

The Times – They are a-Changing
Rabbi Mike Lotker

Bob Dylan sang it in 1964 and a wise person once observed that the only constant is change. And so too are things are a-changing at Temple Ner Ami.

By now, you all know that our beloved Katie has announced her retirement as of the end of May. Katie has been the heart and soul and institutional memory of our Temple for the last nine and a half years and will be sorely missed. I hope that each and every one of you will be attending the luncheon and concert that will be held in her honor on Sunday, April 18th beginning at 12 noon at the Temple. Be sure to call my wife, Sonia, to RSVP at 818-366-8659. I am also delighted to tell you that we have found a wonderful replacement for Katie.

I'm sure that you've also heard that the Temple itself will be moving. While the final details and approvals haven't been completed, as of this writing it appears to be very likely that some time soon (our goal is early May) the Temple will be moving to share facilities with the Camarillo Church of Christ on 515 Temple Avenue – where we will be known as “the Temple on Temple Avenue.”

I know that some people will be concerned by this move but I, for one, am very excited by it. First and foremost, the facility is wonderful. Our Torah School will have three real classrooms, outdoor play areas and more. The sanctuary is well suited to our needs and there are a wide variety of meeting rooms, a social hall, a teen and parent lounge, a wonderful library and a social hall quite similar to our current facility. There is a private parking lot as well as lots of future possibilities. The location is ideal with easy access to the freeway and to Metrolink. The Temple Board members that have seen the space agree with me that it would make for a great move even if it were not for the fact that this will reduce our occupancy and maintenance expenses by half.

I also love the statement that sharing this sacred space with a Christian Church makes to the community and to our families. As you know, Judaism teaches that our primary focus should be on what we do rather than what we believe. Especially in our Reform tradition, this translates into doing *mitzvot*, especially the ethical commandments associated with *Tikkun Olam* – healing the world, rather than emphasizing the ritual aspects of Judaism such as keeping kosher, prayer three times a day, insistence on wearing *kippot/yarmulkes* daily, etc. Simply put, we care less about theology and more about good deeds. While Christians have a different theological base, their actions also translate into making the world a better place. Members of the Church and of your Board are all excited about how we can demonstrate that people of God and good faith can join in helping to solve community and world problems even though we come from different faith traditions.

Of course, most things about our Temple will not change. Rabbi Lisa and I will still be here every Friday nights and Saturday mornings to lead services and Torah Study. Adult Education can continue with no worries about competing for space with our wonderful

teen programs. Our children will still receive a wonderful education and work hard to prepare for their B'nai Mitzvah. The Temple will still be the focus for holiday services and celebration and meetings of local Jewish groups. Further, we hope that, as the recession recedes and our finances improve, we can continue to make good use of our precious financial resources to better serve our community and God. I know that you all will agree.

I am confident that you will be as excited about our new facility and partnership as I am and look forward to the wonderful experiences that the future holds for us there.