

RABBI'S RESPONSA

Shalom L'Kulam — Peace, All,

How many tasks have you got on your to-do list that you never get around to tackling because there is always something more pressing standing in the way? Maybe they are small goals like polishing those shoes that have been looking shabby for too long or they might be more significant goals like enrolling in a new class or updating your will to include Temple Sinai in your list of charities worthy of receiving one of your legacy gifts. Whatever the nature, there are goals we each have on our lists that we rarely get around to because life gets in the way. Wouldn't it be nice if we could put life on hold for a bit? The reason I'm dreaming aloud is because we're heading into January and I'm going to attempt to do just that.

With my last contract renewal, the temple leadership and I agreed to a progressively designed model of rabbinic sabbatical. Traditionally, clergy arrange for a six-month sabbatical retreat from the daily grind of congregational work in order to study, write, meditate and generally recharge before returning to the routines. In lieu of that, we have agreed to a three-week sabbatical (from the same Hebrew root as - Shabbat) annually to give me sacred work time away from the daily tasks to focus on the bigger learning goals and congregational growth that I hope to effect.

January, with its threat of blizzards, leaves us with few families scheduling b'nai mitzvah and a perfect time to tackle those high-value but low urgency goals. Cantor Micah will step into the role of primary clergy and the office staff are ready to handle all your requests. You can read more about my sabbatical on the Temple Sinai – Clergy & Staff website page, but for now, here is what I'm planning to do with that sacred time.

My guess is that most of you are not yet aware of a program into which I have been accepted. The Clergy Leadership Incubator (CLI) is two-year curriculum now running its fourth cohort. It selects 20 rabbis across denominations who are at least five years into their rabbinate (but no more than 15), and who have big ideas but need an incubator to help develop and implement them. I've been matched with a mentor as well as three other participants in the cohort with whom to work closely. We meet, virtually, each month plus we will attend three retreats to gather and intensively focus ourselves. Locally, I've already put together my Design Team consisting of a small group of experts who can help me plan our path together and am only now beginning to share pieces of the developing picture with the community.

You'll hear more about this in coming months, but the sneak peek is that the leadership of the congregation is laying out an 18-year plan for the congregation. We are developing structures within Temple Sinai that enhance our – Kehillah Kedoshah – Sacred Community. This includes creating a team of guides who will work with every interested member to develop an IJP – an Individual Jewish Program (based on the idea of an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) for students in school to personalize an educational approach perfectly suited to them).

Our Sinai Circles, intentionally small affinity groups, will grow exponentially as more self-identified

leaders seek to create and share opportunities to deepen relationships, enhance their own growth and create meaningful spaces for themselves. The ongoing covenant between God and our people demands participation from each of us just as we expect something in return. Every one of you will be essential as we turn our focus from “a temple organization that provides for your Jewish needs” to “a community based upon covenantal, two-way relationships.” Only together can we realize the most powerful potential that 21st century Judaism has to offer – a path towards our highest and best self, alongside others on their same journey.

I'd LOVE to share more with you, one-on-one and to help you find your place in Sinai's future...when I return in February!

L'Shalom – In Peace,
Rabbi Jay TelRav