ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

We were delighted that 62 Village Temple members joined together for the Annual Congregational Meeting on Wednesday, June 7. The meeting, which lasted 100 minutes, included presentations, discussion, and interaction with the congregation. After healthy and respectful conversations, the congregation voted favorably to:

1. Approve the slate of officers for next year. Those present welcomed the new Co-President, Fred Basch, and two new board members, Marina Levin and David Caceres. There was also a special presentation to outgoing Co-President, Jerry Arbittier.
2. Approve the budget, which included a dues and religious school increase, as well as a security fee.
3. Extend for another year the introductory free membership for new members with children in first and second grades.
4. Authorize the board to pursue a 5-year loan/line of credit of up to $300,000.
5. Approve an extension of Rabbi Hirsch’s term through June 2020.

Some of the above items were discussed in last month’s congregational letter. If you would like additional information on any of the above topics please contact the temple office.
It's hard to believe that it's been a year since I began my time at The Village Temple. As I reflect upon the past 12 months, I am grateful for the incredible dedication of lay leaders and staff who have worked to bring healing, calm, and vision to our sacred community. When I arrived last July, I was committed to being with the congregation for one year—as many of you know, it was my mantra at every community conversation last summer. As the year progressed, it became clear to leadership and me that The Village Temple needed a different model of interim rabbi—one that would help stabilize the congregation, bring healing, help establish congregational systems, and, working with leadership and staff, set the congregation on firm footing, emotionally and financially—all necessary key components—to welcome the next rabbi. Having received permission from the Rabbinic Joint Placement Commission to remain with the congregation, I look forward to partnering with all of the key stakeholders to make The Village Temple the downtown go-to place for spiritual growth, learning, life cycle observances—and MOST importantly—for community. Indeed, we are a sacred community in one relationship with one another.

As I stated at the congregational meeting last month, Judaism is built upon relationships, from the bible to modern days. Relationships bring meaning to our lives—give us purpose. We can talk about the real need of attracting new members and we cannot lose focus on making our current members feel engaged and connected.

As staff and lay leaders plan for next year, staff and lay leaders will be reaching out to get to know each member and to connect members to one another. Coffees and conversations will help foster connections. Author, Ron Wolfson in his book *Relational Judaism*, challenges synagogues to be more about people and not programs. He urges us to forge “deep relationships, not fee-for-service transactions.” “Cheers” was a popular TV show and everyone knew its tagline… “where everybody knows your name.” So, too, should the synagogue be a place where people are known and feel connected. Indeed, The Village Temple will offer engaging programs and inspiring worship AND those points of connections must be infused with “high touch interactions.” A year-long Adult Hebrew Class leading to Adult B’nai Mitzvah will bring members of all ages together for learning, fellowship and fun. The same for b’nai mitzvah families who will have opportunities to meet and spend quality time together. And there will be more that will be shared over the summer, as plans for kesher—connection—will be finalized.

I want to extend my personal thanks for allowing me to serve as your rabbi for the next few years. I hope we will strengthen and enrich one another as we journey together.

My best for a wonderful summer!

Rabbi Deborah A. Hirsch
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Dear fellow congregants,

Rabbi Hirsch and our executive director, Sandy Albert, recently led the board of trustees in a seven-hour long discussion about the future of the Village Temple—and about one another. At day’s end we all agreed we understood more about our connection to the synagogue and to one another.

We want to include all of you in the conversation. Our congregation contains many fascinating people. We are artists, physicians, lawyers, executives, social workers, teachers, writers, curators, psychologists, actors, architects, engineers, chefs, yoga instructors, caregivers and designers. We enjoy music, dance, travel, gardening, sailing, knitting, ping-pong, tennis, hiking, reading, debate, walking, running, biking, movies, theater, politics, and social action. In other words, we are New Yorkers.

In a new outreach program, board members have begun to reach out to you to let you know about special events at the Village Temple. You may be invited for a cup of coffee or to a gathering, to hear your thoughts about what you value about the synagogue and what you would like to change. Rabbi Hirsch wants to hear from you as well.

Introducing Fred Basch as the new Co-President
In the spirit of getting to know one another, please meet Fred Basch, who will be serving as co-president for the next year.

Fred runs an architectural firm that specializes in renovating Broadway and off-Broadway theatres, historic preservation, and criminal justice facilities. He is also known as Emma’s dad, Susan’s husband, Sheldon’s son, and dedicated children’s choir parent.

A member for nine years, Fred served on the religious school committee before joining the board seven years ago. He has focused on building maintenance.

Fred joined the board when he realized how much time his family was spending at the temple between services, religious school drop off, and choir. Seeing how much this small temple had to offer, he felt an obligation to find out more about the temple and to help. As an interfaith family, Fred and Susan represent a large and important constituency of the Village Temple community.

As you welcome Fred into this new position, please thank Jerry Arbittier for completing four years of service as co-president of The Village Temple. Throughout a difficult period of transition, Jerry provided wisdom, humanity, and courage. One word summarizes Jerry: mensch. Over the last year, as Rabbi Hirsch restored calm and hope for the future, Jerry has been at her side, offering support and counsel for her, the staff, and the board. And he did all of that while running his own large and complex business.

Jerry will continue to be a crucial part of leadership as a member of the board of trustees and chair of a new group of advisors, consisting of former Village Temple presidents.

Julie Salamon and Fred Basch. Co-Presidents
This has been another successful year for our teenagers at The Village Temple. Post *bnai mitzvah*, almost all of the teenagers chose to engage in our community. Many decided to become TAs (Teacher Assistants) in the religious school classrooms. This year, we had 23 teenagers helping as teacher assistants. Our Sunday and weekday classrooms had at least one TA in every grade, some classes had two or three. The teens helped teach Hebrew letters, vowels, and prayers to the younger students. The TAs ran our Sunday morning electives of art, Hebrew games and trivia, Torah skits, songs and poetry writing, as well as the Chanukah and Purim carnivals.

Our Village Temple Youth Group (VTYG), which is open to all 8th- to 12th-grade VT members, had some exciting events this year. The VTYG helped lead children's services during the High Holy Days, and participated in social action projects, such as the toy drive, the soup kitchen, Kites for Riverkeeper, and our NYC neighborhood park clean-up. Our youth group board helped plan events bowling, sporting events, Broadway shows, a trampoline park, laser tag, ice skating, paintball, indoor rock climbing, a Six Flags trip, and more.

In looking to next year, all 8th/9th-graders are encouraged to join Madrich, which is our bi-monthly leadership development program. They will meet for dinner, discussion, and social time. On average, 12-15 teens come each session. We are hoping to launch a Confirmation program with Rabbi Hirsch for students in 10-12th grades.

In February 2018, we will be going to the Religious Action Center (RAC), which is the hub of Jewish social justice and legislative activity in Washington, D.C. The RAC educates and mobilizes the Reform Jewish community on legislative and social concerns, advocating on more than 70 different issues, including economic justice, civil rights, religious liberty, and Israel.

It is wonderful to see so much involvement and commitment from our teenagers. They love spending time at The Village Temple and being with their friends, and we hope that they continue to stay active in the Jewish community now and in the future.

If your teen is interested in being involved in any way, or if you would like more information about our teen programs, please contact me.

Liotte Greenbaum
Director of Community Engagement
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Scenes from our Religious School

The final weeks of the school year at the Village Temple Religious School were filled with many special moments that inspired feelings of gratitude, pride and accomplishment among our students and their families. Below are a few snapshots of some of the wonderful learning experiences and celebrations in our Sunday and Weekday Religious Schools:

In honor of *Yom HaAtzmaut*, Israel Independence Day, our Pre-K and Kindergarten students took a virtual trip to Israel where they had a chance to experience its special flavors and visit most its sacred and fun destinations. Upon their “return,” our students made colorful collages to share what they learned with their parents and siblings.

As part of their *Lag B’Omer* celebration, our Tuesday 2nd graders made their own LED bonfires to take home and use as bedroom night-lights. They then made s’mores and gathered around their pretend campfire in the dark under the stars to hear and discuss a holiday story.

On Sunday April 30th, many of our Religious School students and their parents gathered at Tompkins Square Park for the annual Mitzvah Day. We accomplished a lot in cleaning up the park clean for all to enjoy this spring and summer.  

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On Sunday May 7th, we gathered on Pier 45 to fly kites and raise money for Riverkeeper, a non-profit organization that works to protect our waterways and find solutions to the threats to clean water. It was a chilly and windy day, but we had a great time flying kites as a community and raised $750.

Our education team is committed to innovation and we will be working hard this summer to design new educational experiences and services that strengthen a welcoming atmosphere that creates a sense of purpose and community. Stay tuned!

Wishing you a wonderful summer!

Alex Tansky
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