

Beth Shir Sholom has been very much alive during our *first* nearly 18 years. From projects like our Social Action Committee's drive for school backpacks, to meals for AIDS patients and various programs for the homeless, from our commitment to those working for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, to Tikkun Orleans, our aid for flood victims in New Orleans, Beth Shir Sholom is always present, active and involved. Our Early Childhood Center makes a name for itself as a developmental program that is loving, caring and helps to make *menches*. Our Religious School is now our LifeLong Center, utilizing informal learning styles and offering an expanded menu of programs. We could do none of this (and more) without an incredible cadre of volunteers that runs such events as our Purim Carnival, Book Fair and our infamous Bark Mitzvah. Some volunteer in the office, on a whole host of administrative committees and for these High Holy Days. Others formed a Women's Chavurah, a Men's Club and a soon to be Singles Group. Because of our volunteers we are renowned as the synagogue that accomplishes more than is expected for community our size. When crises occur in the lives of our fellow members, we all volunteer as a caring community. On behalf of us all, I promise that we will use that same communal

strength to support and embrace all those impacted in these fragile economic times.

Our Tish and its music is the quintessential expression of Beth Shir Sholom. We know we're doing the right thing because everyone is copying us! They really can't replicate what we do, though, because this music comes out of the *kishkes* of this community! Our music is the melodic articulation of our communal soul: searching for more meaning, striving for a different interpretation, determined to be relevant, inspiring and motivating us to create a healed, repaired and peaceful world.

You can imagine that we engage in some pretty intricate logistics on these High Holy Days in order to bring all I've described to places designed for something else. We've done so in churches traditional and new-age, a cavernous civic center, an airport hanger, a theater, and a hotel room where we morphed into Beth Mauve Sholom. What you may not know is that we are doing the same thing EVERY DAY in our home facility on California Avenue. It is a building lovingly designed many years ago, with other spiritual expressions and communal activities in mind, that does not truly house what is now the Beth Shir Sholom personality. Thanks to your generosity we

took two significant steps toward making our home more reflective of who we are. We made our sanctuary more engaging with curved pews and an open *bimah*. Outside, we created a Gan Shalom, a garden of peace, a space of enjoyment and spirituality for all ages. The rest of our facility lags far behind. For ourselves and in order that Beth Shir Sholom might be inherited by another couple of generations, we need to renovate our building. We need to open up its corridors and fill its hallways with light. We need classrooms and other spaces that are flexible enough to accommodate the many programs and projects in which children and adults engage at Beth Shir Sholom. Above all, our home needs to be beautiful and inviting.

I am passionate about this project. I am and will be the rabbi of this project. The foundation stones for this sacred endeavor have already been put in place and I want us all to hear how we are going to build upon those stones. This is a venture for and with us all. Stan Brooks has graciously taken the role of Chairperson of the capital campaign that will fund the Beth Shir Sholom Renovation Project and I asked him to share this moment with us so that we can all benefit from his leadership and inspiration that will help us to build this dream together.