

### **February 3, 2023**

Before I graduated from college, I said I would never live in Houston. It was just too big for me. But a real live job offer quickly changed my mind. While working at said job, I said I would never carry a pager – you know, those ancient things that beep and show just a number at any time of day or night. Well, working in systems development and babysitting the brain of an organization's operations changed that plan as well. Being the child of a divorced family, I said I would never get married. 25 years later, you've seen how incredibly successful I've been with my "I will nevers." Candidly I've tried the "I will never win the lottery," but thus far, the universe has not taken the bait on that one.

If it had, I may be talking about something else right now. Last May, our Master of Coin, aka our Treasurer, Bregger Garrison shared the congregational budget at our annual meeting. As usual he painted a deficit budget; yep, we spend more than bring in. Amazingly enough, in the middle of those red numbers, he also painted a big, beautiful FUNDRAISER that would, like that one pot of oil during Hanukkah, miraculously appear and keep the proverbial lights on. In May, that fundraiser was a vision; today it's a reality.

On Thursday, March 2nd Temple will host our *Doing Good for SA* benefit. Our hope – *our need* – is to raise \$100,000 to close the deficit. Our members have received these invitations as have countless friends, partners, and other community stakeholders. But nothing is more powerful than a personal invitation. So tonight, I am inviting you, and you, and you, and you to join us at this wonderful event. The agenda includes an outstanding silent auction, the recognition of two unsung heroes, an amazing performance by San Antonio's own poet laureate, and the celebration of Temple's communal service to this great city of ours. But a party isn't a party without people. So please, buy a table on your own or with friends, buy a ticket and make new friends. This event is Temple's only fundraiser of the year, and it will take our collective effort to make it a success.

My freshman and sophomore years in college, I took a job as a telemarketer and sold credit card protection. While I was good enough to buy a car with my earnings, the experience left a traumatic scar. I said I would never solicit people again. Instead, I've bought boxes of fundraiser chocolates, "accidentally" buried raffle tickets in the accumulated mail pile, and shortened girl scout careers because of those darned cookies. While I will continue to challenge the universe about the lottery just in case, out of love and respect for this amazing institution of ours, I will ask you explicitly to give generously before and during this important event. \$100,000 is a lot of money. And it's for a good cause. You're sitting in and among it. I am happy to share my invitation this evening for the QR code for those of you who do not keep shomer Shabbos. I look forward to seeing you on March 2<sup>nd</sup>!

### **Announcements – 10 February**

When I was in high school, I was part of MZ Yoshanah, a girls' chapter of the B'nai Brith Youth Organization. Among the countless memories I have of that experience was of our chapter

meetings, and in particular, the end of them. We finished each meeting with a standard refrain, then added our unique perspective. The refrain was this: “For the Good and Welfare of MZ Yoshanah Chapter 2053...” Each person then mentioned something they enjoyed about the meeting or a recent success or how a member did something above and beyond for the benefit of the organization. To this day, I remember how uplifted I felt after each meeting – regardless of the topics discussed, regardless of which girls attended (remember, not all teenage girls are friends), and regardless of whether we we actually accomplished anything at all.

Sadly, good and welfare is no where to be found in my professional life. Never in all my years at Accenture, HEB, USAA, or any of my corporate clients have I ever participated in a meeting that ended with something intentionally uplifting. We work our way thru the agenda -- or don't -- and call it day. Some days I rinse and repeat this process 6 or 7 times, but never have I seen Good and Welfare.

Temple board meetings, however, reintroduced me to this lovely notion. As the President, I look forward to Good and Welfare. Why? For several reasons. First: have you ever led a roomful of 30 smart, outspoken, passionate Jews? I understand Moses' hesitation when he was asked to lead Israel! Good and welfare serves as a well-deserved finish line to an often challenging experience.

Second: the board tackles difficult issues – ones that affect our congregation today and tomorrow. Not one person takes this responsibility lightly. These issues engage both our heads and our hearts, so our conversations are both intellectual and emotional. That can create some dynamic discussions. Said differently, it can periodically get heated and tense – all for good reasons, but nonetheless, our meeting space can be uncomfortable. Good and Welfare serves as the great neutralizer: of temperature, of attitudes, of moods. It reminds us that we're all on the same team, working toward the same goals.

Third: our Trustees are friends – of mine and of each other. While our meetings provide the forum for us to accomplish Temple business, Good and Welfare allows us to cultivate those friendships, share good news, support each other in difficult times, and deepen our connections as congregants, as Trustees, and as humans.

I always look forward to our Board's Good and Welfare because I know how uplifted I will feel after each meeting, regardless of the topics discussed, which Trustees attended, and regardless of how much we actually accomplish. I leave you with one final thought: For the Good and Welfare of Temple Beth-El, may we always find the finish line, may we keep working together on big dreams,

### **Announcements (given by Marsha) – 2.17.2023**

The Hebrew word “shalom” is a powerful one. It functions as the perfect salutation for both meeting and parting ways, adding sophistication to the more basic greetings of hello and goodbye. More to the point, shalom means peace. But it also has variations on the definition: harmony, wholeness, completeness, and tranquility.

It seemed the perfect word to use, therefore, when describing Dollie Closna. For nearly 11 years, Dollie has been the glue that has helped complete Temple and kept us whole. She's not just the voice on the phone, she's the first ear and caring heart to hear our issues. She's not only the face we see when we arrive, she's the first smile and warm laugh to brighten our day. She's the keeper of Temple folklore, and she also knows where all the bodies are buried – both literally and figuratively. For over a decade she has worked tirelessly on our congregation's behalf, weaving her magic into countless aspects of Temple operations.

As difficult as it will be when she leaves for New Jersey, we take a bit of solace in the wise words of Dr. Seuss: "Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened." And smile we will, even if they are laced with a few tears... and some panicky phone calls about where things are located or how we're supposed to accomplish some task that only Dollie would know how to do!

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, our clergy, the Temple staff, and our entire congregation, we thank you, Dollie for bringing shalom to Temple Beth-El. And we wish *you* shalom as you begin this exciting new chapter of your life.