

Shalom! I feel so very honored that I will be serving you as your incoming cantor and collaborate with such an amazing team!

Throughout the interviewing, researching, conversing, presenting, and more, I have really had a lovely experience getting to know more about Woodlands Community Temple, members, and staff.

Due to the pandemic, it was virtual interviewing. So, I am definitely looking forward to meeting everyone in person. I was happy that Rabbi Billy sent me pictures of the sanctuary with the flexible seating, the High Holy Day tent, and lawn, and more to give me a feel of Woodlands.

The congregational interviewing experience kind of reminds me of the dating world. Cantors and congregations are searching for their best match. And if they're lucky, they find their professional b'sheret. I was searching for a creative and collaborative pulpit with a congregational family: A community where I could see myself being a part of for the long-term.

One of the questions that the committee asked me was, "What inspired you to apply specifically with Woodlands?"

In addition to the qualities I just mentioned, I was very impressed by the variety of services you have, some of which include, A Joyful Noise, Mishpacha Shabbat, and Jammin' Shabbat. You really make it your own home. You even have your own prayer books that you wrote "the Woodlands way."

The longevity in how long your clergy have been at Woodlands speaks for itself...and in having the opportunity to better get to know them I can certainly understand and appreciate how wonderful of a team you have.

You are also a congregational family. You really put the “C” in WCT. Community is what it’s all about: working together where every person counts. Even tonight is a great example, where the congregation voting took place and each of you had a vote and are a part of this wonderful moment.

Another question the committee asked me was, “What do you enjoy most about being a cantor?”

There are so many things that come to mind which focus on utilizing music as a vehicle for serving the community in a variety of different ways including different musical choirs and bands, classes, and services. If I had to choose one thing, then I would say it’s being with a family as they celebrate simchas, or happy life cycle events together. I love watching parents gleam over their child for their bar or bat mitzvah after having worked with the student and family along the way. And it is extra special to develop a relationship with the family where I may then be able to celebrate, and perhaps officiate, other wonderful future occasions with them as well. It feels like you’re part of the extended family in that sense. This again, sounds to me like the Woodlands way, and I’m all in!

When opportunity permits, I like to provide at least a line or reference of Torah. This week we reach the end of Leviticus. And whenever we conclude a book of Torah, it is a tradition to chant the words, “Chazak, chazak, v’nitchazeik”...which mean, “Be strong, be strong, and let us be strengthened.” It’s a different world we live in, and we are going through new obstacles. Yet, we find ways to grow and be resilient in the face of adversity. I remember at summer camp, we had a team growth experience with a ropes course where we needed to find a way to get over a wall. The wall was literally a wall but it was also thought of in the

figurative sense. We needed the help of each other in order to all make it over. There was no way for one individual to do it alone. Working together, building bridges, tikkun olam, and being there for each other emotionally will allow for us to persevere the challenging times and become stronger. So, “chazak, chazak, v’nitchazeik...be strong, be strong, and let us be strengthened.” As a community, may we continue to strengthen one another through mitzvot, prayer, social action, and kindness.

I want to thank the entire search committee, leadership, staff, clergy team, and all of you. I am sincerely grateful to be welcomed in so warmly as part of your congregational family! Todah Rabbah...Thank you so much!