

**48th Annual Mayor's Community Breakfast**

**Speech delivered by Mayor Fuller at the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Theodore D. Mann Mayor's Community Breakfast  
5/25/22**

On April 27th, I joined in a circle of remembrance at the Oak Hill Middle School to honor and celebrate the lives of four youngsters—Steve, Kayla, Greg and Melissa. They died on a school trip 21 years ago when their bus flipped on an icy Canadian highway.

As we finished up, Elaine Alpert, Steve's mom, invited her cousin Ellen Stettner, a cantor, to sing a prayer of healing, the Mi Shebeirach.

The words and the music were powerful that night and I found myself returning to the prayer repeatedly in the days that followed as the refrain of finding the courage to make our lives a blessing and helping those in need of healing had struck a chord.

I invite Cantor DJ Fortine of Hebrew College to sing this beautiful prayer. Follow along with him.

*Mi Shebeirach: A Prayer for Healing*

*Mi shebeirach avoteinu*

*M'kor hab'racha l'imoteinu*

*May the source of strength*

*Who blessed the ones before us*

*Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing*

*And let us say Amen*

*Mi shebeirach imoteinu*

*M'kor habrachah l'avoteinu*

*Bless those in need of healing with r'fuah sh'leimah (with a full recovery)*

*The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit*

*And let us say Amen*

Both I as an individual and, I think, we as a community desperately need right now both the courage to make our lives a blessing as well as the renewal of body and spirit.

We are living in a broken world, full of hurt: persistent inequities, mental health struggles, financial hardships, illness and death from COVID, climate change, and a war in Ukraine.

We're still reeling from the racist shooting in Buffalo and now we have to speak about the unspeakable, at least another 19 children and two fourth grade teacher shot dead inside the Robb Elementary School in Texas.

*We need help to find the courage to make our lives a blessing.*

We need help to find the courage and strength to build lives of meaning and blessing. For me, this means common sense gun laws. We've done our part in Newton and in the State, now Congress must step up. It also means working purposefully to share our blessings with each other and across our city, continuously striving to strengthen Newton as a community that welcomes all and brings hope to the hopeless.

This morning, the power of community and connection in this tent and across zoom helps me, and I believe helps us, find that courage to make our lives a blessing.

For by breaking bread together, we are giving sustenance to Newton as a community of caring.

We are finding the courage to keep going, to move forward in kindness and generosity of spirit with each other and toward our neighbors from different villages, from different backgrounds, from different faith traditions and, here in Newton, with different opinions on just about everything. As the Mi Sheberiach reminds us, we must extend our compassion and prayer for healing not only to those like ourselves, but to *all humankind*.

*We need to find the courage to make our lives a blessing.*

For we live together. We work together. We always need each other; this interdependence has been especially clear in this time of duress and stress, in this period of change, and in the too many hours of mourning.

I have been buoyed personally and we as a city have been blessed with the courage and caring of the people who have worked so hard to make this a better City and School District. May I ask both our current and any former employees of our City and Schools to stand so we may thank you?

I am also sustained because I know deep in my heart that we are a city filled deep with compassion and so many of us are serving as allies to each other as we stand up, speak out, and address systemically hate and bias and say, "Not in my City; not in Newton."