

Seven years ago, I called the Temple Sinai office hoping to understand the temple's direction on being open and inclusive to those of us in the LGBTQ community. I was thrilled to find out that our congregation was welcoming to all and was looking forward to meeting some new friends who also identified as LGBTQ. You see, while living and working in Stamford, I had been traveling down to Manhattan most Shabbats to pray with other like-minded Jews and the commute was challenging. Most Fridays, it took two hours to find my way to the Upper West Side which didn't put me in the right frame of mind to start Shabbat. While I had a nice group of friends from the LGBTQ community there, it was hard to connect with them beyond Shabbat.

After some deliberation, I decided to join Temple Sinai and immerse myself in the congregation. I simultaneously began my search for those who also identified within the LGBTQ community. Seven years later, here's what I've observed.

Under Rabbi TelRav's leadership, we have forged a partnership with the Triangle Community Center (TCC) in Norwalk. The TCC is Fairfield County's leading provider of programming and resources to nurture growth and connection within the LGBTQ community. Some of our congregants are volunteering at the TCC, providing valuable resources to this important agency.

In addition to establishing a partnership with the TCC, Rabbi TelRav has led our annual participation in Pride in the Park (a festival celebrating the LGBTQ community in Fairfield County). It should be noted that we are the only Jewish organization that consistently participates in this festival.

Our clergy has created an annual Pride Service which is growing to be an important service in our community. So many who attended our 2017 Pride service commented on how meaningful it was that the Rainbow Flag is proudly displayed on a permanent basis in our sanctuary. I believe we are the only congregation in Fairfield County to display the Pride Flag permanently.

June was Pride month and I'm extremely pleased with the progress that we, as a congregation, have made at being inclusive to all. I'm even more excited at the opportunity that lies ahead for all of us to do even more. So, here's the challenge. How do we broaden our *kehilah kedoshah* (sacred community) and bring even more from the LGBTQ community to join our congregation? Who do you know who is looking for a sacred community where they can experience spiritual growth?

As I enter my second (and last) year as your president, I will make this outreach one of my priorities. I will work alongside Rabbi TelRav and the Membership Committee to expand the awareness of our efforts and to make Temple Sinai the place for the LGBTQ community to worship in Stamford. I know that Rabbi and I can't do it alone. Please let me know if you're willing to lean in and help lead this important work. Growth can happen here only if we do this together.

For those of you who are wondering if I made the right decision seven years ago to join Temple Sinai, the answer is yes! And I know that there are many others in the LGBTQ who would feel the same way. Now let's invite them in.

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