

Los Angeles, November 9, 1993, the day before the "Kristall-Nacht" in Germany.

Dear Friends and Fellow-Members:

My name is Judith Whitelaw. I am sure I am totally unknown to you. Well, just before the High Holidays, I became a member of "Temple Beth Zion".

The first time I attended services was on Shevuoth. I stayed for Yizkor and to the end of the Service. Something unusual for me. Since a tragedy struck my family, I walked out of every other congregation I went to. It might be hard for others to understand; I just felt I did not belong there. But, the moment I entered Temple Beth Zion, I felt a peacefulness coming over me, which I so badly needed, and I said to myself, "this will be your 'spiritual' home from now on". I also promised myself to go back to my roots. Coming from a very religious family, I decided to attend Shabbos service like we did at home, just the way it was in Breslau where I was born. The Holidays were indeed a pleasant experience for me. I enjoyed the service and the Temple was filled to capacity. Coming back the following Shabbos, I could not believe what I saw. There was barely any Minyan. Where were all the people I saw at the High Holidays? I talked with Rabbi Tenenbaum about it and asked him if I could do something to increase the attendance and get more people to come to the shabbos service. He suggested I go ahead. This is the reason I am writing this letter to you today. You see, 55 years ago on the exact date all the Synagogues in Germany were burned to the ground. There were no more Temples left for us to go to worship. I was there. I saw it happen. I was born in Germany.

Here we are blessed to have a wonderful Rabbi and Cantor and nobody comes. It is sad. Attending the Shabbos service is always a learning experience for me. Not too many Rabbis explain the Torah Readings, the Haftarah or Prayer Book like Rabbi Tenenbaum does. My message to you is 'make coming to Temple a habit'. It is a good one indeed. You will never regret it, and above all you will see the biggest smile on Rabbi Tenenbaum's face. Then I will be glad I wrote you this letter.

Most cordially,  
Judith Whitelaw