

## **“Why I Became a Member of BCC” Drash for December 22, 2000 (Shabbat Chanukah)**

**By Jay Soloway**

Shabbat Shalom, Chag Sameach, good evening. My name is Jay Soloway, and I greet you tonight as a new member of BCC, as well as a member of the BCC Membership Committee. Allow me to extend a hearty welcome to all of our new members, whom we honor tonight, all of our other BCC members, and certainly all of our guests this evening.

Some of you may be wondering, “New member? I’ve seen this guy around for years!” That is true. I have been coming to BCC for High Holiday services, the community Seders at Passover, and the occasional Friday night service for a good number of years. But it was only this past year that I finally took the plunge, and became an official member of this wonderful shul. I’ll try to explain what triggered my decision to join in just a moment.

When I did join BCC, I did so in anticipation of becoming a fully active member, but with no particular preference as to what capacity in which I might volunteer my time. So when I met with Rabbi Edwards soon after joining, I told her that I’d be willing to go wherever the need was greatest.

It was longer than a nanosecond later, though not by much, that Davi Cheng (whom I am convinced lives right here at BCC) contacted me to say that BCC’s greatest need right now—besides money, of course—was to form a membership committee, and would I join? Of course, I said yes.

(By the way, the other members of this new committee are Arlene Krantz and Neil Klasky, with Davi serving as our chair. We can use some more help, so if any of you would like to join this committee, please see one of us at the oneg.)

At our first meeting, Davi, Arlene, Neil and I began to discuss our mission, and the kinds of activities we might undertake to attract new members and welcome them into the BCC family, as well as how we might maximize the satisfaction of our existing membership.

At one point in our meeting, someone (and I think it was Arlene) suggested that we come up with a list of all the benefits of membership at BCC.....and for a moment, all four of us sort of looked at each other.

I can’t say what was going through the others’ minds at that moment, but I will tell you what was going through mine: My God—on the one hand, there’s a huge number of things that might be considered benefits of membership at BCC.

On the other hand, there may be but a few, or perhaps just *one* thing that might move someone to join a shul—*this* shul, and that in the end, it really is a very personal and individual matter. I thought about all the possible reasons that someone might choose to join BCC.

Obviously, there’s the outreach and welcoming of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender *and* straight communities. This alone, I suppose, is reason enough for many of you here tonight to be members of BCC.

But also consider how ritual is handled at BCC. Regardless of your Jewish upbringing and preferred degree of religious orthodoxy, you will always feel comfortable and well taken care of here.

For those seeking Jewish adult education, BCC offers a veritable cornucopia.

Consider the opportunities at BCC to join others in Tikun Olam. Project Caring and Project Chicken Soup and Project Turning Point are but three examples of how BCCers can help improve the world. Consider, too, the opportunities at BCC to celebrate life cycle events. Think of the commitment ceremonies and weddings and aufraufs and b’nai mitzvah and birthdays and

anniversaries that have been celebrated in this sanctuary.

BCC offers its own special way of caring for members and their families and loved ones at times of sickness and death, as well.

Think of the children’s programming.

Consider the musical programming, thanks to Fran and the choir and the band.

I could go on and on.

So. Why did *I* join BCC after all these years?

I believe the catalyst was a significant change in my personal life this past year. My relationship of nearly twelve years came to an end. It was an amicable end, but an end nonetheless. Or, better said, this event in my life provided me with a new beginning—an opportunity to reshape my life, of which I gladly took great advantage.

As I pondered what shape and direction I wanted my new life to take, I needed to consider my past, seeking to identify those elements in my past experience that were most meaningful to me. My ruminations helped me better understand what role BCC had played in my life. I realized that all along, BCC provided me not only a sense of community, but an *unconditional* sense of community. On demand, no less. Whenever I felt like it, I could just show up at BCC, and feel welcomed and be embraced—both literally and figuratively. I could feel at home.

This is why **I** joined BCC.

I thank Rabbi Lisa and Tracy and Fran and Davi and everyone else amongst the congregation for making me feel so welcome here.

For all of you who are members, I hope your sense of connection to BCC is strong and keeps you a part of this family—my family—for a long time.

And for the guests amongst us tonight, I am living proof that it is never too late to join BCC.

Please do consider membership here, and allow yourselves to be welcomed into this loving community, just as I was.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach.