

**Installation Remarks**  
**Theodore W. Firetog, President**  
**Temple Beth Elohim**  
**June 19, 2009**

Shabbat Shalom.

It is truly an honor to be installed for another year as President of Temple Beth Elohim. I would like, first of all, to thank Ed Kislik and his Selection Committee, the Board of Trustees, and the Congregation for again bestowing this honor upon me. Thanks also to Steve Smith for helping Ed put together this installation program. And, of course, I want to thank Rabbi Churgel and Cantor Pilatsky for leading tonight's worship service and my fellow congregants, and guests for attending our 54th annual installation ceremony.

As I stated in my installation remarks last September, this year our temple would have a new beginning of sorts. Indeed we had. We welcomed a new Rabbi, three new Vice-Presidents, four new trustees, and a new President. As with any new beginning we expected and saw many changes in our temple - new renovations to our building, new programs, new ideas, new ways of doing things, new challenges, new congregants, and introduction of a new prayer book. Along with these changes, most of us recognized that there may be a period of uncertainty, uneasiness, and perhaps even some anxiety or trepidation.

Therefore, there is no question that this past year has been a very challenging and demanding one for me - trying to keep a balance between what has been and what will be, between the concerns of our long established members and the needs of our newer congregants, between the temple leadership of the past and that of the present, and between the financial requirements of our temple and the reality of our present economy.

But, by the same token, this past year has been very rewarding. As a synagogue, we remain strong and vibrant - as we continue to be a beacon of Reform Judaism in our community. Of course, this would not have been possible without you, our congregants, as well as our professional staff and our hard working and devoted group of elected temple officers, trustees, and committee chairs and members who graciously volunteer to serve our temple for the benefit our congregation. Thank you to all of you who have assisted, helped, and supported me this past year.

I also want to welcome our new members to the Board of Trustees this year: Scott Lefkowitz (Treasurer), Willis Mawyer (VP of Education), Carole Wolfner (Trustee), and Sheila Zimmerman (Sisterhood President). I look forward to working with each of you (as well as with the rest of the Board) this coming year. I also want to acknowledge and thank our non-returning officers (Mindy Ablor and Harvey Cohen), Trustee (Marc Clar), and Board member and Sisterhood President (Susan Naftol) for serving our Congregation this past year. The countless hours that each of them had spent on our behalf are quite evident as was their commitment to improve and enhance our temple.

In addition, thank you to our Rabbi, Cantor, and Director of Education for all the cooperation and assistance that you have given to me (as well as to each other) throughout the year. And, of course, along with our professional staff, I want to thank those individuals who actually take care of the day to day activities of our temple, our extremely capable and dependable office and custodial staff.

As temple President for the past year, my overriding goal has been to ensure that the affairs of this Congregation, the administration of which you have vested in your Board of Trustees, were handled with accountability, transparency, and in accordance with our Temple's Constitution. Next year, it is my hope that we, as congregants, can all work together to continue to strengthen our synagogue and grow as congregation, spiritually and socially.

It's time to move forward with a renewed sense of commitment and pride in our synagogue – to ensure that our synagogue not only continues to provide spiritual support but also social and educational opportunities. A place where we can continue to turn to in time of need or sorrow; to celebrate joyous lifecycle events; to provide a Jewish education for our youth; and to say Kaddish for our loved ones. But these services and opportunities exist only if our Congregants support our temple both financially and through their physical presence and participation.

We are a family at TBE - a family whose members differ in ages, educational backgrounds, interests, and financial abilities - a family that doesn't always agree on how things ought to be done, or indeed, what needs to be done - but a family, nonetheless, whose members practice Reform Judaism in our synagogue not because of any particular Rabbi, Cantor, or even lay leader, but because of our religion and what this institution has to offer.

And, as with any family, we must depend on each other to get us through all the challenges that face our temple and to ensure that this institution continues to benefit its members. And the more of us who become involved in our synagogue, the stronger our family will be in order to meet these challenges. This year, I want us all to actively participate in our temple and celebrate our Judaism together, as one family.

If you regularly attend worship services, I ask you to try a social event you have not participated in before. If you regularly attend our social or school events, I ask you to join us for worship services more often. If you have not had the time to participate in the life of your synagogue recently, I ask you to make a commitment to yourself, your faith, your loved ones, and our family to become more active this coming year. Join Brotherhood or Sisterhood, join a temple committee. Become involved.

If you make that commitment, I am confident that we can continue grow as a temple – a place that offers opportunities for all of its members-- for our new members, our ongoing members, our children, and our seniors. In working together, there is no doubt that our temple will continue to remain a strong, healthy and vibrant testament to our Jewish faith and our community because of you, our wonderful and active congregation.

Shabbat Shalom.