STATE OF THE SYNAGOGUE ANNUAL APPEAL

SPEECH FOR

SHERRI PARMAN

Hello everyone, and Happy, Healthy, Sweet New Year! We’ve all been inscribed in the book of life for a **good** New Year- well…. **THAT** took a load off my mind!!! (**Wait for the laugh**) and we are absolutely thrilled to share this year’s High Holy Days with each one of you. Whether you are here with your family or with friends, or if you’ve accompanied **yourself** to this year’s services, I want you to know that we welcome each one of you with open arms and your presence here is really a mitzvah on so many levels. It’s wonderful that you have chosen to acknowledge your faith alongside of each one of us, and although we all share an invisible connection to all Jews by birth and “osmosis” throughout the year, it is especially gratifying that we stand-or sit-or lean as one community along with our brothers and sisters and cousins and friends **throughout the world**. Imagine that there is a small spot of light emanating from each one of you, and now picture the cluster of light coming from this congregation…. picture the same type of light filling the night sky as it bursts forth from the other synagogues in the area, in the county, the state, the country, the world. Tonight, all of the dots connect and the constellation of Judaism burns bright for the world to see. We all stand together as a force to be reckoned with-a force filled with humor and history, compassion and pride.

We are here tonight to take a few moments from our impossibly busy and complicated lives to take a deep breath, follow the path laid by our ancestors, and honor our heritage. Being able to experience the age old rituals practiced by our fathers and their fathers and those that came before, reinforces what it means to be Jewish or to embrace Judaism. We belong to this very special community, and it is our mandate to preserve the precious context of this synagogue and the Jewish legacy that belongs to each one of us.

(**If you want to be funny, you can say**) Although legend teaches us the history of the Jewish people in a one-liner that goes like this, “They tried to kill us, we won, let’s eat!” (**Wait for the laugh**), being a part of Congregation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ means so much more-really! Each one of us is already a winner as part of the global Jewish community as well as the more intimate communities within the Jewish context, like ours, here at Congregation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. For those of you who participate regularly in the “**action**” here at Congregation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, you know this is a growing, thriving, “happening” place. Our community is organic, and by that I mean that it lives and breathes with, and thanks to, all of you. The building and congregation are contexts- structures are just shells without the heart and brain and voice of this thriving Jewish community, or, in other words, **YOU**. Your participation brings life to this context.

For those of you that do not participate on as regular a basis, this is **YOUR** home as well. As I said earlier, our lives are impossibly busy and we all do what we have to in order to survive and thrive in this hectic and challenging world, and as human beings, one really important component to our survival is having a time and a place to go to and to pause, reflect and connect with our inner spirit. We can’t necessarily get there-**yet**- by accessing new technologies and apps that are more and more present and essential in our daily lives, but we **CAN** get there by allowing ourselves time to share the rich and age old traditions that our religion and faith can offer to us. I am sure we will hear more than one hum of a blackberry alert or iPhone ping during these services-no matter how hard we may try to remember to silence our PDA’s, but the good news is-we’re all here, together, and each one of you is a vital component in sustaining the Jewish identity and culture for future generations. And by the way, I’d like to propose a new meaning for the acronym PDA. Some may think it means Personal Digital Assistant. Those of you who tend to be more “romantic” may think it means “Public Display of Affection.” Tonight I want to suggest that every time you look at your PDA’s, think PERSONAL DEMONSTRATION OF AFFIRMATION-and think of us!

I don’t know how many of you know this, but couple of months ago, at the end of June, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Jerusalem and the Wailing Wall. He made his trip, yarmulke in place, in the middle of the night, accompanied by, among others, the Chief Rabbi of Russia, Berel Lazar, as he visited the Wall and asked to see the tunnels. He spoke with ultra-Orthodox men he encountered and in a press conference afterwards, he acknowledged why it was so important to him to make the visit. He acknowledged that Judaism is one of the 4 MAJOR religions in the world and in the Russian Federation. Politics and opinion aside, I don’t know about you, but hearing this really made me quite emotional and proud. When we think of the history of the Jewish people and in particular in Israel and in Russia, to think that the Russian president would take the time to show this kind of respect is quite special. Everyone wants to be acknowledged for who he or she is, especially in light of our history- and by that I mean the struggles and challenges that we’ve inherited.

Vladimir Putin took time to shine a light on Judaism-literally, and by participating however you can in Congregation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ it’s your way of giving life to that ray of light. You are not here by accident. There are no coincidences. Each one of you chose to be here and as such, you’ve acknowledged that you are a part of our community. We are thrilled to include you and we’re thankful that you have included us in your lives. This is a place that truly encompasses the best of Jewish based life. We welcome everyone. Whether you were born Jewish or are part of an interfaith family, please know that your family has been extended to include Congregation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If you’re single or think you’re alone in this world, **SURPRISE!!!** You’re not! You have Congregation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This is a place to come to where you have a home and whether it’s every week for Shabbos or a few days a year to acknowledge your faith during the High Holy Days, we’re here for you.

Congregants are owners of this space on so many levels, and the more owners we have, the more we can share the light and support that comes with being a part of this family. There are so many programs we offer that enrich the lives of our congregants and community, programs like (**Name 3 or 4 programs that support both the congregation and surrounding community**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**maybe mention education for children and adult education classes**), \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**various forms of community outreach**), \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**partnership programs with other congregations throughout the world?**), and as we give, we receive gifts that we never expected-gifts of friendship, understanding and partnership, and that sense of belonging grows geometrically.

This place is a sanctuary-literally and physically, and as such its survival is essential to all of our lives. Each one of you provides the heartbeat, both tangible and spiritual, that keeps Congregation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ going. This year we’ve seen substantial growth in spite of the challenges we all face. (**Name 3 quantitative points that demonstrate the growth of the congregation**). We’ve \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We thank everyone that has been involved in making 2011 (**or give the Jewish year so that it acknowledges the 5772?)** such a productive and important year in our history and we eagerly look forward to even more growth and positive community impact in the coming year.

I’d like all of you to really think about how you’d like to be part of this congregation now and into the future. If you choose to be more active, Welcome! Come in to see us or give us a call right after the holidays and we’ll be happy to explore the synergies possible through your valuable participation. Too busy to get down in the trenches on a regular basis? We understand!! Send us a postcard! Let us know how you are!! Are you among that special group that joins us regularly and participates in our programs and community outreach? Fabulous!! We’ve got even more work for you to do-get ready!

I think by now all of you realize how important Congregation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is to me and hopefully something you’ve experienced tonight will inspire you to consider this sanctuary as your own. Every contribution you make is needed, wanted and essential to the life and survival of our very special community and all is appreciated more than you will ever know. The more we have, the more we can spread the light of spiritual fulfillment and community and from the bottom of my heart and on behalf of Rabbi \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Cantor \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, we say Shana Tova and “**Sanctuary much**!” (**If this is too corny, then perhaps just say, “Thank you!”….but perhaps some more humor will warm the crowd and encourage them to give**).