

Notes for Co-Chairs Review Or Shalom AGM 2022

Dave:

The AGM is our chance to look back at the previous year and align ourselves to the upcoming year. I'll take some time to look back and Dalia will cast our eyes to the future.

At this time last year we were deeper into the pandemic concerns and still had all our services online. We had just gone through a high holiday period with very small groups in attendance. This year we are still in pandemic (and flu) concerns but enjoying a return to more events in person. We continue to take the advice of the BC Health Advisory and of our own Covid committee. Or Shalom events are mask-recommended and people are making prudent choices about mask use.

Or Shalom was very quick to adopt online services, and continue to experiment with services, courses, and classes being in-person only, zoom only, and hybrid and we continue to learn about the balance of wider inclusivity and the complexity of managing hybrid events to work for both in-person and remote participants. We currently plan to continue in-person, zoom-only, and hybrid services through the winter and will review that again as spring returns.

Last year was the seventh year of service with our Rabbi, Hannah Dresner, and the board awarded her a four-month sabbatical to reconnect with remote family, and recharge her own spiritual batteries. During this period our staff and HR committee had to step up their game to cover all the aspects of Or Shalom programs. A big thank you and yasher koach to Tracey Fagg and Matthew Gindin who held the programs together during Hannah's time away. Unfortunately our program coordinator Duggan Cayer found the working environment more challenging than he expected and when a health issue arose, chose to step down from the role. During his exit interview it was clear there are stresses on the program coordinator we as a board needed to address to ensure that role is achievable, has high satisfaction, and is sustainable. We hired Emet Davis who stepped off the board for a 3-month period to interview staff and write Or Shalom's first Employee Handbook. We were reminded that while ad-hoc decision making has flexibility, it also puts a high degree of cognitive load on the staff to continually have to make complex decisions and judgements about what is fair, equitable and efficient. The board thanks Emet for her work on this project and you will hear from her later today..

As this is my last term as co-chair I would like to make some personal remarks. Being co-chair of Or Shalom is both a duty and a privilege, and even though I am stepping down from this role, I expect to continue contributing to the technical needs of the synagogue, and to support Hannah and the staff in whatever way they need me to. I am grateful to the staff who put their hearts and energy into Or Shalom, and to the many volunteers who work, often unnoticed, who help keep this community vibrant and healthy as our spiritual home and family.

I do have some words however, particularly to we boomers in the congregation. If you're over 58, I'm speaking to you. The message is this - the future of Or Shalom depends on new members being welcomed, on including them in events and programs, on giving them the opportunity to lead, and taking giving them the space to move our community in the direction that serves them. It is our duty to give them that space.

I ask you to do these three things: 1. be open to new ideas, 2. be slow to deny requests for change, and 3. Connect with the folks you don't yet know and meet them how they want to be met.

As a co-chair I have witnessed too many incidences of new members feeling shut down or disrespected. I have personally benefited from courageous younger people who have challenged me and helped me understand when my actions have offended or my words have been ill-chosen.

We may say that we want to welcome the next generation to Or Shalom, to take what the founders built, and that we all have nurtured, and keep it growing. But walking that talk means going outside our comfort level, it means being patient to listen to the needs of the people we are welcoming into our community, and to *not* insist that we do things in the way we have always done.

That's what I ask us the elders of this community to do for our future.