Installation Shabbat Sermon, May 13, 2022 – Ina Horn

A year ago, I stood on this bima and was installed as the 61st President of Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple. With the exception of my husband Gerry, my daughter Merin and my 3-year-old grandson Benjamin to bear witness to this honor, the pews in the sanctuary were empty. So, it is with great delight and appreciation to see so many friends and congregants here in the sanctuary this evening. Last year, the pandemic kept us apart, this year, we are finally together again.

I find myself reflecting on what an extraordinary year it has been. This was the first year of my administration and I knew to expect many challenges, and though the challenges did exist, the rewards far outweighed them. For many months, we could not gather inside the synagogue, our beautiful sanctuary, yet through the leadership of Rabbi Bazeley, we stayed open…open to Zoom, open to phone calls, open to emails, notes, Facebook, and the most important kind of open – open hearts. In partnership with the clergy, staff, and lay leaders, I am proud of all the things that we were able to accomplish over the past year.

I am proud of the technology updates that we made in the Temple that allow us to continue to maintain and forge new connections.

I am proud that we were able to officially install and celebrate our Cantor, Mark Stanton. Besides lifting us each week at Shabbat service with his beautiful voice, Cantor Stanton has worked to bring back our Adult Choir, Junior Choir and Jew Directions to ensure that beautiful sounds and music continue to fill our souls.

Speaking of music, we are proud to have hosted several concerts this year including Micelle Citrin, Noam Katz and just this past week Nava Tehila.

I am proud that we welcomed two new rabbinic interns, Sienna Lotenberg and Ezra Leventhal to our Anshe Emeth family. They offer unique talents and fresh perspectives as they continue to hone their skills and learn from our clergy team.

In March, we were thrilled to be able to reinstate Shabbat dinners expertly prepared by our own Team B'teavon and once again enjoy the Purim carnival that was so beautifully run by our teens, both of these events are part of the fabric of Anshe Emeth.

I am proud that a dedicated team of congregants led by Board member, Jay Goldberg, continued to make thousands of sandwiches to help Elijah's promise provide lunches to those experiencing food insecurity.

I am proud that we have kept connected with our congregants by updating you on the happenings in the Temple through our bulletins, weekly emails and at our town halls.

In addition, through our taste of Anshe Emeth series, I am proud that we were able to socialize and interact with each other via zoom, and in-person tomorrow night, while learning about and exploring various culinary delights like cheese and chocolate.

I am proud that we did not allow ourselves to slow down but rather, found ways to work around the obstacles presented to us. And as I begin my second year as president, I am proud that our community was able to weather the challenges brought by the pandemic. The efforts of our dedicated clergy, professional and administrative staff, lay leaders, and volunteers to achieve this result, deserve recognition and our deep appreciation.

One of the greatest benefits of being Temple president is that each week, I have the privilege to meet one-on-one with Rabbi Philip Bazeley. We discuss Temple matters, community issues, and current plans, along with our dreams about the future. While our weekly meetings are part of the job of being president, I have come to treasure these special times that I get to spend with my Rabbi.

I have learned so much from Rabbi Bazeley and I feel blessed to be able to be partners with him in sacred work. I appreciate his warmth, compassion, sense of humor and most specially his friendship. I have no doubt that with Rabbi Bazeley, our congregation could not be in better hands, and I look forward to his vision and guidance leading us for many more years to come.

It is difficult to find the words to describe on how much we rely on the skills of our Executive Director, Heather Kibel. Heather plays a critical role in supporting the Board and clergy to achieve both the spiritual and financial health of Anshe Emeth and its congregants. Until I became an Officer on the Board, I did not truly realize the all-encompassing role that she has. What I do know is that I can always count of her to have everything I need to do my job right and that my first year as president could not have run as smoothly without her help.

I am especially grateful for the friendship, support and guidance of David Levine, our immediate past president. In the midst of his presidency, during March of 2020, Anshe Emeth's on-site activities effectively ceased, but thanks to David, the planning for our future did not miss a beat. His inspiration and encouragement guaranteed a smooth transition for me, and I feel so fortunate to have him as a loyal friend and advisor.

I want to wish mazel tov to all those who have accepted the important role of becoming leaders at Anshe Emeth.

To you, our new Trustees, you have been elected because you are capable, passionate and committed to Anshe Emeth. You have been entrusted with the sacred task of leading this amazing congregation and I look forward to collaborating with you as together we strive to build a bridge to the future.

Tonight, we say goodbye to Joshua Furr and Leah Kravitz as they conclude their terms on the Board. I thank each of you for your contributions throughout your tenure and I look forward to your continued participation on one or more of our committees. Though your voices will no longer be heard at our Board meetings, hopefully, they will continue to be heard through your musical talents that you share with us here at Anshe Emeth.

To our new Youth Group Board, you serve as mentors and role models for all the youth in our congregation. You have been tasked with the responsibility to ensure that the youth of our Temple continue to flourish. You are future leaders of the Jewish people and there could be no better place for you to learn leadership skills than at Anshe Emeth. Thank you and mazel tov as you begin your leadership careers.

Thank you to our outgoing AETY Board, you have grown as leaders and true Jewish role models. You are leaving AETY stronger and more accomplished than ever. We know that the skills you have sharpened in your roles here will carry you successfully through your future endeavors.

As I begin my second year as president of Anshe Emeth, looking back, I have come to realize that as much as I have devoted my time to being president, I have gotten so much more than I have given. It is hard to believe that my term will be over in just a year. This means that I must work even harder over the coming 12 months to get as much done as possible, to leave things in the best possible place for my successor, and current 1st Vice President, Allison Warzala. However, this will not be a difficult task as one of the things that makes Anshe Emeth strong is that we invest in our leaders.

Someone who clearly understands the value of investing in our future leaders is Rabbi Miller. He has passed on a legacy of leadership through programs like the Joshua Project where participants learn what it is like to be a leader of a religious organization while gaining a deeper understanding of our vision and mission. All of the Officers installed tonight are graduates of the Joshua Project as are most, if not all, of the members of the Board. Thank you, Rabbi Miller, for fostering this leadership pipeline as a way of identifying, developing, and recruiting leaders in our Temple all of which result in a highly qualified Board of Trustees.

I work with a team of Officers and Trustees that are vibrant and highly engaged. Everyone on the Board has a voice. Together, they devote their time, treasure, and talent to Anshe Emeth. They are not paid, rather, they are volunteers. Their compensation comes from the gift of service. It also comes in the form of professional and leadership development that they gain in running a committee, doing fundraising work, and in developing relationships with kindred spirits who share a passion for our Temple's work. They are the Temple's most visible and credible ambassadors who invite others to know more, do more, and give more, to the Temple they all care so much about.

As a Board, we never stop trying new ways to be effective. This past year, we re-envisioned the format of our monthly meetings by adopting the use of a consent agenda. By utilizing this new format, we are now able to streamline the approval of routine agenda items and increase the amount of time we spend on issues of a strategic nature and on issues that could benefit from Board discussion. With this one small but important change the Board has been able to identify and focus on substantive issues that we are facing as a congregation while allowing us to delve into these matters each month and generate action items.

Our Trustees have been working harder and accomplishing more, and with this new meeting design I expect to do even more with our energized Board over this coming year. So, let us show our appreciation for them. Will all of the Officers and members of the Anshe Emeth's Board of Trustees please rise so that we may acknowledge you and thank you for all that you do.

As president of our congregation, I have the privilege to walk on a road paved by my predecessors. They remain devoted to Anshe Emeth. In fact, many of our past presidents are here tonight. I extend a big thank you to all of our past presidents, as I have learned from them and will continue to seek their guidance and support.

As Jews, we serve as a prime example of what Jews have always done; sustain, care for each other, and continue to move forward in the most difficult of times. Anshe Emeth is a true living example. Our ancestors survived hard times and we too will continue to succeed over the new challenges of today. Our temple community is strong and has wonderfully taken care of each other.

After withstanding enforced isolation for many months, we have all come to realize how much we value physical, human connection. As we now reconnect with one another, I am hopeful that we all will find a sense of joy in interactions that we preciously took for granted. I honestly believe that the upcoming year will be a rewarding one for Anshe Emeth, and I look forward to spending it with you.

Shabbat Shalom!

Ina Horn