

Letter #4 to the Community on the Rabbi Search Process
January 18, 2010

Dear JCA Community,

Mark your calendars! We have two rabbi candidates coming to town. On the weekend of January 29, 30, 31, 2010, Rabbi Nathan Martin will be coming to the JCA and on the weekend of Feb 19, 20, 21 Rabbi Benjamin Weiner will be with us. We are continuing to interview by phone and in person a number of others so there may well be one or two more candidates. A full weekend of activities is planned for the candidates and there will be many chances for you to offer your feedback. These candidates have already been through two interviews by the screening committee. Now it is your turn. Please join us in welcoming them to the JCA.

Rabbi Nathan Martin is a 2006 graduate of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. He holds a BA in Political Science from Stanford University (1988) and an MA in International Relations from Johns Hopkins University (1991). He is currently the Assistant Director of the University of Michigan Hillel in Ann Arbor, MI and has also served as a Rabbinic Intern and an Interim Rabbi at various congregations. Prior to becoming a rabbi he was a Scientific Engineering Associate at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California. Rabbi Martin's stated rabbinic goals are:

- Support the growth of a spiritually vibrant and engaging Jewish congregation.
- Create an intellectually stimulating environment for Jewish learning and practice.
- Nurture a culture of caring in which congregants celebrate and support each other.
- Help strengthen our communal capacity to act as 'shomrei adamah,' guardians of the earth and 'rodfei shalom,' pursuers of peace.

Rabbi Benjamin Weiner is a 2008 graduate of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. He holds a BA in English Literature from Columbia College (1995) and an M.Phil. in Irish Literature from Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland (1999). He is currently the rabbi and Director of Education at Mishkan Ha'am in Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. and has also served as a High Holiday cantor, Rabbinic Intern, and chaplain. Prior to becoming a rabbi he worked as a journalist, book reviewer, and essayist on Jewish philosophy, communal politics, finance, culture, and comparative religion. In Rabbi Weiner's letter of interest he says the following about his philosophy:

“My Reconstructionist orientation has ... helped me to re-envision how a rabbi serves a Jewish congregation. The fact that you have named yourselves a 'Jewish Community', as opposed, for instance, to a temple or synagogue, is very telling and very in keeping with my own sensibilities. Though I love those aspects of spiritual leadership that can emanate from the bimah of a synagogue, including exegesis of Torah and the musical facilitation of prayer, I have never been entirely comfortable with the term 'pulpit rabbi.' The pulpit, whatever it looks like, is one element of a larger phenomenon: one facet of the deeper task of creating a robust and welcoming Jewish communal home. For this reason, I've taken to referring to myself as a 'communal rabbi', one who seeks to engage individual Jews where they are, and lead them through their own gateways into larger Jewish fellowship.”

The schedule of times for the community-at-large to meet the candidates is as follows.

Friday night services at 6:15 PM. The candidates will conduct the service and offer a brief d'var torah. Oneg to follow service and informal time with the rabbi

Saturday morning services at 10:00 AM. The candidates will lead services, read from the Torah and present d'var torah. There will be a Kiddush following services and Rabbi Nathan will lead a short teaching on TuBishvat, the birthday of the Trees.

Sunday morning 11:45 – 12:15. Hebrew School Learners' Minyan which is open to all.
Sunday 12:45 - 2:00. Open meeting for the congregation – question and answer session with the candidate.

Feedback forms will be available to you at all services and congregational meetings during the candidate weekends. Your voices are essential to our process, so please come, meet the candidate and give us your feedback.

Sincerely,

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