

Good Morning, and Shanah Tova,
One year ago I stood in this same spot, delivering my first Rosh Hashanah message as President of CBE. If you recall, the overall sentiment of my remarks last year was that it FELT GOOD to be President of Beth Emeth.

It's one year later. NOW how does it feel?

Well, it feels DIFFERENT. The second time you do ANYTHING, naturally feels different from the first time. But it's more than that.

Physically I may be standing in the same spot, but I'm actually in a very different place.

Last year, with one child in middle school and one in high school, somehow my kids still seemed within my reach. Now, with both children in high school, I'm acutely aware of their impending departure from the nest. Many of you will relate when I say it feels to me like Rebecca, my high school senior, has one foot firmly planted in her baby shoes while the other foot is standing on a yet-to-be determined college campus. My youngest child, Jason, is a freshman in high school. At almost 6 feet tall, he suddenly fancies himself too big to hug his mommy. Of course I disagree, but I digress.

The biggest change in my own life is that after almost 18 years as a stay-at-home mom, last April I chose to go back to work. Now I am with the other working parents at the grocery store at 6 o'clock in the evening, and doing laundry all day Sunday while my family is saying "Mom, do I have any clean socks?" Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining. I am blessed to have the opportunity to try to "do it all".

So, you see, being President now, for me personally, feels.... DIFFERENT.

DIFFERENT, maybe. But still GOOD? Definitely. Let me explain.

Last year, we had just ended the prior year with a \$30,000 budget deficit and had made some tough decisions in order to present a balanced budget for the year ahead.

It FEELS GOOD to report that, as a result of the board's fiscal responsibility, our staff's vigilance in watching expenses, and our members' continued generosity in support of the Annual Appeal campaign, we were able to not only meet the balanced budget but, in fact, recoup the deficit from the year before. We have again presented a balanced budget for the current fiscal year 2011-12.

Last year, like many other conservative synagogues in the area, we had been seeing a decline in membership numbers and I pledged an increased commitment to recruit and retain members.

It FEELS GOOD to report that we enter this new year with 10 more member families than we had one year ago. This may not sound significant, but considering that congregations always lose members to attrition every year, an overall net gain is something to feel good about. Our focus on membership will stay strong this year.

Last year, I asked our volunteers and staff to commit to reducing the amount of paper generated by CBE.

IT FEELS GOOD to report that we recognized a savings of several thousand dollars and countless pieces of paper. And yet, we still were successful in delivering the services needed to keep things running. We will stay the course on generating less paper.

Last year, I pledged an emphasis on improving Communications here at CBE.

IT FEELS GOOD to know that our new Facebook page has over 150 "likes", including our very own Rabbi Steve. It FEELS GOOD to hear positive feedback on my monthly Shofar articles. And it FEELS GOOD to announce that plans are underway for the launch of a brand new CBE website which will go a long way toward facilitating continued improvements in our communications.

Last year, there was a lot of discussion around enhancing our members' enjoyment of worship services.

IT FEELS GOOD to look out and see all of you using our brand new Machzor Lev Shalom for these High Holiday services. And it FEELS GOOD to tell you that the Ritual Committee has made strides in training new service leaders, our newly

formed Chorale has brought live music to some of our services, and our Religious School Director, has begun revamping our children's services.

Last year, the need was identified to reward our dedicated staff and Board volunteers with opportunities for personal growth.

IT FEELS GOOD to know that last year's staff, board and other volunteers benefitted from attending sessions which provided new insights into various aspects of Jewish leadership. We will continue this year to nurture and grow our talented pool of staff and volunteers.

So, these are just a few reasons why, like last year, it still FEELS GOOD to be President.

GOOD, but DIFFERENT. And that's ok. In fact, that is the true beauty of my relationship with CBE, and I would argue of most everyone here's relationship with CBE.

Our lives are dynamic, always changing. Beth Emeth, although changing and evolving too, is, for me, a constant. Really an anchor. It is a consistent presence in my life – and the life of my family and community – and it gives me firm footing from which I can face change.

It FEELS GOOD to be here, speaking to people with whom I've shared my life, watching their families grow and change as my family grows and changes. Being together through various stages – life cycle events and life changing events. CBE is our constant, our connection to one another.

Constant but not stagnant. In order to be that anchor, CBE must consistently change and evolve too. And, that's where the job of being President really gets interesting. I am proud of Beth Emeth's ability to adapt and change as the needs of our community and the world around us change.

Ahead of us lies a very big change. We all know that Rabbi Steve has announced his intention to retire in June of 2013. In fact, we've known now for over a year.

Some may say the task ahead to search for a new rabbi is a daunting one. But, I'd like to think of it as an opportunity for the congregation to reflect on who we are and what we want in our next spiritual leader. An opportunity to be involved in making sure that our congregation – our anchor of Jewish life – can remain our constant, continuing to provide us with a foundation and a “home base” to keep us grounded.

With Rabbi Steve's actual retirement date still almost two years away, it is a bit too early to begin in earnest the journey towards hiring a new rabbi. But, please rest assured, the journey will be made with opportunities for involvement from all congregants. Please stay tuned throughout 2011 and 2012. Continue to read your Shofar, weekly announcements and the CBE website to stay informed.

Reflecting back AND looking ahead, from this vantage point, standing in this very spot, I can honestly say it not only FEELS GOOD to be President of Congregation Beth Emeth, IT FEELS GREAT.

L'Shanah Tova. A sweet and GOOD new year.