TEMPLE SHALOM: THE FIRST THIRTY YEARS

by

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Temple Shalom
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1

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, more than one million individuals are affiliated with congregations of the Reform Jewish movement. Our temple – Temple Shalom of Chevy Chase, Maryland – is only a microcosm of this large totality, yet an examination of its short 30-year history shows it to be unique in many respects, unique in the quality of its leaders and in the substance of its many programs.

From our very beginning in 1959, we have adhered to the fundamental principles of Reform tradition, primarily responsible free choice regarding beliefs, rituals, and ethics. We have changed as the movement has changed. In the area of ritual, for example, where in the early years we frowned on the use of kipot and tallitot, these are now worn freely at the user's discretion. Where once the service was conducted almost entirely in English, now a substantial portion is read in Hebrew. This flexibility has molded the character of our congregation, bringing about a true "temple family."

There are differences of opinion within families, and we have had our share of differences of opinion; there are traumas in family life, and we have had traumatic situations that truly threatened our very existence. Yet, in evidence of our remarkable inner strengths, we have come through our years of trial with familial bonds stronger than ever. Our synagogue now serves to the full extent of our tradition as a Bet Hatfillah (House of Prayer), Bet Hamidrash (House of Study), and Bet Haknesset (House of Gathering). The Hebrew inscription over the ark in our sanctuary reads "Know Before Whom You Stand." We have stood before God for thirty years, and this is the chronicle of the temple's passage from infant to mature adult.

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OUR ORIGINS

In the 1950's, only one Reform temple existed in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C.: Temple Emanuel, in Kensington. During the late spring of 1959, a substantial exodus of member families from Temple Emanuel took place as a result of the clouded atmosphere that existed at the time within the congregation. Of those leaving, a group of some 39 families banded together to seek a congregation that would meet their Judaic ideals. They held a series of meetings at which it was decided almost at once that the best course of action would be to organize a new temple. This decision was spurred not only by their desire to remain together as a cohesive group, but also by the evident need to expand the Reform base in Maryland because of the northward migration of the Jewish population in the Washington area.

The first of the organizational meetings was held in late May at the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission building in Silver Spring. The primary decision to form a new temple was made at that time, with little or no opposition. As soon as this was agreed upon, ad hoc committees were set up to organize the various facets that make up the modern Reform temple. Additional organizational meetings were held within a short time, one at the Perpetual Building Association building in Silver Spring, others at the homes of John and Adele Lewis and Oscar and Dolly Felker. Attendance at the Perpetual meeting was stimulated by newspaper advertisements and word-of-mouth prompting, so that it was much greater than the size of the original group.

A principal focus at these later meetings was the naming of the temple. Some people strongly favored a traditional Hebrew name, others just as vehemently advocated an English one. Many names were put forth, such as "Temple Beth Ami," "Temple Beth

Shalom," "Suburban Reform Congregation," "Suburban Hebrew Congregation," and others. Joseph Caro and Eugene Love independently suggested "Temple Shalom" (Temple of Peace), a name that seemed particularly appropriate in light of the fact that the departure from Temple Emanuel had been anything but peaceful. In the end, as a compromise, Stanley Nehmer suggested a double name, "Temple Shalom, The Suburban Hebrew Congregation," and this was officially adopted. Because it was cumbersome, the subsidiary name was dropped from common use after a year or two.

Getting Started

The few weeks after the organizational meetings saw a truly extraordinary burst of activity. The leaders of the founding group – the members of the first Board of Trustees (Table 1 and Page 10), headed by our first president, Oscar Felker – were people of substance, people with responsible positions in such fields as government, law, finance, and economics, people who were not awed by the challenge of building a temple from empty air. Under their leadership, almost the entire founding group worked diligently in one capacity or another to produce the temple that emerged full-blown at the end of the summer. It was a thrilling time, with a sense of togetherness and a sense of accomplishment that spurred us all to even greater effort.

The tasks were many. The most important ones included arranging for facilities for religious services, organizing the religious school and appointing its principal, electing the first officers of the congregation, adopting a constitution and bylaws, appointing a rabbi, organizing an administrative office, and finding suitable facilities for general use of the temple. All these were accomplished in just a few weeks!

Hunting Space

The search for buildings in which to conduct our operations, placed in the hands of hard-working committees, proved triply

fruitful. First, inquiries were made, and the principal of Rock Creek Forest Elementary School, located on Grubb Road at the Silver Spring - Chevy Chase border, graciously granted the temple permission to conduct Friday evening Sabbath services in the school's all-purpose room and to hold Sunday religious school in the classrooms. Our first service was conducted in the school in July.

We now had a location for our Sabbath services and for education of our children, but we desperately needed space that would be available to us full-time for administrative offices and meeting rooms. Soon, our efforts were rewarded a second time. Jean Beeman, a member of the search committee, noticed a "For Rent" sign on a property on Wisconsin Avenue at Bradley Boulevard in Bethesda. The land, now occupied by the Bethesda firehouse, at that time contained a lovely, large, stone and white-clapboard Colonial house and other smaller structures on spacious grounds, but the building appeared to be in a state of disrepair and the grounds were overgrown with weeds and underbrush. Undaunted, Mrs. Beeman contacted the realtor, a Mr. Fry, and learned that he was attempting to rezone the property, known as the Brewer estate, for construction of an apartment house. While the rezoning effort was in progress, Mr. Fry was willing to lease the property to the temple, magnanimously for payment of the taxes on the property as the sole rental fee, provided that the temple was willing to assume responsibility for maintenance and improvements in the building. The offer was quickly accepted.

Once the property was obtained, the magnificent spirit of our temple members came to the fore. Crews were quickly assembled and a massive cleanup was begun. Willing hands came from every direction to reclaim the uninhabitable building and grounds. Many families, including children, pitched in to do unaccustomed physical labor. Even our president, Oscar Felker, who was completely out of his element, stood outside in his silk suit and burned trash that the children carted from the building. Howard Reizenstein took on the unenviable task of rodent removal. Others removed underbrush, painted the exterior, swept, and did the many other menial tasks that were needed. Irving Feinberg

found a professional painter who painted part of the interior of the building for a very nominal sum. Finally, the Temple Center, as it came to be known, was ready for occupancy.

And occupy it we did. The building housed our temple offices, committee meetings were held there, midweek Hebrew classes were conducted there, and our lay summer services took place there. The grape arbor on the grounds was decorated and used as our sukkah, and a successful Sisterhood bazaar was held on the grounds. We continued to make heavy use of the Temple Center until we moved to our new, permanent building in 1965.

The employment in 1959 of the elementary school's all-purpose room for Sabbath services was a strictly temporary arrangement until more suitable facilities could be obtained. Again our search was successful. St. Paul's United Methodist Church, located at the corner of Grubb Road and East-West Highway, and its minister, the Reverend William Baker, granted us use of their sanctuary for our weekly services until such time as our own building was completed. This generous gesture was characteristic of the friendly and mutually useful relationship that has existed between St. Paul's and Temple Shalom since that time. Our Sabbath services were held in the church, except for the summer season, from late 1959 to 1965. In the 1970's and 1980's, our Sisterhood women and the women of St. Paul's maintained a relationship that was helpful for both groups by exchanging babysitting services at holidays, St. Paul's supplying babysitters during our High Holy Day services and the temple reciprocating for the church on Christmas Day and Easter Sunday. In 1960, in appreciation for their help and as a symbol of friendship, the temple donated a new 50-star American flag to St. Paul's Church.

Filling a Need

Actual operations of the temple began in July, 1959, although the Board later designated June as the official anniversary month. By the end of that summer, Sabbath services were in full swing, the Sisterhood and Brotherhood had been organized, both the Senior and Junior Youth Groups had been put into operation, applica-

tion to join the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) had been made, a cantor had been hired, a choir made up of temple members had begun readying itself to sing at High Holy Day services in the fall, and the temple office was functioning smoothly in the hands of the indefatigable Rhoda Kreiel. Because our concerted efforts had produced such a vital organization so rapidly, we not only survived infancy, we prospered. Of those who had left Temple Emanuel in the spring, 35 families opted to become dues-paying members of Temple Shalom at its organization. Others in the community quickly joined. The figures were impressive: by October, there were 90 member families and 150 children in the religious school. By December, 20 more families had become members, and by the end of our first year in the spring of 1960, we had 139 member families! Officially, these 139 families are considered founders of the temple.

The events of the start-up year of 1959 culminated with the High Holy Day services in September. These were held in the Chevy Chase Baptist Church near Chevy Chase Circle. The officiants were our first rabbi, Edwin Friedman, and our first cantor, Benjamin Gruber. Most astonishingly, the church was completely filled on Rosh Hashanah evening, a dramatic result of the intense effort of the founders. Only three or four months after the founding of the temple, it was clear that we had filled a pressing need in the Jewish community of metropolitan Washington.

The UAHC eventually supported the view that our presence in the community was both desirable and necessary, but the road to obtaining a Union charter was a rocky one. Theodore Geiger, Stanley Nehmer, and Oscar Felker presented our case to the other Reform congregations in the Washington area. They used demographic figures compiled by Nehmer to justify our position, but every congregation save one, Temple Beth El of Alexandria, Virginia, opposed our acceptance into the Union. However, Rabbi Eugene Lipman, then in the UAHC administrative office, and Rabbi Emmet Frank of Temple Beth El, who was the regional UAHC representative, both supported our application and, despite the opposition, the charter was granted on June 12, 1960.

It was presented to the temple at the Sabbath service of September 16, 1960, by the UAHC Director of Education.

Looking Ahead

One important undertaking of the first year that illustrated the foresightedness of the temple's leaders is worthy of mention. This was the appointment, soon after the temple's founding, of a long-range planning committee, chaired by John Lewis. This committee was charged with developing policy regarding the eventual character and size of the congregation, which would impact on the eventual size of the temple building. The committee, using statistics obtained from the UAHC, recommended that we should be a relatively small congregation, large enough to be viable but small enough to be friendly and intimate. The recommended target size was 400 families, for that would require only one rabbi and no executive director, and would allow most members to know each other. A special congregational meeting was called in March, 1960, to consider the report of the committee, which was approved. The building that we eventually occupied was designed with this target size in mind. The committee was reactivated in November, 1960, to continue work on long-term policy, and the question of optimum size and quality of the temple has been reexamined from time to time throughout its history, most notably in 1975 and 1976. In general, a policy of limited growth was the consensus choice of the committees and the temple Boards. Because the temple reached its maximum size under the old policy in 1987, this very important matter once again came to the forefront, leading to intense debate. In 1988, commitment to slow, continual growth was once again reaffirmed at a meeting of the congregation.

3

OUR CONSTITUTION

One of the first of the steering committees to be set up during the organization of the temple in 1959 was the constitution committee, chaired by John Lewis. It was necessary that a constitution be drawn up and adopted rapidly so that a charter could be obtained from the UAHC. The charter would bring official recognition to Temple Shalom as an accepted Reform congregation, thus granting it needed status in the community. The constitution was quickly drafted, principally by John Lewis and Jacob Goldberg, and adopted by the congregation on July 23, 1959.

As might be expected in an evolving organization, the constitution has been amended four times since its inception. The most important changes have involved such matters as the selection, contract renewal, and termination of the contract of the rabbi (1963); the transfer of authority in several areas from the Board to the congregation (1964); creation of the position of financial secretary (1971); enfranchisement of children of congregants aged 16 and up (1971); and clarification of the rights and privileges of non-Jews in the congregation (1989). All amendments have resulted from the efforts of ad hoc constitutional review committees appointed by the president of the congregation, with Board approval, from time to time throughout our history. The general effect of the amendments has been to make the congregation more democratic than it originally was, and to provide improved controls in temple administration.

The constitution and bylaws in effect at the conclusion of our 30-year history in 1989 are shown in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively. Noteworthy features in the constitution include the following:

- Non-Jewish spouses and children of members are considered members of the congregation themselves, with clearly defined rights (Section III-2).

- No rights may be denied to any members by reason of financial inability; dues and fees may be forgiven (Sections III-5 and V-4c).

- The president of the Senior Youth Group is a member of the Board, ex-officio (Section V-1).

- The congregation may reject the budget submitted by the Board, in whole or in part, by two-thirds vote (Section V-4f).

- The congregation must approve the rabbi's contract when it is long-term or when the rabbi has served five years or more in office (Section VI-3).

- Special meetings for any given purpose may be called by 10% of the members of the congregation (Section VIII-2).

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OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

An extremely important factor in the success of a volunteer organization is the quality of the individuals who are willing to assume the responsibilities of membership in the governing body of the organization. Through the years, Temple Shalom has been highly fortunate in this respect, as witnessed by its healthy status at the conclusion of 30 years' travel on a sometimes difficult path. Most past and present members of our governing body, the Board of Trustees, would agree that Board membership is an often painful, sometimes infuriating, but ultimately highly satisfying experience. Because the root mission of the temple is at the heart of our Judaic and communal lives, many outstanding individuals who would otherwise not be so disposed have agreed to take on the mantle of lay leadership. The temple owes its existence to their efforts.

The Beginnings

Immediately upon adoption of the constitution in July, 1959, the first Board of Trustees, consisting of six officers and 12 trustees, was elected. The officers are named, as are the officers of the succeeding 29 Boards, in Table 1. The trustees of the pioneering first Board were Dr. Edward Beeman, Eva Benesch, Bernard Blankenheimer, Joseph Caro, Anne Goldberg, Barnet Greene, John Lewis, Melvin Love, Morton Malin, Stanley Nehmer, Joseph Sirkis, and Jesse Weinstein.

One month after the seating of this Board, it responded to an obvious need by approving the establishment of an Executive Committee to advise and assist the president in administering the affairs of the temple. This committee, still in existence 30 years later, consisted originally of the five officers plus four trustees appointed by the president. Another feature of the original Board, mandated by the first constitution, was the short-lived position of the Chair-

Table 1. Officers of Temple Shalom, 1959-89

1959-1960: *President:* Oscar Felker; *Chairman of the Board:* Theodore Geiger; *Vice-Presidents:* Jerome Reiter, Frances Seidenman; *Treasurer:* Ernest Weiss; *Secretary:* Rhoda Kreiel.

1960-1961: *President:* Oscar Felker; *Chairman of the Board:* Theodore Geiger; *Vice-Presidents:* Joseph Caro, Herbert Seidenman; *Treasurer:* Leonard Abel; *Secretary:* Rhoda Kreiel.

1961-1962: *President:* John Lewis; *Chairman of the Board:* Oscar Felker; *Vice-Presidents:* Bernard Blankenheimer, Stanley Nehmer; *Treasurer:* Melvin Shanker; *Secretary:* Rhoda Kreiel.

1962-1963: *President:* Paul Nussbaum; *Vice-Presidents:* Leonard Abel, Stanley Nehmer; *Treasurer:* Mildred Reizenstein; *Secretary:* Deena Levine.

1963-1964: *President:* Leonard Abel; *Vice-Presidents:* Jack Alterman, Stanley Nehmer; *Treasurer:* Morris Bernstein; *Secretary:* Adeline DeBrovy.

1964-1965: *President:* Leonard Abel; *Vice-Presidents:* Stanley Nehmer, David Negrin, Jacob Goldberg; *Treasurer:* Morris Bernstein; *Secretary:* Herbert Seidenman.

1965-1966: *President:* David Negrin; *Vice-Presidents:* Charles Ladenheim, Edward Cohen; *Treasurer:* Morris Bernstein; *Secretary:* Irving Schlafman.

1966-1967: *President:* David Negrin; *Vice-Presidents:* Edward Cohen, Benjamin Posin, Sylvia Friedman; *Treasurer:* Albert Maltz; *Secretary:* Helen Weingarten.

Table 1. Continued

1967-1968: *President:* Edward Cohen; *Vice-Presidents:* Albert Maltz, Rhoda Kreiel; *Treasurer:* Sydney Bubes; *Secretary:* Helen Weingarten.

1968-1969: *President:* Edward Cohen; names of other officers not available.

1969-1970: *President:* Alex Stouck; names of other officers not available.

1970-1971: *President:* Stanley Kalin; *Vice-Presidents:* Stanley Nehmer, Stephen Grossman; *Treasurer:* Leo Weinberger; *Secretary:* Eunice Holsberg.

1971-1972: *President:* Stanley Kalin; *Vice-Presidents:* Stephen Grossman, David Frager; *Treasurer:* Mae Stern; *Financial Secretary:* William Perry; *Secretary:* Martha Ladenheim.

1972-1973: *President:* Stephen Grossman; *Vice-Presidents:* David Frager, Howard Braun; *Treasurer:* Leo Weinberger; *Financial Secretary:* William Perry; *Secretary:* Martha Ladenheim.

1973-1974: *President:* David Frager; *Vice-Presidents:* Howard Braun, Frances Nebesky; *Treasurer:* Arthur Sturm; *Financial Secretary:* William Perry; *Secretary:* Martha Ladenheim.

1974-1975: *President:* David Frager; *Vice-Presidents:* Howard Braun, Frances Nebesky; *Treasurer:* Arthur Sturm; *Financial Secretary:* William Perry; *Secretary:* Sylvia Friedman.

Table 1. Continued

1975-1976: *President:* Howard Braun; *Vice-Presidents:* Yvonne Wagner, Paul Kretchmar; *Treasurer:* Daniel Resnick; *Financial Secretary:* William Perry; *Secretary:* Sylvia Friedman.

1976-1977: *President:* Howard Braun; *Vice-Presidents:* Yvonne Wagner, Paul Kretchmar; *Treasurer:* Daniel Resnick; *Financial Secretary:* William Perry; *Secretary:* Beatrice Leipsig.

1977-1978: *President:* Yvonne Wagner; *Vice-Presidents:* Paul Kretchmar, Ellen Kaplan, Alan Pressman, William Perry; *Treasurer:* Daniel Resnick; *Financial Secretary:* Barry Lubin; *Secretary:* Sophia Weinberger.

1978-1979: *President:* Yvonne Wagner; *Vice-Presidents:* Alan Pressman, Paul Kretchmar, Ellen Kaplan, Alfred Falthzik; *Treasurer:* Daniel Felkoff; *Financial Secretary:* Barry Lubin; *Secretary:* Sophia Weinberger.

1979-1980: *President:* Alfred Falthzik; *Vice-Presidents:* Alan Pressman, Mordecai Labovitz, Joan Kalin, Arthur Sturm; *Treasurer:* Daniel Felkoff; *Financial Secretary:* Barry Lubin; *Secretary:* Marjorie Gildenhorn.

1980-1981: *President:* Alfred Falthzik; *Vice-Presidents*: Alan Pressman, Mordecai Labovitz, Irene Rosenfeld, Barry Lubin; *Treasurer:* Daniel Felkoff; *Financial Secretary:* Barrett Ripin; *Secretary:* Marjorie Gildenhorn.

1981-1982: *President:* Alan Pressman; *Vice-Presidents:* Mordecai Labovitz, Irene Rosenfeld, Barry Lubin, Gerri Blumberg; *Treasurer:* Bruce Phillips; *Financial Secretary:* Barrett Ripin; *Secretary:* Sandra Kamisar.

Table 1. Continued

1982-1983: *President:* Alan Pressman; *Vice-Presidents*: Mordecai Labovitz, Barry Lubin, Gerri Blumberg, William Weissel; *Treasurer:* Bruce Phillips; *Financial Secretary:* Barrett Ripin; Secretary: Sandra Kamisar.

1983-1984: *President:* Mordecai Labovitz; *Vice-Presidents:* Barrett Ripin, William Weissel, Anne Goldberg; *Treasurer:* Bruce Phillips; *Financial Secretary:* Helene Sacks; *Secretary:* Sandra Kamisar.

1984-1985: *President:* Mordecai Labovitz; *Vice-Presidents*: Bruce Phillips, Barrett Ripin, Anne Goldberg, Sandra Kamisar, William Weissel; *Treasurer:* Barry Raff; *Financial Secretary:* Helene Sacks; *Secretary:* Beryl Feinberg.

1985-1986: *President:* Bruce Phillips; *Vice-President and Treasurer:* Barry Raff; *Vice-Presidents:* Sandra Kamisar, Anne Goldberg, Beryl Feinberg, William Weissel, Bruce Baum; *Financial Secretary:* Helene Sacks; *Secretary:* Karen Lowe.

1986-1987: *President:* Barry Raff; *Vice-Presidents:* Karen Lowe, Sandra Kamisar, Beryl Feinberg, Helene Sacks, Audrey Kramer; *Treasurer:* Harriet Sturm; *Financial Secretary*: Harvey Berger; *Secretary:* Scott Kravetz.

1987-1988: *President:* Barry Raff; *Vice-Presidents:* Karen Lowe, Sandra Kamisar, Helene Sacks, Wilma Braun, Audrey Kramer; *Treasurer:* Harriet Sturm; *Financial Secretary:* Harvey Berger; *Secretary:* Scott Kravetz.

1988-1989: *President:* Karen Lowe; *Vice-Presidents:* Sandra Kamisar, Harriet Sturm, Helene Sacks, Audrey Kramer, Scott Kravetz; *Vice-President and Secretary:* Wilma Braun; *Treasurer:* Harvey Berger; *Financial Secretary:* Beverly Potter.

man of the Board, distinct from the president of the congregation. The Chairman, a voting Board member whereas the president was not, presided at both Board meetings and meetings of the congregation. Theodore Geiger served as chairman during Oscar Felker's two terms as president (1959-61), then Felker was chairman during John Lewis' term (1961-62). In July, 1961, the Board proposed a constitutional amendment deleting the position of chairman, and the proposal was adopted the following year.

Expansions

In July, 1969, the Board conferred honorary Board membership on a member of the Senior Youth Group, to be elected by that group. The obvious reason for the action was to ascertain and incorporate the views of our youth in Board decisions that often impacted on the future of the temple. The move was deemed so successful that in March, 1971, the Board voted to seat the president of the Youth Group as a voting member, and the youth seat has remained ever since. Another new Board post that was proposed and approved in 1971 was the important one of financial secretary, who would have jurisdiction over the financial obligations of Temple members. William Perry was elected as the first financial secretary.

As the temple grew and became more complex, more Board members were needed to handle the additional tasks. The latest Board, serving in 1989-89, included five vice-presidents, 15 trustees, and a total of 28 voting members (eight officers, 15 trustees, two immediate past presidents, and the presidents of the Sisterhood, Brotherhood, and Youth Group).

Our Temple Presidents

There are many responsible positions in the administration of a temple, but none is more demanding than that of the president of the congregation. The president is the one individual, more than any other, who is responsible for the health and well-being of the organization. He or she must therefore be intimately familiar with the many ongoing programs, the problems that continually surface, and the interpersonal relationships among all the members of the

temple, Board members and non-Board members alike. The president must be an administrator, a confessor, a teacher, a reporter, a sounding board, and must serve as a bridge between the rabbi or other professional staff and the congregation as a whole. The president's telephone must be available at all hours; his or her devotion to the temple must be absolute during the entire term of office.

Despite these onerous demands, we have had a series of outstanding performances from our presidents. Almost all of them have been well prepared to assume the duties of the office, having previously served as Board members and/or committee chairs. However, they have differed substantially in the thrust of their presidencies, reflecting their personal interests and background as well as the exigencies of the time. Some have concentrated their efforts on temple programs; others, serving during periods of financial stress, have operated the temple as a business, an approach that was necessary to assure the survival of the congregation. Each of them has left an indelible positive mark on the temple, enhancing its long-term prosperity and success. Our founding president, Oscar Felker, was truly extraordinary; his vigor, personality, and salesmanship were central not only to the establishment of the temple but also to its success in its formative years.

Eighteen individuals have served the congregation as president during its 30-year history (Table 1). Presidents were limited by the original constitution to three one-year terms, but none has actually served that length of time. Leonard Abel holds the longevity record, since he completed Paul Nussbaum's term in 1963, then was himself elected in the two succeeding years. Nussbaum was the only president who resigned the office, leaving in April, 1963, after less than one year, for personal reasons. The Board immediately elected first vice-president Abel to succeed him. Yvonne Wagner holds the distinction of being the first woman president. She served two full terms during a particularly trying time in the life of the temple. Regrettably, two of our past presidents, Oscar Felker and Alfred Falthzik, did not live to see the end of our 30 years, and three – David Negrin, Edward Cohen, and Howard Braun – left the area shortly after their terms expired. Nearly all the others have maintained an active interest and influence in the congregation.

Board Sidelights

Board members take their responsibilities quite seriously and vote on important motions in ways that they personally feel is best for the congregation, but they very frequently have honest disagreements as to the appropriate course of action. One humorous anecdote illustrates this independence of mind. In 1973, Stanley Kalin was a voting member of the Board as a recent past president. At the same time, his wife, Joan, was elected as a trustee. Stanley did not feel it appropriate to have two voting Board members from the same family, and tendered his resignation to the president, Davis Frager. Frager, valuing the ability and acumen of both Kalins, refused to accept the resignation. Stanley's fear of a "Kalin voting bloc" proved totally unfounded, for he and Joan voted on opposite sides of most issues during the following year!

Obviously, most matters that come before the Board for discussion and decision are important to the inner workings of the temple, but there have been instances where the voice of the Board has been expressed on wider subjects. For example, the Board in 1965 officially expressed support for the position of the Jewish Community Council on civil rights. In another example in 1968, in a move that eventually proved less than admirable but which reflected the position of the U.S. government at the time, the Board called our rabbi, Sanford Jarashow, to task for publicly proclaiming his opposition to the Vietnam war. However, perhaps the most memorable move by the Board in the temple's history, at least the one with the most significant consequences, dealt with a strictly internal matter, as we shall now see.

The Near-Fatal Near-Merger

It was the early spring of 1970, and the Board of the temple faced a bleak prospect. Operational costs were rising sharply, financial resources were thought to be practically nonexistent, and temple membership was stagnant and even decreasing. Furthermore, a majority of the Board felt that the location of the temple was not conducive to membership increases and that we could not meet the large cost increases with the existing membership. In April,

after intense discussion, the Board saw no way out of the dilemma except to bring about a merger with another congregation, thereby forming a single large congregation that would be able to withstand economic pressures. Consequently, the Board authorized the president, Alex Stouck, to appoint an ad hoc committee, "The Committee to Seek a Merger," and thereby precipitated a major crisis within the temple.

The committee approached both Temple Sinai in Washington and Temple Emanuel in Kensington, from the latter of which many of our founders had previously resigned. Both temples expressed interest in a merger because they were also having membership problems. The location of Temple Sinai in the District of Columbia was considered unfavorable and the arrangement offered by the president and Board of Temple Emanuel was viewed by the committee as being more attractive. The plan involved some small retention of identity, possibly by incorporation of Temple Shalom's name into the name of the combined congregation, but basically our members would become members of Temple Emanuel, the temple's resources would be taken over by Temple Emanuel, our building would either be sold or used as a satellite of Temple Emanuel, and the contract of our rabbi, Sanford Jarashow, would be terminated.

When word of the Board's intent got out to the members, immediate opposition developed. The opponents were primarily the founders of the congregation, whereas none of the Board members who favored the merger were founders who had come from Temple Emanuel. An anti-merger leadership group, consisting of Leonard Abel, Irving Lewis, and Stanley Nehmer, quickly conducted a fund-raising campaign to raise the cash necessary to meet the immediate indebtedness of the temple. In a short time, they obtained pledges exceeding $25,000 from some of the more affluent members. Meanwhile, President Stouck and the Board had called a crucial meeting of the congregation to approve the merger with Temple Emanuel.

At that meeting, which occurred in May, the Board speakers presented a very pessimistic picture of the future of the temple. As they saw it, merger was the only salvation and the arrangement with Temple Emanuel should be ratified. The president of Temple

Emanuel was even present to support their position. Those who favored continuation of the temple in the face of the severe obstacles articulated their case. John Lewis made an impassioned plea and suggested an official pledge drive to meet the deficit. Emotional speeches by Jacob Goldberg and Stanley Kalin followed, each making substantial pledges. The Abel-Lewis-Nehmer group announced the results of their preliminary pledge drive. Others joined in with pledges. The enthusiastic outpouring of spontaneous commitment carried the day and the move to merge was defeated. A committee was immediately formed to procure additional pledges. In all, some $30,000 was pledged by 80 families, and the temple was saved, at least for the immediate future.

The temple kept its identity, but not without paying a severe price. Over 100 families resigned from the congregation, bringing membership down from 287 to about 185 families. The dropouts reasoned that the temple would not survive and did not want to be part of a losing proposition, having to enroll their children in a school that might close. This group included most of the sitting Board, but to his credit, President Stouck did not leave, and even now, almost 20 years later, remains a valued member of the congregation. It should be noted that the Board acted out of what they considered the best interests of the temple, yet when their cause was defeated, they immediately left.

The survivors faced a tremendous task, pulling the temple back from the abyss. The "merger" Board had not even wanted to nominate a president for the following year (1970-71) because they were almost certain that the temple was going out of business, but a member of the nominating committee, Ann Grossman, refused to accept this view. After consulting with several leaders, she persuaded Stanley Kalin to accept nomination as president, with Stanley Nehmer and Stephen Grossman to serve as vice-presidents. Kalin was an ideal choice, because he was an extremely capable, noncontentious individual who had not been identified with any particular faction in the temple. In recognition of the mountainous problems facing them, this group of officers set their primary goals: to hold the temple together, to place it on a sound financial footing, and to replace the membership losses.

The first major issue facing the new Board was the status of Rabbi Jarashow. The survivors were generally more favorably disposed toward him than those who had left, but there was residual disenchantment within the congregation from some who felt that he was too bland to attract many new members. To preserve unity, it was decided that the best interests of all would be served if the rabbi left. He readily agreed to depart, provided he were given a year to get his affairs in order, and this was quickly granted. President Kalin has stated that, on receiving Rabbi Jarashow's resignation, he determined to make the lame-duck year as comfortable as possible for the rabbi.

As Kalin dealt with the numerous problem areas, he received excellent support and a high level of cooperation from all the members, because everyone feared the imminent demise of the temple. He leaned heavily on Leonard Abel, an expert in the financial field, for fiscal advice. Vice-Presidents Grossman and Nehmer also concentrated on the monetary problems, out of necessity treating the temple as a business rather than a loosely controlled volunteer organization, as did David Frager in the presidency following Grossman's. They renegotiated the temple's debts, including the three mortgages on the building. Creditors were asked for additional time for repayment of debts and for some relief of obligations to forestall foreclosure. The UAHC had been pressing for payment of dues, and they were handled in the same way as other creditors. Happily, all the creditors cooperated with the requests and all debts were eventually repaid.

A felicitous consequence of the trials of 1970 was the warmth and closeness that grew among the survivors. They had been through a very hard time together and strong loyalties developed. With financial disaster averted by effective management, with the arrival of Rabbi Ian Wolk later in the year bringing new optimism, and with the new spirit of confidence becoming apparent in the community, the membership rolls began to expand once again. Within the year, membership totaled 210 families, and by 1975, over 375 families counted themselves as members of Temple Shalom. The goals of the officers had been achieved, we were back on the right course, and the future was bright.

5

OUR RABBIS

If the pressures and responsibilities bearing on the president of the congregation are great, those on the rabbi are enormous. The rabbi is literally on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He or she must strive to be responsive not only to the Board of Trustees, but to every member of the congregation as well. The rabbi must operate in a fishbowl, exposed to the public eye. It is a truism that no individual can be all things to all people, yet rabbis are routinely expected to come close to the ideal. It is no wonder, then, that many rabbis of ability, integrity, and resourcefulness still do not reach a tenured status in a congregation. In Temple Shalom, the provisions in the constitution that deal with the contractual arrangements with the rabbi -- hiring, retention, and termination -- have been modified over the years to give the congregation as a whole, as opposed to the Board of Trustees, a greater voice in the decision process. Consequently, the concept of "one thousand bosses" is particularly applicable, and only a rabbi of extraordinary talent can prosper in the position. Such a man is our present rabbi, Bruce Kahn.

Four rabbis and one assistant rabbi have served the congregation since its founding: Edwin Friedman (1959-64), Sanford Jarashow (1964-70), Ian Wolk (1971-80), and Bruce Kahn (1980-), assisted by Barry Schwartz (1988-). Rabbi Schwartz also serves as Educator of our religious school. We have been fortunate in that the rabbis have all been very strong in one of the major areas of temple affairs, the handling of life-cycle events and traumas within member families. Moreover, they have each exhibited unique talents that have greatly benefited the congregation, as we will now see in an examination of their individual careers in Temple Shalom.

Edwin Friedman

When a Reform rabbinic vacancy occurs in the United States, the congregation in question almost always follows the accepted procedure. It contacts the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), which supplies panels of rabbis, with the names and curricula vitae of 10 or 12 candidate rabbis on each panel. The search committee of the congregation narrows the list to the three or four seemingly most suitable candidates, then invites them to visit the congregation for interviews. After the interviews, the committee selects a nominee, who is presented to the Board and eventually hired. Unfortunately, this procedure could not be followed at Temple Shalom in the summer of 1959 because we were not yet members of UAHC. In point of fact, the arrival of Edwin Friedman as the first rabbi of Temple Shalom was pure happenstance.

Theodore Geiger, at a meeting of a small group at his home at which the hiring of a rabbi was discussed, stated that he had mentioned informally to Rabbi Balfour Brickner of Temple Sinai in Washington, with whom he was acquainted, that Temple Shalom was in need of a rabbi. Shortly thereafter, Rabbi Brickner called him to say that there was a young rabbi passing through town named Edwin Friedman. Brickner had met Friedman earlier when the latter was a student at American University; he had recently graduated from the Hebrew Union College and might be available. Brickner spoke quite favorably of him. A group of Temple Shalom leaders subsequently met with Rabbi Friedman and were well-disposed towards him. He was a man of many talents, already known as a writer, historian, archaeologist, and researcher. He was an accomplished musician, a student of classical guitar. He had served congregations in Casper, Wyoming; Victoria, Texas; and Fairmont, Virginia, as a student rabbi. Our Board of Trustees did not hesitate; he was appointed our rabbi, even without formal application to the CCAR. He met the congregation at a luncheon at the Brook Farm Inn restaurant in Chevy Chase, where he was introduced by Geiger and spoke briefly. He was officially installed as our rabbi on September 25, 1959, by Rabbi Brickner, coincidentally at our first service at St.

Paul's Methodist Church, with the Reverend Baker of the church also participating in the ceremony.

Rabbi Friedman held our pulpit for five years, during which time a major event of a personal nature occurred, his marriage to Carlyn Beckman in 1961. The couple honeymooned in Europe and Israel, and the congregation presented them with a candelabrum and silver bowl as wedding gifts. In the rabbi's fifth year (1963-64), the Board was faced with a decision with respect to his continuation, because CCAR policy called for a contract with some degree of permanence after a rabbi had been with a congregation for five years. President Leonard Abel appointed an ad hoc committee to ascertain the sense of the congregation on the question of the rabbi. This committee, querying many members, soon learned that there was strong disagreement within the temple; some people pointed to the rabbi's many fine attributes, others to his perceived shortcomings.

On the positive side, Rabbi Friedman was thought to be intellectually very bright. The children in the religious school were enamored of him; to them, he was a wonderful friend and teacher. He also conducted excellent adult education courses. During Torah readings at Shabbat services, his archaeological scholarship came to the fore; he employed his archaeological visits to Israel to demonstrate the historical relevance of the weekly portions of the Torah. As he read, he did free translations, making the Torah come alive. In 1961, he exhibited his native creativity by organizing and participating in the first "Festival of the Arts," which gave birth to our excellent drama group, the Temple Players. Another example of his creativity was his co-authorship, along with Theodore Geiger, of a modern haggadah. This was used for the first time at the first Temple Shalom seder in 1960, again at succeeding temple seders, and is still followed in some homes today.

There was an accumulation of allegations against Rabbi Friedman rather than a single central problem. When President Abel met with him to discuss terms of a possible long-term contract, his demands were beyond what Abel, a professional in financial matters, felt that the temple could afford. After debating the situation

at length, the Board finally voted in November, 1963, not to renew the rabbi's contract beyond the current fiscal year, which would end in June, 1964. There was, however, a vocal minority of Board members who disagreed with the Board's position. To air the matter and to seek the approval of the Board's action by the congregation, Abel called a general meeting in December, 1963. This meeting, which was held at the Lynnwood Elementary School in Chevy Chase, was a raucous gathering, with passionate pleas on both sides of the controversy. Rabbi Friedman spoke on his own behalf, President Abel spoke on behalf of the Board majority, and others expressed their opinions emotionally, some even threatening to resign if the decision was not in their favor. A vote was finally taken, and the congregation upheld the Board position by a 60% to 40% margin. Rabbi Friedman left, and within a short time he had organized the Bethesda Jewish Congregation in Bethesda, Maryland.

The departure of the rabbi had severe aftereffects on the congregation. Almost one-third of the member families resigned, and those who were left had to begin the difficult tasks of unifying and rebuilding. President Abel was central to the effort. To keep the survivors together, he appointed a number of the supporters of Rabbi Friedman to administrative positions in the temple hierarchy, thus involving them in the affairs of the congregation and stopping the outflow of members. In April, 1964, even before Rabbi Friedman's contract had expired, the Board appointed Rabbi Sanford Jarashow to our pulpit, and the temple was soon to be on a firm footing once again.

Sanford Jarashow

When Rabbi Friedman's contract was not renewed, a Rabbi Selection Committee, chaired by Morton Malin, was appointed by President Abel. This committee, after following accepted CCAR procedures, recommended to the Board that Sanford Jarashow be offered our rabbinate. The Board did so, and he was appointed in April, 1964. In May, the temple met the rabbi and his fiancee, Carolynn, at a reception held in their honor. They were married in Massachusetts in June and, after a honeymoon, he assumed our

pulpit in August. He was officially installed on October 2, 1964, by Rabbi Albert Goldstein of Boston, an old friend and mentor. The Jarashows were twice blessed during his Temple Shalom days, sons being born in both 1967 and 1969.

When Rabbi Jarashow came on board, the temple was in disarray because of the emotions aroused by the departure of Rabbi Friedman. We very badly needed a rabbi who was both calm and steadfast, a stabilizing influence. Rabbi Jarashow filled the need perfectly. As a reflection of his character, the years he was with us were basically peaceful and uneventful. He proved to be a fine rabbi, universally well-liked, a kind and gentle man who lived his religion and was an excellent pastor. A typical example of the latter was the assistance he gave Ann Grossman at the time of the death of her father. Although the Grossmans had joined the temple only the day before, Rabbi Jarashow insisted on coming to their home and spending the entire day with them, making it possible for Ann to deal effectively with the death. He was a strong supporter of the state of Israel; he initiated the Israel Committee, which became very active under the chairmanship of John Lewis, sponsoring several important, well-attended programs and social events. Feeling the Vietnam War to be morally untenable, he spoke out strongly against it, even though such a position was unpopular at the time, and he was even called to task by the Board for his stand. He was, of course, ultimately proved correct.

Unfortunately, the very qualities that made Rabbi Jarashow so right for Temple Shalom in 1964 became less favorable in 1969 and 1970. Though pleasant and courteous, he did not attract many new members, and the stagnating membership was generally felt to be a principal cause of the financial crisis that enveloped the congregation in 1970. Potential members were lost because he refused to accept intermarriage as a viable option for young couples. As detailed earlier, the financial difficulty almost culminated with a merger with another congregation and caused the resignations of many fearful members. A group of Rabbi Jarashow's supporters, including Leonard Abel, Irving Lewis, and Stanley Nehmer, met with the rabbi and convinced him that, in the interests of both the temple and his own career, it would be better

if he sought another pulpit. He agreed, but asked to stay one more year to give himself time to arrange his future course; this was quickly and amicably arranged. During the course of that year, he accepted a position as an economist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, working on food programs for the underprivileged, and remained with the temple on a half-time basis until the expiration of his contract on July 1, 1971. Shortly thereafter, he assumed another pulpit, becoming rabbi of Temple Judea in Massapequa, New York.

Ian Wolk

Near the beginning of Rabbi Jarashow's lame-duck year of 1970-71, President Stanley Kalin appointed a search committee to find a successor. This group narrowed the list of candidates provided by the CCAR to two, Rabbis Ian L. Wolk and Alton Winters, and each was invited to come to Chevy Chase for interviews. Rabbi Wolk, who was the assistant rabbi at the largest Reform synagogue in St. Louis, Missouri, had in fact already been interviewed by Vice-President Stephen Grossman, who was a member of the search committee and who had been in St. Louis on a business trip. On arrival in Washington, the rabbi and his wife, Carol, lunched with President Kalin and both vice-presidents, Grossman and Nehmer. The rabbi was articulate, animated, and vital, greatly impressing the group. In his later interview, Rabbi Winters exhibited excellent credentials, but was serious, staid, and more reserved in contrast to Rabbi Wolk and his flash of youth. The majority of the search committee felt that the temple was more in need of Rabbi Wolk's qualities and recommended that he be offered the pulpit. In the light of subsequent events, it should be noted that, before the committee's decision became final, Vice-President Grossman undertook an extensive investigation of Rabbi Wolk's background references. He particularly queried people at the St. Louis congregation, including some who were no longer members and others who were not strong advocates of the rabbi. The most negative statement by anyone in St. Louis was that Rabbi Wolk was so charismatic that he overshadowed the senior rabbi. In any event, the Board extended the pulpit to Rabbi Wolk in December, 1970, and in the following month the con-