

THE VOICE OF CONGREGATION DOR HADASH

An Affiliate of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Shalom Haverim: I would like to update and share with you some of the issues currently being discussed by our board. Although I would like to believe that everyone reads the minutes we send out electronically, I suspect that many of you will find this review useful. In brief, the issues can be outlined as growth, the rabbi question, fundraising, and a follow-up on "Our Boundaries and Opportunities".

We have been grappling with the issue of growth for some time. For some, this is solely a question of numbers, namely how many members do we have. Another viewpoint is to look at the activities the congregation does and ask if we want and can do more? We now have three regularly scheduled services a month, a religious school, and a variety of activities organized by our Social Action Committee and Adult Education/Programming Committees. We also hold services for the Jewish holidays and life events. New this year are the Friday night dinners and the Dorot services, both of which have been enthusiastically received. They are also both activities which strengthen our sense of community and potentially attract new members. Our Adult Education/Programming Committee has brought us a series of wonderful talks, using the Squirrel Hill Library on Sunday mornings, as well as orchestrating a four part lecture/discussion series by visiting Rabbi Shawn Zevit, on the principles of Reconstructionism. These are all activities which make our congregation more interesting to current members and potentially more attractive to non-members. They also require some financial commitment and human investment in time and effort. Are these the kinds of things we wish to continue with or even expand, and if so, do we have the resources to do this?

Engaging a rabbi for the congregation is yet another way to approach growing the congregation. Several members of the congregation have felt that a rabbinic presence is important enough to them that they have joined together (the Rabbi Havurah) and brought a rabbi to us one week-end each month, at their own expense. Those of you who have not taken advantage of Rabbi Zevit's presence are missing an opportunity to see and feel what it is like to work with an experienced Reconstructionist rabbi, which may be very different from your contacts with other rabbis in the past (the schedule for Rabbi Zevit is in the calendar here in the Kol). At the November board meeting a proposal was put forward to bring the question of hiring a rabbi by the congregation to open discussion. (That proposal was sent to you electronically and is available again on request). The board, after much discussion, decided that the rabbi question is just one part of the growth of the congregation, and that we need to look at all the possible options in order to proceed. A committee to pursue the options relating to growth and how to reach wider consensus within the congregation on what course to take is being set up.

All of these activities are also affected by financing. Each

comes with a price tag, some obviously much larger than others. Do we have the money to do the things we want to do? This year alone, due to increases in expenses and funding of our current activities, we expect a significant shortfall in our finances. We have begun to ask for contributions to help meet our current operating expenses. So far we have received contributions from over 30 members totaling more than \$6000. We are hoping to raise \$15,000 and I would again ask that those of us who can afford more than our dues step forward and help. We are all familiar with fundraising in other venues. How do we want to do this at Dor Hadash? What will be most consistent with our communal values? Most congregations do not rely upon dues as their sole income. Increasing dues to cover all our expenses may put an undue hardship on some people. I would like to think that we can do better. My hope is that raising funds to support our community will become part of our culture. The board has decided to set up a fundraising committee to look at the process of fundraising and recommend how to go about this in the future.

"Boundaries and Opportunities" is a term the Reconstructionist movement has applied to the role of non-Jewish members of our congregation. A committee met and formulated a series of recommendations which were adopted at our annual meeting in March, 2005. We are becoming increasingly aware of the distress this policy has created for some members and are trying to see if there needs to be some revision of this policy. I would encourage everyone to read the lead article in the Spring issue of "Reconstructionist Today" from this year entitled "Jews and Fellow Travelers" for a nice discussion of this topic. You should have received it in the mail when it came out, but we will try and have copies available on request.

My goal here today is to try and keep everyone informed as to what is going on at the board, and thereby in the congregation. The board is trying to ensure that as these topics are discussed and decided upon, there is wider input and participation by the congregation at large. Your comments and feedback are welcome. As always, all are welcome to come to board meetings at any time (they are all open). You should all be getting the agenda for the next board meeting with Dor Hadash News that comes out via e-mail the Wednesday before the meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting are sent out with DHN once reviewed at the meeting. We are trying to keep everyone "in the loop."

It was a real pleasure and joy to have Chas Hirsh and Ester Tucker present at the December board meeting, as both of them were recently ill. By the time this arrives your Hanukah menorah will likely be back in the cabinet waiting for next year. I hope everyone had a joyous holiday. We have several B'nai Mitzvot coming up in the next several months (see the calendar) and I encourage everyone to come and share in these wonderful simchas.

B'shalom, Jerry Rabinowitz