



July 2023

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter, memories of last month's spectacular Beth David Diamond Jubilee Weekend continue to put a smile on my face. On Friday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, our community delighted in honoring our cherished members of 50-plus years at a spirited Shabbat service and experienced a curated archival display (currently on view in the Social Hall). Then, on Saturday evening, we continued to celebrate our congregation's first 75 years with a beautiful night of outdoor cocktails, dinner, and entertainment. Highlights included a fascinating documentary video recounting Beth David's history, and a musical revue of 75 years of Broadway featuring our incredibly talented clergy, congregants, and High Holiday vocalists. This warm, connected, and joyful weekend embodied so much of what makes Beth David the exceptional community it is. Kudos to everyone involved in making the Diamond Jubilee celebration a huge success. If you were unable to join us, please check out the video, musical performances, and photos on our website (<https://bdavid.org/75-diamond-jubilee/>).

The Diamond Jubilee weekend taught me so much about all our community has accomplished in its first 75 years, such as the "can-do" culture that established the small shul in Wynnefield, the transformational move to Gladwyne, and Beth David's continuing commitment to inclusiveness, active participation in Jewish life, engaging our children, and making the world a better place. These qualities continued this past year in a myriad of ways - ranging from Beth David Boogie preschool gatherings; fun holiday celebrations for our students and community; spiritual and creative High Holy Day services; thought-provoking adult education programs; community Shalom Shabbat (at Beth David) and Shabbat Shared (congregant-hosted) dinners; the return of Family Promise hosting of unhoused families; leadership by our clergy and congregants in social action initiatives such as the Martin Luther King Day Interfaith Shabbat, fighting the local rise of antisemitism, and meeting with legislators on public education, climate justice, and other important public policy issues; and so many more.

We all want to help ensure Beth David continues to build on this legacy for the next 75 years and beyond. As presented at the recent Annual Meeting, through our *Three Paths to a Thriving Future* strategic planning process, your professionals and lay leaders have been working hard over the past few years to address key challenges facing Beth David's financial sustainability. These primarily include a decline in membership base and a lack of revenue sources beyond membership commitments, school tuition and charitable gifts. Through this work we've made progress on several fronts, such as stabilizing membership, eliminating our mortgage through the generosity of a small group of congregants, hiring a full-time educational director as an investment in growing our religious school, approving establishment of Beth David's first true endowment, exploring creation of a preschool, and launching an outdoor space planning process to maximize the spiritual, educational, play, social, and ecological potential of our campus. More information on these efforts can be found in the Annual Meeting presentation (<https://bdavid.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Beth-David-2023-Annual-Meeting-Slide-Deck.pdf>).

As also reported at the Annual Meeting, for the new fiscal year the Board of Trustees approved a budget of approximately \$1.3 million, with a projected deficit of approximately \$120,000. This projection assumes no net change in membership count, although we are working hard to increase this number through continued emphasis on member recruitment and retention. In light of continuing inflation pressures on our expenses, the Board also approved a small average increase of 2.5% for the Basic membership commitment levels and religious school tuition fee.

Accompanying your invoice is a link to an online form for you to select this year's Annual Commitment level of giving. If your circumstances allow, please consider choosing one of the voluntary commitment levels above Basic listed on the form: Supporting (\$5,000), Partners (\$7,500), and Builders (\$10,000), or somewhere in between. **The Supporting level represents the approximate per-household break-even cost to fund our operating budget.** As always, **your annual commitment provides the most important source of support for Beth David's daily operations.**

Beth David does not deny membership to current or prospective congregants for financial reasons. If you or a prospective member of whom you're aware needs financial assistance, please contact our Executive Director, Jill Cooper. All requests are strictly confidential.

Payments may be made by **credit or debit card** (subject to a three percent processing fee) or by **electronic funds transfer** (with no fee) through our ShulCloud membership portal. If you prefer to pay by check, please mail to our accounting firm at:

**Beth David Reform Congregation  
P.O. Box 418  
Montvale, NJ 07645**

Checks may also be sent to the Beth David office.

The High Holy Days will be here before we know it, and planning is already underway. **To receive your High Holy Day tickets, we ask that you remit at least 25% of your commitment level by August 31, 2023**, with the balance due by December 31, 2023. All school fees must be received by the first day of school.

Thank you for your support and for being an essential part of our Beth David community. It has been an honor to serve as your temple president for the past year, and I look forward to working with our Board, professionals, and staff again in the coming year to continue making Beth David relevant and meaningful for you. Please keep an eye out for the emails from our office highlighting upcoming events, and try to attend services, programs, or other opportunities that speak to you. I know you'll be glad you did.

I hope to connect with many of you at Beth David over the summer and during the rest of the year. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out with any questions, suggestions or concerns at [rbender@bdavid.org](mailto:rbender@bdavid.org) or (610) 416-5654. In the meantime, best wishes for a great summer.

L'Shalom,



Rodd Bender

P.S. If you have any friends or family looking for a spiritual home, please put them in touch with our office or me. We would be delighted to show them what makes Beth David so special.