

## Temple Sinai Presidential Installation Speech

### Chuck Fox – Temple Sinai, President June 1, 2025

Good morning, everyone.

As my very first act as president, I want to announce a formal pardon for **Adam Mayer**—for blasphemy, heresy, and assorted acts of irreverence. Let it be known across Dupree Drive: his record is wiped clean! All jokes aside, we know Adam's humor and heart are a huge part of what makes this community special—we will miss him on the board after 15 straight years of service—but are thrilled he will be serving as a Past President on the Professional Relations Committee over the next two years.

Before we look ahead, let's pause to appreciate the journey that got us here—and the person who extended that journey *just a little bit longer* than he originally anticipated. **Robert Sinsheimer**, our beloved and longest-serving president—twice elected, twice committed, and, technically, two weeks overtime. His current term was extended because, well, the original date of this Annual Meeting fell smack in the middle of my twins' college graduations—both out of town, both on the same weekend, of course. Robert, thank you not only for your flexibility but for your enduring leadership, kindness, mentorship, and patience. You have been a steady hand and a generous heart, and I am so fortunate after two years learning by your side to be able to call you my close friend.

It is *bashert*, then, that we read Parshat Naso this coming week—the longest Torah portion in the Five Books of Moses. Like Robert's presidency, it lingers not just because of its length but because of its substance, structure, and care. As you have heard from **Berylann** in her D'var Torah, Naso attends to both personal and communal holiness with meticulous attention. So too, Robert, your presidency has been marked by an unwavering attention to every person, every project, and every value that makes Sinai, Sinai.

Whether it was the bylaw revisions, the congregational covenant, or even around the table dreaming goals into existence, Robert followed the lessons of Naso that teach us that leadership isn't about rushing through the work—but about honoring every offering—every voice. The Torah could have summarized, but, instead, it names each leader, each gift, person by person, item by item. That lesson compels us: no one is to be skipped or overlooked. Everyone counts. That is the intention I aim to carry forward in the years ahead.

So, what do we do next?

Anyone who has been in a meeting with me over the past two years knows that I hope to build on our Sinai value of maintaining a **Culture of Philanthropy**. This is not just about fundraising; it is about a sacred connection rooted in relationships and legacy. Just look around you at our sanctuary, our chapels, the Lehrman rabbinic garden, our school, the teva trail. Our generosity – your generosity - at Sinai has been so wonderful

over the past 57 years, and those of us in leadership have faith that this will continue with our current generation of members. We have seen so many individuals and families act to be a part of something bigger than themselves, a community and a future that provides inspiration for their Jewish family members and friends and, yes, those who will come after us as well.

As American Reform Rabbi Ferdinand Isserman said, “Pray as if everything depends upon God, and act as if everything depends upon you.” So, with our belief and trust in our membership in mind, we’ll also take meaningful steps to evaluate and improve our current development efforts, expand legacy giving, plan a celebratory gala next year to honor TSPreSchool’s 40th year—all while beginning to envision a 60th anniversary campaign a few years down the road that can further secure our future.

We also want to foster a culture where gratitude is not a transaction—it’s a mindset. Where our members and donors feel connected to – and proud of - the impact of their giving. We’ll enhance donor appreciation through personalized moments of thanks—and give our board members the tools to be not only stewards, but storytellers and ambassadors.

Next, we aim to **deepen membership engagement**—meeting people where they are and inviting us all into community with empathy and authenticity. We’ll ask each other, not just what we want from synagogue life—but what we hope to give to it. What brings us here? What keeps us rooted? We’ll invite conversations about our Jewish journeys, our aspirations, and our sense of belonging. Because when we truly share, and when we listen and feel heard, we build trust. And when we build trust, we build community.

Further, through digital innovation, video technology, social media, relational outreach, and tools like Salesforce, about which we heard earlier in this meeting, we can better understand and support our members in every phase of life.

We also hope to nurture the next generation of **Leaders at Sinai**. Our new VP of Spirituality **Lara Dorfman** is helping to lead a Sinai task force on leadership development that is assessing our current strengths and challenges and offering recommendations to create a sustainable pipeline of community builders. Ever appreciative of Atidaynu, the task force identified the need for a dedicated lay body—under the VP of Governance—to oversee the cultivation and engagement of leaders through training on a longitudinal basis. We aim to make leadership roles more accessible, purposeful, and inclusive, ensuring a robust and representative volunteer base for years to come.

We’ll strive for leadership built not only on skills—but on heart and reflection. We’ll also explore leadership opportunities beyond traditional structures—recognizing that leadership can take many forms. Whether it’s organizing a social action project, mentoring a teen, or helping shape our digital presence—every act of engagement matters. And we will strive to make sure our leadership is as diverse as our congregation from the standpoint of demographics as well as life experiences.

In education, our team will focus on **strengthening learning from birth to earth**—instilling Jewish pride, literacy, resilience, and a deep connection to Israel. We want our kids to leave pre-school, Noar and our teen programming not only knowing *what* we do as Jews, but *why*. Let's continue bringing joy and relevance to Jewish learning—for our children, teens, and adults. And let's prepare them for the world we are launching them into with cogent and fact-based methods to fight the antisemitism that has sadly reemerged.

We'll continue to embrace compelling models of adult learning, from immersive retreats to speaker series to deep dives into modern Jewish identity. Our exemplary education team is never afraid to experiment with new and innovative vehicles for Jewish learning, and even as we tout our many successes, we are excited because there are still opportunities to grow further as a center for thought, growth, and meaningful dialogue.

When it comes to action, we're excited to **reignite our commitment to justice and community values**. With the launch of our new congregational approach to Tzedek initiatives which is transparent, congregant-driven, and process-based AND an intentional deepening and living of our Culture of Belonging, we hope Sinai continues to be not just a synagogue—but a force for good in the world.

*Let's regularly assess whether our actions align with our values—and when they don't, let's be brave enough to adjust. Let's keep listening—to our members, to our neighbors, to the world around us—and let that listening shape our justice work.*

And throughout all of this, we'll strive to lead with kavannah—intention—with ritual that simultaneously grounds us and connects us to something bigger than ourselves and prayer that amplifies our innermost aspirations for healing, protection, and gratitude. The *Hashkiveinu* prayer asks God to:

וּפְרוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹמְךָ “spread over us the shelter of Your peace”

וּשְׁמֹר צֵאתֵנוּ וּבֹאֵנוּ guard our departure and our arrival.”

That is my prayer for us during this moment of transition. That we move forward safely, meaningfully, and together. That we continue to welcome people into spiritual practice that feels accessible, uplifting, and relevant. That we make space for awe, for stillness, for connection.

I want to extend my deepest thanks and **MAZAL TOV on your installation** to our newly-minted Executive Committee, and to our full Board of Trustees. Thank you for your vision, your accountability, and your belief in what we can build together. To all our committee members, task force participants, and volunteers—you are the heartbeat of this synagogue. Your time and talent are the threads that hold our community together.

And to our entire membership—thank you for showing up, for believing in our future, and for making Sinai your spiritual home.

To our clergy—Rabbis Ron, Brad, Sam, and Natan, and Cantor Beth—our senior staff, including Jack, Shelly, Marisa, Jamah, and Shanna. To our entire professional team, our teachers, our tutors, our maintenance staff and security personnel. Thank you for your expertise, your commitment, your professionalism and your Gute Neshamas and your menschlikeit.

This morning's meeting has outlined so many of the remarkable successes we accomplished together over the past year. And it has also laid out just how much we still have left to do. Temple Sinai can be a masterpiece and a work in progress simultaneously. That's not a contradiction—it's our strength. *Using our secure foundation as an anchor of the Jewish community, we can take chances, strive to improve ourselves, be bold in our new initiatives, and branch out even further than we already have to meet the challenges that our future brings.*

Our task now is to take what Robert and those before him have handed to us—and shape it with purpose and heart. Because as we've learned from Naso, and from life itself, the details matter. Every offering matters. Every person matters. And so does every next step.

I want to take a special moment to acknowledge and thank our brand-new president-elect, **Emily Webb**. Emily is smart, thoughtful, kind, and deeply dedicated to this community. We are incredibly fortunate that she has agreed to step into this role, and I know Temple Sinai will be in extraordinary hands when her time comes.

Lastly to my children, Sydney and Ben, you both graduated from college last week and I am so happy and honored you both chose to attend today's meeting. Mom and I are both proud to help lead the Atlanta Jewish community, and we hope you'll take to heart how essential it is not just to our survival, but to our flourishing, that we all embrace the opportunities we have to contribute in our own unique way. To all our current and former Sinai Noar, bar mitzvah and confirmation kids who are or soon to be "adulthood," we as leaders at Sinai hope that you will find meaning and belonging in Judaism, and that your parents will continue to pass this value of community involvement on to you all. L'dor v'dor, from generation to generation.

Again, thank you all for trusting me to help lead Sinai forward. Let's embrace the future—grounded in our Temple Sinai values and open to bold, forward-thinking initiatives. Let's move forward not with fear, but with conviction and courage. Let's build on the good, confront the difficult, and continue to commit ourselves to being the kind of Jewish community that is always guided by vision, soul, and an unwavering belief that tomorrow is pregnant with possibility.

Now that this speech, which was almost as long as the parsha and Robert's tenure combined, is over... Let's get to work. And let's make it matter. Amen.