Clergy, Rabbi Freelander, JTV and Temple board members –families, friends, congregants

Shabbat Shalom -

Among other things, I have been asked to report on the state of our congregation. I am happy to report that the state of our congregation is good; actually, the state of our congregation is . . . I’m going to say “phenomenal,” but you can pick your own superlative.

Our finances are stable – in fact, we’re performing better than budget, in the positive way. Membership is steady, on some metrics ahead of last year, and better than previous periods. All good. And we are unquestionably poised for even greater things in the year ahead.

But more important, I think, than the dry statistics, is the fact that the vitality of our congregation, the level of engagement across all age groups, and the degree of member involvement in the life of our Temple community are all extraordinary.

Our speakers series, our Rabbis’ classes, our B’nai Mitzvah program, our Mishpacha University, our back pack drive, our participation in Help Suffolk Day, our work with the Gerald Ryan Outreach Center and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, our food collection for the Mercy Inn, our annual rummage sale, our purchase of a fully equipped ambucycle for United Hatzalah, our fun fundraisers, . . . . I could go on and on. All extraordinary.

The past year was one of transition and growth, as our beloved Senior Rabbi of 33 years became our Rabbi Emeritus and turned the reins of spiritual leadership over to our beloved Rabbi Susie Heneson Moskowitz. Seamlessly, we have emerged from that transition as
strong and as vibrant as ever, honoring old traditions and making vibrant new ones. So the
timing of tonight’s installation of both our JTV Board and our Temple Board could not be
more fitting, as our reading of the Torah cycle begins anew with Beresheet. A new
beginning.

None of the wonderful and important things happening here at Temple Beth Torah would be
possible without the dedication, selflessness and hard work not only of our clergy, directors,
staff, teachers, committee members, and volunteers, but of the leaders of our youth and adult
boards, who give of themselves constantly throughout the year.

To our JTV Board members. While I say it all the time, it’s no exaggeration, and it bears
repeating – the many, many things you do for our temple and for our community -
fundraising, food drives, mentoring, helping at soup kitchens – are so impressive. Temple
Beth Torah would be a lesser place without your energy and your many, many
contributions. You represent us so well, and we are so proud of you. Thank you, and your
advisers - Rabbi Wiesenberg and our Director of Youth Engagement, Dr.!! Jodi Mishkin-
Michaelson - for all you have done and are doing to help make our Temple the wonderful,
exciting and inviting place it is. We like to say – I like to say – that the reason we exist, the
goal of our temple, is to nourish and nurture our young people. But it’s equally true, that we
get so much nourishment and fulfillment from all the many good things we see and know
you are doing and from your many accomplishments, and the many more that lie ahead for
you. Keep up the good work.

To our trustees and officers. If there’s nothing else that has been brought home to me during
the past year, it’s that it takes the hard work, thoughtfulness, insight and dedication of many
people not just to attend to the nuts and bolts of operating a temple, but to provide the inspiration, the energy, the comraderie, the sense of community that it takes to make a building a place of learning, a place of celebration, a place of worship, a place of sharing so many things, the kind of place where our generous, inspired, talented and caring clergy – Senior Rabbi Susie Heneson Moskowitz, Rabbi and Educator Rachel Wiesenberg, and Cantor Sarene Appelbaum – can teach, inspire, uplift, counsel, comfort and spiritually lead us.

As a board, we don’t always agree on everything at first (and sometimes second, third and fourth . . ), but in the end, we always find the right way to lay aside our differences – differences that are dwarfed by how much we share and agree upon - and work together to achieve our common goals. Thank you for all you have done, for all of the sacrifices you have made for the sake of our temple community, and thank you to your families for sharing you with us, and for the sacrifices they have made. And, as always, thank you to our predecessors, upon whose shoulders we stand and without whose foresight and generosity this wonderful place would not have been possible. And thank you, again, to our faculty and tireless office, religious school, nursery school and maintenance staff; who make it all work. And thank you to the congregation for its confidence in our abilities and for its support. And, of course, thank you to our marvelous Rabbi Moskowitz, with whom it has truly been a great pleasure working. And thank you to my incredible wife, Susan, for your support and inspiration and to my children, for your understanding, patience, inspiration and incredible senses of humor. You make it all worth it.

Thank you everyone. Shabbat shalom.