



The mandate of the Rabbinic Search Committee is to conduct a formal search for a senior rabbi for Congregation Sukkat Shalom. As a committee, we will conduct this sacred mission in an open, collaborative, dedicated, unbiased, confidential manner in the best interests of the Congregation.

Date: November 22, 2023
To: Congregation Sukkat Shalom
From: Rabbinic Search Committee (RSC)
RE: Selection of Rabbi Brian Immerman for Senior Rabbi beginning July 1, 2023

We are extremely pleased to announce that on Sunday, November 20, the Rabbinic Search Committee (RSC) came to a unanimous and enthusiastic recommendation for the next senior rabbi of Congregation Sukkat Shalom, Rabbi Brian Immerman. We believe he embodies all the qualities identified as important to our congregants – he is warm and intellectual, he values relationships, is a gifted sermonizer, has a demonstrated commitment to interfaith, LGBTQ and social justice work and has excellent, relevant experience and references. We could not be more pleased that he has accepted our non-binding offer.

A Review of our Process:

In January 2021, upon the announcement of Rabbi Sam Gordon's transition to emeritus status, committee chairs were appointed for both the Transition Committee and Rabbinic Search Committee (RSC), with board consent. As a member of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), Sukkat Shalom is required to follow URJ's recommended practices on how to handle rabbinic searches, which requires a rigorous, completely confidential search process and utilization of placement services through the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). Accordingly, the congregation entered into a contract with the CCAR to begin the application process.

During the spring of 2021, under the direction of the Transition Committee, chaired by John Kupper, we conducted a congregational survey and multiple focus groups to collect input for our search process. Uncountable staff and volunteer hours went into creating a beautiful application. As required by CCAR, the co-chairs of the RSC formed a 14-member search committee from every member demographic of our congregation to work autonomously with the mandate of selecting a senior rabbi. Beginning in May of 2021, the RSC met weekly, creating a working covenant, taking direction from CCAR, participating in implicit bias training and reporting regularly to the Transition Committee. In 2021, the RSC vetted 17 rabbinic candidates. The search of 2021 ended with Rabbi Carlie Daniels being promoted as acting senior rabbi.

The RSC gave a full report to the board on how to re-tool the process and recommended next steps for a 2022 search early in 2022. This year, all 14 members of the RSC thankfully returned, fully committed to another search and brought in a rabbinic search consultant, Rabbi Steven Kaye. On August 1, 2022, we again entered into placement with CCAR and submitted our updated application for senior rabbi. The RSC received another 17 resumes, made 10 introductory calls, conducted 8 interviews (first and second), contacted 25 references, had a total of 230 congregants attend three separate town hall sessions. As we came down to three finalists, the RSC brought them to meet with staff and clergy, toured them around the area and had them meet with congregants in a "town hall" setting. We compiled extensive confidential dossiers on each candidate: resumes, reference summaries, congregational input, feedback from existing staff and clergy, as well as input from each of

the RSC members, and re-reviewed sermons and interviews. The bottom of this letter summarizes a small portion of this input.

With the unanimous support of the Board of Directors, we confidently present this information along with our recommendation to the members of Congregation Sukkat Shalom to elect Rabbi Brian Immerman our next Senior Rabbi.

Respectfully and joyfully submitted,

Co-Chairs *Andrea Pauls Backman and Cathy Baker*

RSC members *Bob Breit, Shoshana Buchholtz-Miller, Jim Denton, Kaitlin Donnelly, Lisa Fingerhut Carlton, Abbey Fishman Romanek, Doug Fisher, Steven Horwitz, Ron Packowitz, Debbie Plager, Jill Schoeneman-Parker and Adam Siegel*

Responses from Congregation based on the Town Hall:

I think he would fit in very well overall, I felt quite positive about Rabbi Immerman. I found him to be warm & welcoming, focused on building relationships, and committed to social justice efforts. He seemed earnest & eager about wanting to lead Sukkat Shalom.

Knowledgeable. Personable. Energetic. Many strong attributes. Quick to deliver thoughtful responses. Confident. Did his homework.

I thought he demonstrated the ability to connect with our older members as well as younger members which is so important at our transition. I also feel he has no agenda other than observing the needs of the Temple.

Rabbi Immerman was terrific. He was clearly intelligent and articulate, but also very warm, relatable and personable. I really liked what he said about bringing people into the Jewish faith and it's clear that he loves what he does. As a congregant who is on the older side of the community, I could see calling on him in times of need... He has a comforting presence.

Think he's a perfect fit. He seems personable and charismatic. I liked his enthusiasm and he seems like he would be an engaging rabbi.

Warm persona. Articulate speaker (including the sermons I have listened to online). He appears to have capacity to bring new ideas and is open to listening. I was impressed and pleased to see him as a candidate.

I think he is an excellent match for our congregation on spiritual, political, community, and personal levels. I was definitely impressed.