Outgoing president’s speech, Annual Meeting 2016

Today marks Jerusalem Day in Israel, a day to commemorate the reunification of the city following the 1967 war, following 19 years when the city was divided. Despite the fact that many of us cannot be physically here today, our congregation too is strongly united, by tight community, spiritual, and social bonds. We are so blessed to be together, one way, or another.

We’ve had a productive year. We began with beautiful High Holiday services. We collected hundreds of cans of corn for the Food Bank and hosted a moving Interfaith Thanksgiving service. Our Hanukkah Party saw Sisterhood, community members, and students united in joint volunteer efforts and fun. Our community Passover seder was stimulating and delicious.

Sisterhood Shabbat drew us together as a community of creative prayer writers, and Sisterhood continued to bring us together with Play Reading and Book Discussion nights that included both men and women.

Our new rabbinical student has encouraged us to join together in rhythm and song, and in study. Reb Jordan’s adult education classes have inspired even the most shy among us to speak up and contribute to the group conversation. Many of us enjoyed bonding at a Havdalah and Dinner Out with Reb Jordan and several subsequent dinners, both inside the synagogue and out. Our tour of the Yiddish Book Center was enlightening.

Last summer’s Tag Sale not only netted a very respectable pot of cash, but also gave us another opportunity to work side by side in community effort. We are looking forward to another wonderful Tag Sale this July 10th. Please join us for fun, profit, and the satisfaction of purposeful participation.

Our cemetery project is another meaningful group effort. The committee and our very generous donor has worked together to provide us with a beautiful and restful space.

Now we need volunteers to unite in the greatest mitzvah of all and learn the art of preparing our dead Jewishly for burial. Please let us know if you’d be interested in this ultimate expression of compassion. We also now have a lovely new donation of shiva minyan books that match our regular siddurs.

Our bumpy carpet has been stretched, literally putting us on much safer ground at our spiritual events. Our driveway will soon get a mini-facelift as well. The Board has begun a Capital Maintenance account to provide for ongoing repairs to our building. Your past donations are gratefully acknowledged, and your future gifts are welcomed. In honor of the 50th anniversary of our “new” building, after the flood destroyed our old home, we are working on a history of our shared experiences as a congregation, and have initiated a conversation with the town of Putnam about a tree planting ceremony in commemoration of our relationship with the larger community.

We had the opportunity to be together this year at milestones as diverse as Baby Namings, Bar Mitzvahs, Burials, Weddings, and Shiva Minyans. As I leave four years of having had the honor of being your president, this is my wish for our community – may we continue to recognize the value that each of us brings individually to a strong and vibrant community, and truly appreciate in turn all that our community does to enrich each of our lives. May we grow bigger and better, but never forget our roots and the importance of the contribution each of us makes uniquely to the whole. Shalom and Thank you!