

Anita Rosenberg, President's remarks, Rosh Hashannah, September 2013.

As President of this amazing congregation, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, it is my honor and privilege to welcome you to this morning's Rosh Hashanah service and to all of our High Holy Days services throughout this month in the New Year of our People, 5774. And, it's our birthday! Our Congregation enters its 265th year, since 1749. Actually, more than that when you consider that Charleston Jews worshipped in people's homes from 1695 with barely enough for a Minyan. What a journey they travelled, what a testament to their determination in the founding of a Jewish community in the New World.

As we continue our congregational journey, we will need to consider how we can sustain ourselves in this ever-changing world. What is our vision for the future? As we reflect on what we want to become, ask what we are willing to do to move in new directions as we maintain our historic past.

Just look at us today! Worshipping this morning in a larger space that gives us the opportunity to be all together as one holy congregation, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim. We are indeed grateful to those members, staff, Executive Director Alex Grumbacher and Rabbi Alexander who have worked so hard and carefully to make this happen.

And speaking of successes, just last month, KKBE was honored at Camp Coleman by the Union for Reform Judaism, URJ, for outstanding achievement in Coleman Camper Recruitment – a real investment in our youth – our future.

Our forefathers and mothers did not sit passively by and allow circumstances to decide their future. They took risks, questioned G-d, stood up for those who needed help and travelled with purpose. For centuries, since Abraham and Sarah, Jews have travelled. If we are to sustain ourselves as a community of Reform

Jews, we can't afford to be complacent. As a community, we know how to celebrate our successes while keeping in mind the need to re-evaluate, adjusting along the way, ensuring that our journey remains positive and relevant as our needs change.

Do we take our KKBE Mission statement for granted? Have you read it lately? It's on almost everything we publish and on our website and Facebook page. Have a look at it and see how it speaks to you.

This year, let us put our collective effort behind those words that guide our every action: Torah: programs that inspire lifelong Jewish learning, Avodah: inclusive communal worship and ritual, and G'milut Chasadim: Where each of us has a responsibility in the quest for greater justice, peace in the world and acts of loving-kindness. Be assured that your Officers and Board of Trustees are governed by our mission and values as we work for the congregation. Our values demand that we cherish honesty, courage, integrity and ethical behavior in everything we do. We achieve goals through visionary leadership as a means of strengthening our inclusiveness, creativity and connection to our Jewish past and future. We must insist on fiscal responsibility and effective use of our assets. We must preserve, nurture and renew our unique Reform Jewish heritage.

Of course, I think we would agree that we are a wonderful, inclusive congregation, but, as always, there is much work to be done, for ourselves, for our community and for our world. When I think of KKBE, I think of one of my favorite quotes:

"In this community, may we find G-d
In this community, may we find our way in the world.
In this community may we be drawn near to our people Israel
In this community may we be bound to one another.
In this community, may we be drawn to the Torah
In this community may we learn

To love our neighbors as ourselves
And our G-d with all our heart, and soul, and might.
Teach us, our G-d, to convert our thoughts into faith,
Our words into deeds, here and everywhere, now and at all times.
Teach us to live, that as we come and go from our synagogue,
Day after day, year after year,
We will become changed, deepened, lifted up.”

May we travel together from strength to strength, and participate, as a community, in the ongoing journey of the Jewish people.

L’shana tovah tikatevu,

Anita