

Good afternoon and welcome. I am Jon Geier and speak to you today on behalf of the JCC Board of Trustees. I have done a lot of public speaking in my career, but not for an event like this, and to be candid, speaking at Yom Kippur services were not on my “things to do in retirement bingo card.” But I am very proud to be here to speak with you today. The JCC of LBI community has become such an important part of Suzy’s and my life.

While I see many familiar faces, I don’t know many of you, so let me introduce myself briefly. I am a recovering lawyer – I was a management side employment lawyer, first in DC and later Chicago. I have been coming to LBI since I was 15 (1970 when Don Pripstein drove me to the island), Suzy started joining me when we were 18 (we went to our senior prom), and we moved to the island full time from Chicago 8 years ago. We joined the JCC in 2018 and I have been on the Board since 2021.

As some of you know that I was heavily involved in the 75th Anniversary celebration, including most importantly (along with Sondi Pripstein and Bev Miller) creating the Museum presentation currently in the JCC Library, and if you have not had a chance to visit yet, I encourage you to do so. Today I wanted to share some of what I learned during my research into the history of the JCC, and use those lessons in support of what I am going to ask of each of you later in my talk.

But first let me just summarize the history (if you attended the beach service this summer, or attended the gala you have heard some of this before but bear with me). Although there were likely Jewish services held on the island as early as the late 1930’s, the history of the JCC of LBI begins in the in 1950 (give or take) when a handful of families started to organize themselves, holding services in each-others homes with lay rabbis. In 1952, the Jewish women of Beach Haven created what they called the Adult Study Group. In the museum you will find an old black binder held together with a rubber band that included about two years of typed or handwritten notes of the meetings. Serious subjects were discussed – Israel, maintaining a Jewish life in the United States, politics. Money collected, usually less than \$5. The fundraising goal was to create a JCC to worship and host community events.

Jumping ahead, in summer 1961 the first JCC of LBI building was dedicated – but while our history is far greater than just our building, the buildings too are part of our history. Indeed, the beautiful windows behind me, the ark and eternal light from the first JCC hang in our foyer. A reminder of our founders who had the persistence to start and grow our congregation. Through the 1960s the JCC were led by lay rabbis or at some point we started to employ summer rabbis, as we were only a summer congregation.

Jump forward again to 1977, and another group of families start to again meet in each-others homes during the off season and started the discussion of making the JCC a year- round congregation. I have not found any record that heat was added to the first JCC but between and 1979 the JCC became a year-round congregation. (If anyone knows anything about when a/c was added, or more importantly the origins of these beautiful stained-glass windows. New families, new leaders and eventually full-time rabbis were hired to lead the JCC.

Jump forward with me one last time to the early 2000s when yet another generation of leaders began to explore enlarging the first building. That effort did not get very far and by 2008/9 plans were underway to build where we celebrate the Yom Kippur holiday. In 2012 this building was opened – so we are 13 years in – and if you have a home on or off the island you know how harsh the environment here can be (that is a little

foreshadowing for later). So here we are – celebrating 75 years of Faith, Family, Friends and a whole bunch of fun. But what have I learned, what I hope many of you have learned. Two lessons.

Lesson #1. L'dor v'dor is a common refrain, and we know what that means for the history of Jews, of our faith generally, but the JCC's history is a micro l'dor v'dor – from generation to generation of new rabbis, new leaders, and many new members the JCC is a thriving, year-round, active community. But my first challenge to each of you is to understand that it is our generations turn now. And just a brief personal aside regarding my own l'dor v'dor. I am wearing today, for the first time in 57 years the tallit that my mother's father, my Grandpa Marc Zeeman, gave me to wear on my bar mitzvah in March 1968 – L'dor V'dor.

Lesson #2 relates to Lesson #1, but is even more important. What our history demonstrates is each generation of families, starting with our Founders 75 years ago, believed that having a Jewish presence, having a Jewish community serving the island, the surrounding communities off island and Southern Ocean County generally is important, was critical. The fact that all of you come to the JCC of LBI to celebrate Rosh Hashana, to pray during Yom Kippur says to me that having a Jewish community on this island is important to each and every one of you.

So, what am I asking of you today? First for those of you who are non-members, we are thrilled that you are here to pray with us today, but we would love for you to cement your affiliation with the JCC. Second for all of you, the Board is in the midst of recasting our committees and every committee chair has been challenged to find at least one new member for their committee – so please see Sherry Fructerman, me or anyone on the Board if you are interested. We need your participation.

Third – and yes, I am finally getting to fund raising. In my four years on the Board, there are two financial issues that get most of our attention. First is our dues structure. We are a unique congregation, a unicorn. For 25-30% of our members the JCC is their only congregation, for the other 70-75% we are a second congregation. For that and a number of other reasons, we keep our dues as low as possible. During my research of the history of the JCC I found a letter from 1971, where the person, a new member, was forwarding his check for \$25 and said “at that bargain price, how could I not join.” Our dues today are \$600 a family/\$300 a single – and in my view that remains a bargain.

The second issue is how to maintain our beautiful building – you recall I mentioned earlier about the difficult environment we live with – and how that translates into building maintenance. We have had substantial expenses over the past two years, both here in the JCC and across the street at the Parsonage.

As we approached the 75th the Board of Trustees created a two-track fundraiser to try to mitigate both financial issues. Although you can designate to which track a donation was applied to, if not designated the donation/pledge will be split 50/50 between operating funds and a new Ner Tamid fund (“Eternal Light”) which is the JCC of LBI's first building maintenance fund (lots of fundraising to build the two building but now we have to maintain). This is the time of year when members make their high holy day

pledges/donations. And quite candidly our high holiday appeal is the JCC's primary source of funds. If you have already done so, thank you so much. But if you have not yet made your annual donation, I implore you to consider a separate donation to the Ner Tamid.

Shana Tovah! Jon Geier, JCC of LBI Vice President