

Erev Rosh Hashanah  
Howard Glicksman, Kehillah President

L'Shanah Tovah and Happy New Year.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and our staff, it's my pleasure to welcome you to the Chapel Hill Kehillah Synagogue as we gather together to celebrate the beginning of the year 5770. I'm Howard Glicksman, your Kehillah president. I want to spend much of my time tonight thanking the many people who contribute time and energy to sustaining and strengthening this community. I also want to share some new and exciting happenings at the Kehillah and in our broader community.

Welcome back to Yoni Fisher as our cantor for this year. We are blessed to have both Rabbi Jen and Yoni leading us in prayer during these High Holy Days.

Thank you to all of the people involved in preparation for our High Holy Days services, including our great staff and many volunteers. I want to especially thank Warren Silbovitz who has led our High Holy Day efforts this year. Thank you Warren.

Many thanks to the Religious School Director hiring committee, led by Tamar Birckhead. Tamar and her committee spent most of the summer interviewing candidates, and they did a really great job.

Now on to excitement at the Kehillah! First, welcome to our new, outstanding interim religious school director, Dina Schiff. Dina has been amazing. After being hired 1 month ago, Dina relocated from Charlotte, put together the finishing touches of her teaching staff, conducted teacher training, reviewed and updated the curriculum, had a successful first couple of weeks, and implemented the switch in Religious School hours. I'm exhausted just thinking about all she has accomplished in such a short time.

Not only do we have a new religious school director, but we now have a one-day-a-week Religious School program. The religious school committee, led by Miriam Ornstein, held a Parent Forum, surveyed all Religious School parents, and then, with great support and encouragement, implemented our new Sunday religious school schedule. Older students attend from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., and younger students have a shorter day. After High Holy Days, the school will add optional activities on Wednesdays such as Jewish art, Hebrew study, and Israeli folk dancing.

I'd like to encourage everyone to join us Friday nights or Saturday mornings as we celebrate Shabbat. Each month, we have a Shabbat Shirah: A Song-Filled, Multigenerational, Family-Friendly Saturday morning Shabbat service led by Rabbi Jen and our prayer leaders. At this service, we have guitar accompaniment, upbeat tunes, and yes, even dancing. This service was created from our experiences with Shabbat B'Yachad and last year's sixth grade programs when we experimented with several ways of having a song-filled, family-friendly service. Please join us. Our services have much more ruach (spirit) with more of our community attending. They are a wonderful way to end the week, welcome Shabbat, and pray with our Kehillah community.

After services, join us for a Shabbat Kiddush or Oneg. We have a great Kiddush/Oneg committee, led by Susan Silbovitz who is available to help all Kiddush volunteers and hosts. We encourage members to celebrate a simcha (literally a gladness or joy) in community by being called up for an aliyah and sweetening the moment with food. Join us for an anniversary, a birthday, an addition to your family such as a child or grandchild or great grand child or great great grand child or ... well, you get the point! Please volunteer to host, and let's get more people together to celebrate Shabbat.

There is also excitement in our larger Jewish community. The JCC is about to happen. Save the date of Sunday, Oct. 18 at 2 p.m., and join us as we celebrate the groundbreaking for the new JCC. We expect it to be completed by end of 2010. This is a great addition to our community and we can be a part of its success through our support.

Monday, October 26, under the leadership of Kathy Kaufman, the Social Action Committee, and other dedicated volunteers, the Kehillah will unite with more than 30 local religious and community institutions, to found a powerful, new, Interfaith, Social Justice Organization in Orange County. Previously called the OCOC (Orange County Organizing Committee), the new Organization will be called Orange Justice United In Community Effort.

The OCOC already had its first successful action. As a result of our joint efforts, the Chapel Hill town council passed a living wage policy for Chapel Hill town employees. Moving forward, Justice United will be uniting to address social and economic justice issues regarding the environment, education, affordable housing, healthcare and immigration. To learn more and get involved in this important work of Tikkun Olam, please see Kathy Kaufman.

As we begin the New Year, think about those in our Kehillah community who have been hurt by the economy and need our help. We are committed to welcoming all, regardless of financial situation. If you can, please consider giving a little more this year so we can continue to sustain our community even in these difficult times.

Also, remember those who go hungry every day. We are very involved with the Interfaith Council for Social Services. Thanks to Ava Nackman, our liaison to this great organization. The Inter-Faith Council provides shelter, food, direct services, advocacy and information to people in need in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. The food bank has been especially hard hit by the economy. More are in need of assistance, and the demand for food has risen 124%. The need is urgent; please help us stock the local food bank. Please pick up paper bags in the lobby and bring them back filled with canned or dried food on Yom Kippur. For those who do not carry on Yom Kippur or Shabbat, drop off your food donation during the week.

Attached to each bag is a donation envelope for Mazon, the primary Jewish agency addressing global hunger. Consider donating what you would have spent feeding yourself on Yom Kippur to Mazon for their Yom Kippur appeal.

Please participate so our fasts bring comfort, healing and justice into the world.

On behalf of your Board of Directors, officers and Kehillah staff, I thank you for your support and involvement and wish you, and those close to you, a sweet New Year.

Tomorrow, services begin at 9 a.m. Please note there is a UNC football game starting at noon, which will make finding parking difficult. If you park in the church lot or the parking garage, you will be charged the “football” rate. Please come early, get a good parking spot and join with us as we celebrate our new year 5770.

L'Shanah Tovah. Happy New Year.