

## Speech on Installation Shabbat

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Shabbat shalom.

I LOVE Anshe Emeth! I LOVE the way the colors of the stained glass windows come to life as the sun sets behind them. I LOVE the feeling of peace that comes over me when the whole congregation sings Hashkiveinu. I LOVE passing the Torah from person to person during erev Simchat Torah. I LOVE seeing the exuberant faces of our third graders when they take to the bima to sing. I LOVE that Anshe Emeth inspires me to live a fuller Jewish life.

I have been President of Anshe Emeth for one full year! It has been a year filled with wonderful moments, each one of them a new thrill or challenge. I think the best part for me has been watching and experiencing temple life and temple work from a very unique vantage point, the vantage point of President. Seeing Anshe Emeth this way has inspired me to reflect on the many ways I have been wooed by our Temple's charm and its majesty.

I arrived here for a meeting one weekday afternoon last fall to find the precious babies and toddlers from the Gan celebrating Hanukkah with our clergy and staff. I saw the lights of the Chanukiah reflected in their tiny eyes and suddenly I felt the itty bitty hairs on the back of my neck stand up. Has that ever

happened to you here? Those special moments are becoming more and more frequent for me now. Each time those tiny hairs stand up, I know that I am witnessing something very special here at Anshe Emeth.

I LOVE sitting on the bima each week. Let me assure you it is the best seat in the house! Maybe we should raffle it off at the next auction? I sit next to Rabbi Miller. He sometimes whispers little nuggets in my ear that make me smile like, “watch the balcony stained glass windows as they change from blue to purple during tonight’s service”. Through him, I can feel the sanctity of our worship and his unwavering LOVE for Anshe Emeth. From my seat on the bima, I watch our members and special guests enter the sanctuary, greet one another, settle in for services, and ready themselves to welcome Shabbat. I watch the glow on the faces of moms and dads as they watch their children read from the Torah for the very first time. I sit with the graduating class while one-by-one each one stands to deliver a short speech reflecting on what Anshe Emeth means to them. I watch them breathe a sigh of relief when they come back to their seats and I hear their classmates lean in to whisper “Yasher Koach”.

One of the things I LOVE most about being President is working together with our Officers and Trustees. The Trustees are like-minded individuals who collectively devote their time, energy, skills, and talents for our Temple’s well-being and growth. They always have the Temple’s best interests at heart. They take

their fiscal responsibility very seriously, watching the budget closely all year long ensuring that we save where we can and fundraise when we need to, all the while being respectful of our members and our Temple community. Trustees attend to and fulfill every nook and cranny of need here at the Temple. They plan and attend events and meetings, classes and lectures, dinners and open houses. They reach into our own pockets to share their treasure with the Temple. They function on our behalf every day with fairness, dignity, and grace. I don't think they receive enough thanks and appreciation for the time and effort they expend seeing that OUR Temple is run efficiently, yet soulfully. If you are Trustee, please rise so that we may acknowledge and thank you for every effort you make on our behalf. Thank you all.

I LOVE Anshe Emeth because an impressive spirit of volunteerism and cooperative teamwork is at the root of everything we do here. These past 12 months, I have quietly taken notice of our volunteers at work. They are raising their hands and saying "I can do that"..."I'll make that call". They are planning, talking, creating, building, and leading in every room of our building...every day. They are helping out during Religious School with seders and special services. They are at committee meetings brainstorming and making important decisions. They are setting the tables for Shabbat dinners. They are folding gently worn clothing donated for the Rummage Sale. They are greeting homeless men as they enter our building on cold winter nights. They are cooking day and

night before the Congregational Breakfast. Time is one of our most precious commodities, yet our volunteers are choosing to share their precious time with Anshe Emeth each and every day! Anshe Emeth is a dynamic place where energized people want to make things happen. If you are one of these energized people and volunteered here during this past year in any capacity whatsoever, please stand so that we can acknowledge you and thank you!

One thing I learned this year is that life is about relationships and Anshe Emeth does relationships very well. I LOVE that about us. Not only does Anshe Emeth give us the opportunity to lead fuller Jewish lives, it also gives us the chance to build relationships with each other that become the threads of the fabric of our lives. We build relationships with each other when we learn together on a trip to Cuba or Alabama or Israel. We build relationships with our Rabbis and Cantor through study or when they challenge us to look at a difficult situation in a new way. We build relationships with our teens when we work with them on issues of social justice. Our teens build relationships with the religious school children when they work with them inside the classroom. Congregants build relationships with staff when they volunteer in the Temple office. In our collective works of tikkun olam, we build relationships with the community-at-large, with Israel and with the world.

I LOVE the little stories that bring to life the relationships we share. Like when Rabbi Miller is telling a story and he makes a

point of picking someone out of the congregation to whom the story relates. Like when little Julian Kaimann is thanked during a Trustees meeting, publicly, for collecting hangers during the rummage sale. Like when a shy 6<sup>th</sup> grader, who didn't want to go on the 6<sup>th</sup> grade retreat because she'd never left home, returns home feeling proud that she had a wonderful time learning, getting to know the clergy, and making new friends. Like when 35 of us return from the Civil Rights trip realizing that getting to know each other better was equal to the magic we felt crossing the Edmund Pettis Bridge. The stories that are Anshe Emeth grow out of the relationships we share. There's that 'something' we all know and feel but cannot seem to express that makes Anshe Emeth different than other Temples. Maybe it's the relationships we have with each other or maybe it's the funny, poignant and organic stories that are born from these relationships.

I LOVE that Anshe Emeth is an ever-evolving place that never stands for the status quo. We are constantly growing, innovating, and changing. We are blessed that our Rabbis and Cantor are innovators and visionaries and we thank them for their strong commitment to Anshe Emeth and to us.

For over 40 years, Rabbi Miller has been our spiritual leader and all-around CEO. Our worship, our programming, our work ethic and philosophy, our LOVE and respect for Israel, the holistic education of our youngsters --- these and more have all been championed by him. Rabbi Miller will say that he stands

on the shoulders of the long line of Rabbis who came before him. That may be so, but I think we all know that it's HIS vision, HIS leadership, HIS tender guidance, and HIS love for Anshe Emeth and its members that make us the vibrant and forward-thinking synagogue that we are today!

Cantor Ott lives and breathes music. She has brought her LOVE of music home to us for almost 2 decades. She graces our Shabbat and high holidays with beautiful vocals and new melodies, leads our three choirs, and inspires our youngsters to play instruments, sing, compete, and LOVE music. Cantor Ott has taught us how to express ourselves in song and how to appreciate the many ways that music can enrich our lives and deepen our relationship with the Divine.

Rabbi Bazeley is finishing his fourth year as our Rabbi and Director of our Religious School. He has completely re-designed our school's philosophy and curriculum. He has also proudly cultivated a 92% retention rate of students returning to the Religious School. Our kids are learning and growing and most remarkably they **really want to be here**...unheard of! Rabbi Bazeley wears both the educator hat along with the Rabbinical kippah beautifully and with pride but those roles aren't solely how we see him. At Anshe Emeth, he is seen as warm and fair, sensitive and caring, funny and magical.

I am at the Temple almost every day of the week. When I am here during the weekdays, I LOVE going to the Temple office. It's always busy and always well-run. Phones are ringing, a

handyman needs direction, someone is waiting to see Rabbi Miller, challah is being delivered, Bar and Bat Mitzvah parents are dropping off kippahs for the big day, Osmin, Zoraida and Jim are prepping for an event that night, and volunteers are stuffing envelopes. All the while, there is a palpable sense of teamwork and comradery in the office. The staff members are helping each other do their jobs better. Our professional, administrative and custodial staff is small yet mighty and what they do, they do for us! None of this would be possible without the oversight of our Executive Director Heather Kibel. I don't know how she keeps so many balls in the air at once, but she does AND she does it so well! Her attention to each detail that makes Anshe Emeth move and shake is a tribute to her patience and her skilled expertise. We are very grateful that she loves Anshe Emeth as her own.

So, what are the things you love most about Anshe Emeth? Is it the opportunity to study and learn from sacred texts...or is it Cabaret Night? Is it the myriad of arts and cultural events we host throughout the year...or is it the Women's Retreat? I LOVE that our lay leaders and volunteers show their love for Anshe Emeth by choosing to spend countless hours here each week. I LOVE the relationships our members, clergy and staff share with one another. I LOVE the stories that are born here every day, every week, every month, and from year to year. I LOVE that Anshe Emeth inspires each of us to live a fuller, Jewish life. And I LOVE the way the balcony stained glass windows change

from blue to purple as the sun goes down on another Shabbat  
eve. Shabbat Shalom!