



Congregation  
B'nai Shalom

Dear friends,

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since I arrived at Congregation B'nai Shalom. This has truly been a dream come true for me, as I have been embraced so warmly by our community and welcomed into your lives. It has been a year of opportunities and challenges, and while I am relieved that the first year is coming to a close (a first year can be quite an ordeal!), I am so enthusiastic about all of the possibilities that lie ahead.

This past year I have met many, many congregants and shared joyous and difficult moments in your lives. I have learned about the strong spirit of leadership and volunteer participation in our synagogue, attended countless committee meetings, and even started some new committees and initiatives. I have met with leaders of other organizations, both within and outside the Jewish community, and I have spoken publicly on numerous occasions. The private moments that I spend counseling rate tops on my list of fulfilling daily activities, along with every opportunity to teach congregants, community members, and conversion students. I am most grateful for the opportunity to work with such wonderful colleagues in Hazzan Dinkin and Rabbi Jen, and I know how fortunate I am to be surrounded by the wit, wisdom and support of Lisa, Kathy and Barbara in the office. Luther and Celestino work tirelessly to maintain our synagogue buildings and grounds; we couldn't ask for a more committed staff. Our Board leadership, committee chairs and volunteers are great allies, as together we partner to create the best synagogue community we know how.

There have most certainly been times this past year when I have disappointed you. While I will try to apologize personally and sincerely, my offense may sometimes be unknown to me. Please know that my intentions are genuine and good, and that I hope to learn from my mistakes and be a better person and a better rabbi each day.

The coming year will be full of new adventures. We will introduce a new *mahzor* for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur which will enhance the feel and spirit of our services. There will be new educational programs that hopefully will appeal broadly to you and your family. We will continue to hone in on our core values and our identity as a community and discover how to promote ourselves positively and powerfully so that we can attract new members to join us.

As we learn in the ethical teachings of our sages in *Pirkei Avot*, "the day is short and the work is great ... you do not have to complete the job, but you cannot excuse yourself from it." Together, we have much to accomplish. These are exciting times, and I cannot wait to see what we create together!

Best wishes for a safe and enjoyable summer.

Rabbi Elon Sunshine