

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS*
RABBI SEARCH
09/2019

***This document will be updated periodically throughout the rabbi search process.**

1. Rabbi Jacob has been Shaare Torah's only rabbi. How we will find anyone to fill his shoes?

As a congregation we were so fortunate to have Rabbi Jacob for the past 20 years. He was an incredible force who was instrumental in shaping our community. That said, we are not looking for a rabbi to "fill his shoes." We see this moment as an opportunity for the community to grow and evolve based on the foundation that Rabbi Jacob helped the community to establish. This is precisely why the rabbi search is so exciting for the congregation.

2. Undertaking a rabbi search is such a big task. How does the Rabbi Search Team (RST) plan to take on this task? How is the RST organized?

Fortunately, the RST isn't doing this alone! The search for a new rabbi involves the entire community, and we are striving for 100% participation in the process. The RST intends to facilitate that involvement and steward the process.

We expect the search to take most of this year, following the rough schedule below:

Rob Ritter and Adam Simon co-chair the RST. The remaining members of the RST each lead an area of responsibility which breaks down as follows:

- Communications - Corrin Ferber
- Engagement - Judy Potasznik & Liron Silbert
- Town Hall - Wendy Fischman & Avi Friedman
/Focus Group
- Surveys - Rob Petroff
- Position Description - Gary Robinson & Judy Barr
- Applicant Visit Logistics - Howard Kass

You may contact any or all the members of the RST at RabbiSearch@ShaareTorah.Org.

3. How will the RST receive feedback from the Congregation?

The RST is taking a multi-pronged approach to determining the rabbinic skills and vision that most reflect Shaare Torah. To hear all the voices of Shaare Torah, we will provide multiple opportunities for you to influence the process – by responding to a survey, participating in a focus group or a town hall meeting, sharing your input verbally or through our dedicated rabbi search email box. The dates for these events will be posted in the weekly synagogue newsletter and in dedicated emails.

Please mark your calendars as you are invited to attend any one of the following (more information to follow):

- Sunday Morning, September 22, in the Lakelands after Religious School drop off
- Monday Morning, September 23 at Shaare Torah after ECC drop off
- Wednesday Evening, September 25: Open Town Hall, including small Focus Groups at Shaare Torah
- Sunday Evening, October 6: Open Town Hall, including small Focus Groups at Shaare Torah
- Thursday Evening, October 17: Sukkot Focus Groups in homes and sukkot throughout the community, including Gaithersburg, Rockville/Potomac, Bethesda, and Olney (and/or Germantown/Boyd)

Please note that all focus groups (including those associated with school drop off times) are open to the entire community. **Our goal is for every adult to attend one focus group.** Please pick the time and location that is most convenient for you. **We hope that you will sign up in advance using [this link](#)**, but please attend even if you do not sign up in advance. Signing up will ensure that we have the correct number of facilitators and to help us properly plan for your attendance.

The above focus groups are geared toward adults. Stay tuned for an announcement soon for exciting and age-appropriate opportunities for children and teens to lend their voices to the process!

Following these focus groups, we will also release a survey, seeking to reach as many people as possible and validate what we hear at the focus groups.

4. How will the feedback be used?

The RST will synthesize all the feedback congregants provide through the various modalities to determine the congregation's priorities in selecting a rabbi. The RST will then build a job description based on that feedback and ask applicants initial interview questions reflective of our community's priorities. Based on those interviews we will invite select candidates to visit, and there will be multiple opportunities for the congregation to meet them and provide feedback directly to the RST.

5. *What is the role of the Conservative Movement in our search?*

We are conducting this search in partnership with the Rabbinical Assembly (RA), which is the international association of Conservative Rabbis (that happens to have a new Chief Executive named Jacob Blumenthal), and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), which represents the entirety of the movement's interests. Both the RA and USCJ have provided us with advice, templates, and support. Our job description is distributed through the RA to its network of rabbis.

6. *What should I do if a rabbi asks me about Shaare Torah's search? What should I do if I know of a rabbi I think would be a good fit for Shaare Torah?*

Anyone potentially interested in the position should go through the RA-managed job board (see above). You can also always be in touch with the RST (RabbiSearch@shaaretorah.org) if you have any questions.

7. *How can I help? And how can I provide feedback?*

The most important thing you can do is participate and provide feedback! There will be many opportunities for you to provide feedback about the characteristics and skillset you think are most important to have in Shaare Torah's next rabbi. You will receive monthly email updates as well as email communication to announce an opportunity for participation or other developments. Opportunities to participate include completing a survey, attending a Town Hall meeting and attending a focus group. You will be asked for feedback at each event and you may also send questions and concerns to RabbiSearch@ShaareTorah.org.

Also, we will want to put our best foot forward when candidates are visiting! Shaare Torah is an incredibly welcoming place, and the spirit that brought us to this community is what we expect will help us recruit an exceptional new rabbi.

8. *Does the congregation have a say in the final decision?*

In short, yes! Congregational input is key to every stage of this process, leading up to the final decision. The RST will make a recommendation to the Board based on everyone's input. Then, the Board will vote whether to present the candidate to the congregation for a final vote.