Commemoration
(From page VS-8)
whenever possible, that hate has no place in our hearts, in our community, or in our nation,” added Wolbransky, who is also the cantor of Shirat Hayam synagogue in Ventnor.

“It’s important to focus on 9/11, not for the horrific attack, but for the unity experienced afterward,” said AC Councilman and activist Kaleem Shabazz, a member of the Atlantic City mosque Masjid Muhammad and leader of Bridges of Faith, a community-wide interfaith group. After 9/11, “we had a feeling of brotherhood and sisterhood” that is now receding, he noted. “Today, we will try to get it back. “Let us work together to disrupt the cycle of violence that our own nation has also played a role in perpetuating, said Fortune.

“I believe humanity’s default setting is goodness,” she said, adding that when one group feels attacked, they will attack back. “Let us work together to disrupt the cycle of violence between people and within our hearts,” said Fortune.

“In so many ways our nation is broken and yet there are rays of light,” Rabbi David Weis of Congregation Beth Israel in Northfield told those assembled. Among those rays, he noted, was the fact that “we are standing here together.”

“Peace starts with us,” said Reverend Dawn Fortune of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Pomona; it starts in our own hearts, minds, communities and nations, and flows out from there. “My faith calls me to see the humanity and dignity of all people. How can I see the humanity in hijackers?” she asked, referring to the terrorists who perpetrated 9/11. To do so might be difficult, but was necessary for healing the future and ending the cycle of violence that our own nation has also played a role in perpetuating, said Fortune.

“In an unusual benediction, Reverend William Williams of the Asbury Methodist Church in Atlantic City concluded the speaker presentations by asking everyone to “take out a pen” and write down “your goal, your steps” to fulfill the urgent need for change. Their speeches were interspersed with inspirational performances by church and synagogue choirs, as well as by professional singer Suad El-Amin and the Sally Mitlas Ensemble, which performed several songs in Hebrew.

The choir also came together in the end for a truly moving combined performance of “Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor”—a musical rendition of Emma Lazarus’ famous poem on the Statue of Liberty—and all attendees were asked to raise their voices together for “God Bless America” and the National Anthem, which were passionately and impeccably led by Dr. Beverly Vaughan of Stockton University. Donations were also taken for the Jewish Federation’s Hurricane Relief Fund.

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