

Good morning everyone. I became a member of Beth El Synagogue in Waterbury at age 8. I grew up in that synagogue. My family celebrated most of our life cycle events there – b'nai mitzvot, wedding anniversaries, my niece's baby naming, and unfortunately my grandparents' and my parents' funerals.

I had attended Kol Ami services once during its first summer at Beth David and a couple of times on Shabbat mornings at the VFW hall. The first time I ever wore a tallis was in the VFW hall. It belonged to my father. He was in the Intensive Care Unit of Yale New Haven Hospital but was with me in spirit as I wrapped his tallis around me. Yet I remained a member of Beth El in Waterbury.

After my father's passing, I decided I needed a change. I was the youngest person attending Shabbat morning services at Beth El, by a generation. I needed some place with people closer to my age. During the summer of 2000, I joined Kol Ami. It was an extremely difficult decision leaving my "home".

My first official service at Kol Ami was Rosh Hashanah at the Highland Avenue School. As I entered the room where services were being held, Lou Kugell came up to me, as he did this morning, and gave me a hug and a kiss. He wished me a "Shanah Tovah" and asked how I was. Every year at Beth El, on the High Holidays, Lou was an usher. This is how I had been greeted every Rosh Hashanah. Other friends of mine from Beth El greeted me and introduced me to people who would become friends. I knew I had found my new home.

When I enter Kol Ami, whether for services or a meeting, the outside world stays outside. This is my other home and nothing can bother me here. I don't allow it. Maybe this is why I am usually the last one to leave the building.

From my family to yours, a healthy and happy 5769.

Ethel Marcus