



TEMPLE BETH-EL OF GREAT NECK

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For Immediate Release

Contact:

Stuart Botwinick, Executive Director

516-487-0900 ▪ sbotwinick@tbigreatneck.org

TEMPLE BETH-EL MOVES FORWARD WITH BOLD, NEW “VIVID VISION”

Leading Congregation to Expand Programming, “Rightsize” Location, Explore New Partnerships

GREAT NECK, NY, September 24, 2024—Announcing that “in this time of change, we cannot just continue to do what we have always done,” and that “we remain committed to Great Neck while rightsizing our footprint to better serve the congregation,” the leadership of Temple Beth-El of Great Neck (TBE) today shared some of the details of the “Vivid Vision” that will guide the storied congregation as it moves into a new chapter.

These moves are part of a multiyear “Visioning Process” at TBE that has included defining a clear vision for the congregation at this pivotal moment in its remarkable history. That vision has at its heart, “serving those who desire an authentic 21st-century Jewish experience and who share our commitments to inclusion, gender egalitarianism, full and equal participation of all, civic involvement, modern spirituality, social action, and support of the State of Israel.” It notes that “People join our congregation because they are seeking meaningful personal connections with clergy, a close-knit family-like community, and a strong culture of sacred partnership and learning, in which members are deeply involved in creating the life of the synagogue.”

Senior Rabbi A. Brian Stoller set the stage for TBE’s Visioning Process in his Yom Kippur sermon last year. He taught that “Everyone here knows that the world around us has changed dramatically,

and it's impacting our congregation in significant ways. This is an historic congregation with a proud legacy," he continued, saying "today, we are the trustees of that legacy. As the newest links in the chain, it is our duty to carry that legacy forward. And the only way to do that is by taking up the responsibility of writing a new chapter for our congregation: one that is coherent with—and faithful to—the past, while also putting us on the right trajectory for the future."

To implement that vision, TBE is moving forward on three distinct but overlapping paths.

Expanded Programming, Increased Accessibility to the Entire Community

A brand-new, generous gift is allowing TBE to establish The Miriam & Moses Center for Pluralistic Adult Jewish Learning. **TBE President Jordana Levine** said that "This fund will seed the creation of a robust and intellectually challenging adult learning program, which will help reinforce TBE's role as a leader in shaping the future of pluralistic Judaism on the western North Shore."

Additionally, the new Susan Stumer Cultural Arts Fund is enabling TBE to plan a variety of musical and cultural arts experiences for the coming year, including musician-in-residence weekends, guest cantors to join its clergy on the bimah, Shabbat services with The Shabbatones band, and the hiring of Dr. Pam Levy to direct and grow a congregational choir. TBE is also partnering with the [Gold Coast Arts Center](#) to create a robust schedule of music, film, and other cultural arts programs at TBE for the enjoyment of its members and the broader Great Neck community.

TBE is reinventing its approach to religious school, launching The Kehillah Project at the Gershwind Family Religious School, and opening the program to the entire community (including those who are not yet members of TBE) at an affordable rate. The program features family-friendly schedules, personalized participation in Jewish traditions, quarterly field trips, hands-on learning, and intergenerational experiences. **The Kehillah Project Director Rabbi Megan Brumer** calls it "a joyous, forward-thinking Jewish education program designed to enhance our children's lives through fun, innovative, and active experiences," adding that "We believe that Jewish community is at its most vibrant when our children are rooted in and inspired by core values like inclusivity, character building, and *tikkun olam*."

TBE has just published its 2024–25 program catalog, *Horizons*, a 40-page guide to the full array of activities it will offer in the next year. Many of those activities are open to the entire community. The program catalog is available on TBE's website at www.tbegreatneck.org.

TBE's Physical Home

Observing that "TBE's needs are not the same as they were a generation ago," **TBE Past President and Visioning Team Chair Gary Slobin** shared that the congregation is undertaking "a thorough, thoughtful process to identify the most appropriate physical space for our needs today—and into the future."

Noting that “there is no way to truly understand our options without testing outside interest in our building,” Slobin reported that TBE is working with the real estate firm [Marcus & Millichap](#), which “has begun seeking as wide an array of opportunities for TBE as possible.” He added that the TBE leadership is “confident that this process will surface the best options to rightsize TBE’s footprint, maximize its asset, and reduce its overhead.” Slobin concluded by explaining that the TBE Visioning Team “will carefully evaluate all possibilities that come our way and will bring any opportunity we believe is worth considering to the full congregation.”

Relationships with Other Congregations

TBE President Jordana Levine is leading conversations with other area congregations about the possibility of working more closely together. Levine recently told the TBE membership that “Although it is too soon to say for certain, the Visioning Team believes that TBE may benefit from some type of formal relationship with one or more congregations.” She continued, “We are actively exploring what arrangement with other congregations—including some type of unification or consolidation—would be best for Temple Beth-El and our membership. That may include sharing space, sharing staff, sharing programming, combining finances, or some other type of association.”

Levine also reported that “While it is important to emphasize that TBE is remaining open-minded and is considering a wide array of possibilities, not everything is on the table.” She noted that TBE is “fully committed to its modern and pluralistic values, and to maintaining the connection with the Union for Reform Judaism,” noting “that would not necessarily preclude working with a non-Reform congregation which shares TBE’s values.”

Levine explained that “The history of Judaism teaches us how to protect our core values and traditions while adapting to the changing world around us,” adding that “TBE is well prepared to take on this challenge.” She emphasized that the work of the Visioning Team will lead to a series of recommendations that will be put before the entire congregation, saying “decisions about the future of Temple Beth-El belong to its membership.”

About Temple Beth-El of Great Neck

Temple Beth-El of Great Neck (TBE) is a dynamic, inclusive, and engaged Reform synagogue. Founded in 1928, it is the oldest temple in Great Neck. It has long been nationally recognized as one of the most innovative and dynamic Reform congregations in America, a reputation which has continued under the spiritual leadership of Senior Rabbi A. Brian Stoller, who joined TBE in 2022, becoming the sixth senior rabbi since its founding.

TBE is located at 5 Old Mill Road in Great Neck and online at www.tbegreatneck.org.

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