

Good morning Shana Tova and welcome to the South Shore Jewish Center, recast with the acronym SSJC.

One of the items on the list of incomplete tasks at SSJC is to formally and officially announce the adoption of a mission statement. Many of you have suffered my harangues at Board meetings about the gap because in these times of incipient anti Semitism we must adopt principals that protect our religious practices and insure the survival of SSJC. It is clear that maintaining the status quo as a Conservative egalitarian house of worship is no small task.

Of course even a seemingly simple objective like that requires that we peek into the future and plan a sensible course. Certainly predicting anything about the future of the Jewish people is a high risk game that is destined to end up in the never never land of endless debates and squabbles-It is after all in our DNA. But defining ourselves also makes us realize that SSJC has a significant role in serving as a model for charting a course for the future of Conservative synagogues by creating a workable viable and practical environment for development and growth, while neighboring congregations shut their doors- we should not forget our history of persevering, when there was no Rabbi employed by the congregation and lay people conducted all services.

A case in point, as you remember, was following the merger of the Jewish Center of Island Park and Cong Beth Sholom, Sandy struck. Through the leadership of Jan Rothman and Steve Diamond, in a Phoenix like accomplishment we rebuilt, but we suffered from the unavoidable feeling of abandonment. Our membership was scattered and to some degree still is. Like our neighbors, SSJC seemed to be engulfed by the reality that we looked like a third world country-who can ever forget that.

So the job description was and remains to create and preserve an environment and structure that will insure the survival of SSJC.

We at the SSJC believe that our brand of Judaism is the structure that many similarly situated conservative synagogues will follow because in this 21st century we will either adapt to the times or fade away. In fact the genesis of the discussions that resulted in the merger of the Jewish Center of Island Park and Temple Beth Sholom was how to survive in this century. Your Board and officers can report to you that we are diligently working to become the future by bridging the divide between Jews with diverse beliefs and needs.

It is not merely the spirituality of SSJC that we are addressing. There are practical and physical components that are proceeding and most assuredly, there is much to see and do. We now have revamped classrooms, with room for expansion, for the students that have enrolled in our new Hebrew school; a totally renovated sanctuary that unites the traditions of the Island Park Jewish Center and Beth Sholom into our own home grown protocols, which presents a comfortable and friendly place of worship; handicapped accessible lavatories are being finished; our ballroom has been expanded to accommodate larger parties and events resulting in an increased income stream; our committees function; our programs such as brainstorming sessions with our Rabbi continue; renovation of the kitchen is going forward; our roof no longer leaks; the automated plague board has been paid for and is awaited and the plagues will be put in place; our membership dues remain affordable, while those of other synagogues soar out of control; we operate a creative and exquisite web site; our cooling system actually cools; our heating system actually heats; our PA system makes noise; and finally and most importantly, notwithstanding the nomadic journeys of our snow birds we continue to have a minion on almost every Shabat, with the unlimited participation of all in attendance. All of this requires the devotion of resources and you will hear more of this in the days ahead.

Just as important as is, what SSJC has become and has come to symbolize is the fact that we have formed relationships with community groups and organizations; we have lent our facility for uses benefitting the

community; our participation in non denominational prayer services continues; we have ongoing dialogue with the local government and have cultivated our relationship with other houses of worship and today I have a note from Father Tutone expressing the good wishes of Sacred Heart Catholic Church; we have successfully restructured our office procedures; we continue to support our congregants during illness and loss; and have miraculously managed to steer clear of the Machiavellin like political environment of Island Park and Long Beach - no small feat I may add.

We are dedicated to operating this temple as a place where the Jewish traveler can attend our services in serenity, comfort and friendship. We seek to maintain this synagogue as an outpost where any Jew is welcome. We believe that as a people, we should not follow an exclusionary philosophy. As the recent Pugh Organization analysis points out, we are at a place in time of diminished religious devotion. Therefore survival requires unity of dedication and purpose, to building the largest possible tent to accommodate all of our fellow Jews- our very survival as a people is at stake. We are reminded of the refrain of Benjamin Franklin - that we must all hang together or surely we shall all hang separately.

So, we have a mission statement-survive, preserve, stay lean, reinvigorate and pass this place on to another generation who will, so to speak, keep the home fires burning.

Finally, you will see and hear during this holiday just how fortunate we have been in the recruitment of Rabbi Hoffman, whose contract has been extended for two more years, and who has enlisted Cantor Hillel Bar Zion to join us for the holidays. They are the epitome of contemporary Jewish devotion and culture, as near a perfect fit with us as can be found and we urge you to stay with us, participate, attend and enjoy, show up at prayer services-come along and hang out with us, the best is yet to be.

My Co president Lisa Ariane and our Board thank you for coming here and wish each of you Shana Tova.