

## President's 175th Anniversary Gala Message

It is said that membership has its privileges. Nothing could be more true as we celebrate together, the 175th Anniversary of Vassar Temple. What a privilege it is to be a part of a Congregation which started out so humbly with 5 men who wanted to pray together and has evolved into a Congregation full of families engaged in any number of Jewish activities both at Vassar Temple and throughout our community.

As a member of Vassar Temple for nearly 50 of my 60 years here, and as President of this incredible Congregation, I get to share with you how I view Vassar Temple.

Vassar Temple is a **House of Worship.**

We gather together for regular Shabbat Services, Holiday Services and Festivals. We have services for young families. We have Healing Services. We have added some themed services like our Tisch/Soup and Chili (table)Shabbat, MLK Shabbat, REPRO Shabbat and our Pride Shabbat, just to name a few. The majority of our services are Hybrid to involve and engage as many interested worshipers; no matter where they are located. (one of the good things to come out of COVID, upgrading our Technology).

Vassar Temple is a **House of Study/Learning.**

We gather together for various opportunities to study and learn together. We have weekly Torah study with a very engaged group of participants. We have a vibrant Adult Ed committee that continues to bring new programs to the forefront of our learning with speakers, authors, and a variety of programs. Our clergy have provided us with wonderful opportunities for study and learning throughout the year. We have a bustling and busy Religious School, which along with our Religious School Director and teen Madrichim, has the unique energy of being staffed totally by local College Students. What wonderful role models they are to our children.

Vassar Temple is a **House of Assembly.**

We are a Congregation that finds many reasons to gather together. I will say that most of the reasons surround Food. "If you feed them, they will come" may be credited to Jesus in the bible, but it is certainly applicable in our Congregation. We gather for dinners, organized luncheons, Flexible Feasts, Happy Hours, Hamantaschen Baking, and more. We may enjoy breaking bread together, but it's the "together" piece that impresses me most. We truly enjoy each other's company both in and around the Temple as well as outside in the community.

Vassar Temple is a **House of Song.**

Music has always been a large part of Vassar Temple. When my family joined nearly 50 years ago, Vassar Temple had an organ and a choir. We now have a

beautifully restored Grand piano donated to us by a generous family Temple member, a fabulous Temple composer/musician and a Cantor. We have had various musicians, klezmer, choirs, and soloists grace our bimah and our stage in our social hall. We've held concerts and we've gone as groups to enjoy local concerts and to see Musicals in the city.

Vassar Temple is a **House of Justice.**

Tikkun Olam, Repairing the World is something that Vassar Temple takes very seriously. Our Social Action and Social Justice programs start with our own children from within our own doors. We reach out into our local community meeting the needs that we assess. We prepare and serve once a month at the Lunch Box program. We walk for hunger with the Crop Walk. We have any number of bins gracing our Temple hallways for various collections to serve the community. We have helped refugees get acclimated by helping them find housing, jobs, navigating health care and schooling for their children. We also reach out a bit further by bringing in our local government officials, keeping them accessible and aware of our needs. We write postcards and send them across the country to encourage and remind people to vote. Last June we were one of only two Houses of Worship who held tables at the Poughkeepsie Pride Event at Wayras Park. Our simple message was, "You are welcome here" We were touched by the thousands of participants who deeply appreciated our presence and message.

Vassar Temple is a **House of Community.**

We gather side by side with our fellow community members on various projects. We participate in Mitzvah Day, alongside members of the greater Jewish Community and the Jewish Federation of Dutchess County. We stand, alongside our friends at Mid-Hudson Islamic Association, serving food to the hungry. Just a few months ago, we graciously and humbly received the Legacy Award from the Dutchess County Interfaith Council. We are so proud of that honor and have the plaque that we received hanging just inside our front door. It is a constant reminder that what we do is seen and needed, not only by the people we serve, but also by our fellow peers, friends and colleagues in this Interfaith community.

With all of these "Houses", Vassar Temple has truly carved out a home here in the Hudson Valley and beyond. I have only scratched the surface of all the activities that Vassar Temple participates in. I truly could proudly sing our praises for much longer. But, alas, I believe I have exceeded my time limit and your patience already. Let me conclude by saying that for 175 years Vassar Temple has nurtured our hearts, souls and community through some very difficult times. Through the generations we have found ways to grow and change to meet the needs of our Congregants and community. The old adage of "It takes a Village to raise a Child" I think could easily be "It takes a Village to raise a Congregation."

Let's try something. If you have ever served as a Clergy member at Vassar Temple, please raise your hand. If you have ever been Vassar Temple President, please raise your hand. If you have ever served on the Board of Trustees or served on a committee or Auxiliary like Sisterhood or Brotherhood at Vassar Temple, please raise your hand. If you have ever worked side by side with a member of Vassar Temple on any number of projects, please raise your hand. If you have not been called upon, first of all, what the heck have you been waiting for? But seriously, if you are here tonight, please raise your hand, you are absolutely supporting Vassar Temple this evening and we deeply thank you. Please give yourselves a big round of applause.

Vassar Temple has been a thriving, spiritual home for many congregants for 175 years. We are constantly reinvesting our money, time, action and spirit to keep us vital and relevant for the next 175 years. Vassar Temple's tagline is **Vassar Temple-where you belong**. I will say it again. Membership is a privilege and I feel very privileged tonight, in this room of support, to say I belong here. I know you feel the same. Thank you all for being an integral part of Vassar Temple's past, present and future. We like to say in Hebrew "L'dor vador.", which translates to "From generation to generation."

Thank You.

Lisa-Sue Quackenbush  
President Vassar Temple

I want to take just a moment to extend my sincere thanks to the entire Gala Committee. Planning an event like this takes time, energy, enthusiasm and commitment. We all came into this committee with unique visions of what this evening should look like and how we could touch upon Vassar Temple's past, present and future. Through the leadership of Sandra Mamis- Chairperson extraordinaire, we were able to envision and execute, not only a tremendous Fundraiser, but also a wonderful FunRaiser. Thank you, Sandra.