

Annual Meeting 2023

Rabbi Libby Fisher

Another year has come and gone and it has been so full of wonderful moments here at Temple Emanuel. Let me start with the word Keshet – over the course of the past year, we welcomed nearly 100 students at Keshet. We worked with over 3 dozen madrichim, teen teacher helpers, who also attended Keshet High on Sunday afternoons. Our program ran with the dedication of our wonderful Keshet staff, made up of teachers and specialists who nurtured, taught, and loved our children. We were thankfully able to loosen some of our COVID restrictions, most notably making masks optional and inviting adults into the building again! Keshet parents were invited to celebrate holidays indoors, join their children for a variety of activities, and auxiliary Temple groups and committees were able to use Temple space on Sundays again.

A huge addition to Keshet came in the form of our Shinshinyot, Maskit and Noya. The Hebrew letters shin shin stand for sh'nat sheirut, which means year of service. Maskit and Noya took a year off between high school graduation and the beginning of their mandatory army service to be with us here in Greensboro. They helped us build stronger connections to the people, land, and State of Israel through personal relationships and incredible, engaging

lessons for our youth. Some of our congregants were home hosts for Maskit and Noya, and Temple members were also crucial in fundraising to support their program. If you'd like to thank Maskit and Noya, we are having a community farewell program on Wednesday, May 31 at 6:30pm in the field behind Beth David Synagogue. We hope you'll join us. The Shinshinim program is a shared project between the Greensboro Jewish Federation, Beth David Synagogue, B'nai Shalom Day School, and us here at Temple Emanuel. Not only did we learn so much from Maskit and Noya, it was also an opportunity for our Greensboro Jewish institutions to find new ways to work together, and I look forward to building on this next year, when we welcome two new Shinshinyot, Noga and Noa!

Last year, I stood here and I said, "I am hopeful that we will bring back more of the key components of Keshet for High Schoolers, such as travel to Washington, D.C." And now I am pleased to say we were able to bring back 4 travel programs for our teens which we had been missing since the beginning of COVID. This past September, I went with our 7th and 8th graders out to Western North Carolina for a 3-day Whitewater Rafting trip, along with 5 of their brave parents! In January, we took two, back-to-back trips to Washington, D.C. First, we went with our 7th and 8th grade class to visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as a part of their

bi-annual curriculum. Knowing that a few years had missed out on this meaningful experience, we opened it up to 9th and 10th graders as well. I'm grateful to Sara Kramer, our 7/8 grade teacher, as well as our amazing parent chaperones and Rabbi Koren, who helped to run this important trip.

The next weekend, we packed up again for Washington, D.C., this time for the Religious Action Center's L'taken Social Justice Seminar with our Keshet High students. Rabbi Koren and I, along with 10 Temple teens, spent a long weekend studying the Reform Jewish approach to social justice and advocacy, which concluded with a day on Capitol Hill, lobbying our elected officials. We were very honored that Representative Kathy Manning went out of her way to be present that day to meet with our teens, her fellow congregants.

And as you heard, Rabbi Andy was so excited to lead March of the Living again this year.

Our year of Keshet High concluded with a beautiful confirmation service where we heard from 6 incredible high school seniors about their Jewish identities and how they have been impacted by their time here at Temple Emanuel. We have packets available for anyone who would like to read their words, and they are also available on our website.

The 5783 Keshet Year was a year for the books – I am so proud of the momentum we’ve built, and I look forward to continuing it into the future! I want to say a heartfelt THANK YOU to Tammie Geier, our Vice President of Education, to Barb Boyette, our Education Committee Chair, and to the entire Education Committee. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again – it is amazing to have such a dedicated and hardworking group of people focusing on the wellbeing of our youth and education here at Temple. And of course, I could not do any of the amazing work we do without Brooklyn Flatt, our Keshet Administrative Assistant.

Now, a few words on our education for our adult learners. Our weekly Chevra Torah group continues to meet on Saturday mornings, both in person and on Zoom. This hybrid model has allowed Temple members who have moved away to continue to learn and engage with us, and we regularly see participants from California, to Pennsylvania, to New York, and sometimes even France! We kicked off the year with a 3-session Taste of Judaism course, and followed that with our 18-session Introduction to Judaism class, which we were able to hold in person once again. Rabbi Koren led a 10 session Melton Course called Beyond Borders, teaching on Israel leading up to our Temple Israel trip in February, and I taught our Adult B’nai Mitzvah course. Please mark your calendars for Saturday, June 10th at 10:30am for our Adult B’nai

Mitzvah service, where 6 Temple Emanuel members will read from the Torah for the first time as they become b'nai mitzvah! We had a scholar-in-residence, Rabbi Jack Romberg, who spoke on his family's experience in Germany, and we had many incredible speakers for Shabbats and events throughout the year.

On a personal note, I would like to thank you all for supporting me on my own educational journeys this year. In December, I traveled to India with the Joint Distribution Committee to visit the Jewish communities of Kerala and Mumbai. It was an incredibly exciting and eye-opening trip. In addition, I have just concluded the two-year GFLI leadership development program through the Greensboro Jewish Federation, and we will wrap that up with a trip to Mexico City in June to explore the Jewish community there. These experiences would not be possible without your support and encouragement, and I'm very grateful.

I would be remiss if I did not conclude with a few more thank yous, because this work is the very definition of a group project – Rabbi Koren covered much of the thank yous, so ditto to all he said. Thank you to all of our Temple staff for all you do to keep everything running smoothly! I could go on and on, but for brevity's sake, I'll leave it at that.

Thanks to our Temple Board and committees, and thank you to Paul Benson, our Temple President, for your partnership on matters big and small. And I could not conclude without thanking Rabbi Koren. You have continued to be a great professional mentor, a deeply supportive rabbinic partner, and a wonderful friend, and I look forward to all our future has in store. Finally, thank you to all of you! None of this work would mean anything if not for our warm and loving Temple Emanuel community. I count myself lucky every day to work here. May our next year together be even sweeter than the last. Thank you