



# Temple Beth Emeth

*...its ways are ways of pleasantness,  
and all its paths are peace.*

December 1, 2016

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Dear Friends,

In Martin Buber's Tales of the Hasidim, we read a now famous story of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk. Mendel asks some learned men who are visiting, "Where is the dwelling place of God?" Laughing, the visitors respond, "What a thing to ask! Is not the whole earth full of God's glory?" Menachem Mendel then answers his own question: "God dwells wherever we let God in."

There are many ways to let God in. But we have to make an opening. God's sanctuary—the Mishkan—that traveled with our ancestors was just that, a way to let God in. The Mishkan was a way for God to be more present to our ancestors and for them to be more present to God.

Moreover, people brought gifts to build the Mishkan as God instructed Moses in the Book of Exodus, "...you shall accept gifts for me from every person whose heart so moves them" (Ex. 25:2). God explains to Moses why the gifts are needed, "Let them make me a sanctuary that I might dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). These ancient gifts of the heart served a higher purpose then and continue to do so today.

In Judaism, we often give for a greater purpose beyond ourselves. We give so that we can better know each other, ourselves, and God. The Mishkan was a way to work together to access God. TBE, and the community we build together, is our Mishkan. And I am asking you to make a gift of the heart to TBE.

Truth be told, if I were a member of TBE, I would be skeptical of donating to TBE with a new rabbi just barely in the door. I would be wondering, "What is this new guy going to do with my money?" or, "How might my temple be changing in the coming years? Am I going to like it? Maybe I should wait and see what happens before I make a meaningful gift to the temple."

So let me share some of the ideas I have about the coming years, ways that I would like to see programming grow so that we can serve you better, and hopefully let God in a little more.

- What if we had a visiting scholar multiple times a year? With multiple visits, we could delve deeper into a given subject area, we could grow more.

(over)

2309 Packard Street • Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

main office 734.665.4744 • religious school 734.665.5817 • fax 734.665.9237 • [www.templebethemeth.org](http://www.templebethemeth.org)

- Similarly, what if we had a visiting artist multiple times a year for a number of years? Think of the ways we could grow spiritually from an ongoing experience.
- Our youth programming could be more robust, we must serve our kids and teens better. What if we had a fulltime youth professional who could engage our kids constantly and consistently?
- What if we experimented with congregational education? Could our traditional religious school look different? Could we have a retreat-based model or all-family education model?

These are just some of the ideas that are running through my head. They may not be the right ideas for us now, but I am person who is interested in serving my congregation to the best of my ability and in ways that engage the most people and do the most good.

We live in an amazing city that sits on the forefront of thought in the United States. Our synagogue—our Mishkan—should also sit there as well; we should always be striving to rise in excellence. Of course, I don't have a monopoly on ideas. I hope that you will feel free to share your ideas with our staff and me.

I hope that you will join me in making a meaningful year-end gift to Temple Beth Emeth. We need you more than ever as we seek excellence; creating more opportunities to let God in. I hope you can be a part of this endeavor with a donation, and as importantly, by partnering with me and our staff, getting your hands in the work, and making our wonderful community even stronger and more engaging than it is today.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Josh Whinston

p.s. Hope you'll help us celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Saturday, January 28, 2017. Tickets can be purchased through our website, [templebethemeth.org](http://templebethemeth.org).