

## **TBS TRANSITION FAQs (Summer 2019)**

Temple B'nai Shalom is at the halfway mark in our transition toward finding a new settled rabbi. Here is an update to our Transition FAQs:

### **1) WHAT HAPPENED IN THE PAST YEAR TO POSITION US TO HIRE OUR NEXT SENIOR RABBI?**

Our interim senior rabbi, Rabbi Darryl Crystal, began his two-year term last July. Besides his congregational duties, Rabbi Crystal is an invaluable resource for Rabbinic Transition. We have formed a very active Search Committee and Transition Committee. Both groups are guided closely and assisted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) and the transition staff of the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ). This spring, over 300 congregants took part in our Self Study process which included focus groups and an online survey. We collected extensive information on TBS's strengths, culture, and areas respondents would like to see enhanced. We also got congregants' ideas for the role of our next Rabbi. The study highlights were sent to the congregation in a TBS email blast on June 28<sup>th</sup> and appear at the end of the FAQs for your information.

### **2) WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?**

Members of the Search Committee are filling out the standard application that will be posted by the CCAR. The results of the Self Study (the Focus Groups and the online survey results) will be weighted heavily in the process. The committee also met with Rabbi Rappaport and our staff to obtain their insights and opinions on what the actual job of TBS Rabbi entails from the clergy and staff perspectives. The first draft of the application will be presented to the full committee in late July. The Board will review the final application. The final version of the application will be submitted in late August.

### **3) CAN RABBI CRYSTAL APPLY FOR THE SETTLED RABBI POSITION?**

No. CCAR rules, which TBS accepts and included in our contract with Rabbi Crystal, specifically exclude an interim rabbi from applying for the settled rabbi position.

### **4) CAN RABBI RAPPAPORT APPLY FOR THE SETTLED RABBI POSITION?**

Yes. Internal candidates are welcome to apply. CCAR has given the Search Committee guidance on this issue should Rabbi Rappaport choose to apply.

### **5) IF I KNOW OF SOMEONE WHO I THINK WOULD BE A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR OUR SETTLED RABBI, HOW WOULD I CONNECT HIM/HER TO THE SEARCH COMMITTEE?**

Anyone interested in applying must do so through the CCAR. There are no short cuts nor can TBS accept an application directly from a candidate. The CCAR reviews and processes all applications before forwarding them to TBS.

### **6) WHAT HAPPENS WHEN APPLICATIONS START COMING IN?**

Once applications start arriving the process becomes on-going. The Search Committee will convene as often as necessary to review candidates and have initial interviews via Skype or some other virtual meeting process. At any point, if an applicant becomes considered an extremely strong candidate, they may be brought in for a congregational visit. During a candidate's visit to TBS, they may not lead a service or give a sermon. They may conduct a learning session, meet with congregants and temple staff and our rabbis. We expect to bring between three and five candidates to visit TBS. The TBS Board will make the final recommendation for congregational approval to be voted on at a special meeting of the congregation, as required by our bylaws.

## 7) HOW LONG WILL ALL THIS TAKE?

There is no way of knowing exactly when we will find the rabbi that is best for TBS. We expect to receive some responses to the job posting fairly quickly and then another group after the High Holy Days. Although we are hiring a “settled rabbi,” we will not “settle” for someone who is “just good enough.” Our team has spoken with leaders of other congregations who have recently gone through the hiring process. Their stories, along with our close guidance from CCAR, and our own searches over the years, have given us tremendous insight on what we can expect. Our expectations are that an outstanding rabbi who lives our TBS values will begin on July 1, 2020.

## 8) HOW HAVE OTHER CONGREGATIONS MANAGED THE RABBINIC TRANSITION PROCESS?

This transition will be new to many TBS members. We can learn from the experiences of synagogues that have recently gone through rabbinic transitions with processes that are transparent and inclusive. Below are links to the transition pages that several other congregations have used in recent years to document and communicate their processes.

<https://www.tisrael.org/rabbinic-transition/>

<https://templeisraelomaha.com/faq/>

## 9) WHAT IF I HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

You can send your questions to [Transitions@TBS-online.org](mailto:Transitions@TBS-online.org). All comments will receive a personal response from the appropriate TBS lay leader. Additionally, questions submitted by TBS members may be used or consolidated in future FAQs.



## 2019 Self-Study Highlights

*"A person reaches in three directions: Inward, to oneself; up, to God; out, to others. The miracle of life is that, in truly reaching in any one direction, one embraces all three."  
Rabbi Nachman of Bratislav*

### Self-Study Sample

- 18 adult focus groups (134 pp)
- 2 teen focus groups (25 pp)
- 298 adult survey participants
- Combined focus group/survey feedback from over 300 unduplicated adults

### Compared to TBS...

- Self-Study participants resembled our congregation in terms of:
  - Gender
  - Marital status
  - Percent with children <18
- Self-Study participants, on average, differed in terms of:
  - Age...is a bit older than the average TBS adult congregant
  - Length of membership... is longer than the average TBS adult member

### What about TBS is most important to us?

- The social aspect of belonging to TBS: the sense of community, the welcoming atmosphere, the feeling of inclusion, the relationships with fellow members and the Rabbis
- Support for interfaith families
- Being with community, and/or family during TBS Friday night Shabbat services
- The music and singing that are so integral to the TBS Friday night worship experience
- Personal lifecycle events & worship services, and TBS Religious School program
- The strong Jewish identities that our children and youth acquire at TBS
- For the youngest cohort of survey respondents (ages 18-44): "Communal Shabbat dinners."

*"We came for the kids. Once here you are sucked into the vortex. Younger families is where we grow. Religious School is the first piece but when you get here there is so much more."*

*"I like when the Rabbi relates the current Torah portion to our lives."*

*"I used to call my mother on the way home, when the sermon really connected...I wouldn't always have something to say about each sermon, but I really appreciated the variety of going out of the box sometimes, while other times it was the plain and simple sermons that spoke to me."*

*"Services that make me feel amazing...Sheldon does it. Cantor Buxt does it. I cannot define 'it.'"*

*"I came because I loved the music, I stay because of the community."*

*(Focus group participants)*

### What are we looking for but not necessarily finding at TBS?

- An enhanced Friday night Shabbat worship experience, including use of the Reform prayer book, a spiritually fulfilling service, and a cantor
- Opportunities to engage in social action and social justice as a congregation
- Engagement and connectedness for people in all stages of life
- For some, Rabbinic care. Nearly 3 in 10 survey respondents 65 + prioritized enhanced Rabbinic care, but only 2 in 10 respondents 45-64 & fewer than 1 in 10 respondents 18-44.

*"I feel like I've lost my spiritual home."*

*"As I transition to empty nester, I don't have the same opportunities to connect as I did when my kids were in religious school and youth group. I don't know how I would meet people if I were joining today."*

*"I did the Mom's group when we originally joined. I used to sit here Sundays and Tuesdays. I have lost that community. I have not been here in months."*

*"That great spiritual lift. I miss it. It would be nice if it lived here."*

*(Focus group participants)*

### What do we want TBS to look like going forward?

- Financially viable
- An inclusive, welcoming, and caring community
- A lay leadership that plays a strong role in temple governance
- A strong commitment to Tikkun Olam while preserving a safe space for differing beliefs

### What were survey takers' predominant views regarding engagement with contemporary issues?

- Most of us were in favor of TBS providing education and balanced discourse
- Most of us desired TBS to provide opportunities for social action and/or social justice
- More of us than not favored TBS taking positions, but less than a majority
- At the same time, as many of us were concerned as unconcerned about the impact of increased engagement on the welcoming atmosphere that we treasure at TBS
- Our youngest cohort (ages 18-44) was particularly likely to be in favor of TBS taking positions and providing opportunities to act, and less likely to be concerned about a possible adverse effect on TBS' welcoming atmosphere

### Which traits are we seeking in our next senior rabbi?

- Relates well with people of all ages
- Compassionate and accepting of all
- Has a good sense of humor
- Inspires us
- Skilled at building and enabling congregant-to-congregant relationships and Rabbi-to-congregant relationships
- Skilled at leading worship and giving sermons
- A spiritual leader who also will be a significant positive figure in the lives of our teens
- Older congregants tended to prioritize pastoral care; younger congregants tended to prioritize youth development

*"The Rabbi must be able to speak in a language younger people can understand and hear. Be fluent in lots of different generational languages."*

*"I want a Rabbi who has strong interpersonal skills, is inspirational, and desperately wants to be here and lead us."*

*"Someone who is engaging on a personal level and from the bimah."*

*"I've liked Rabbis who were smart [and] just talk to you like a person. I want someone who is spiritually inspiring, smart, modern, forward thinking and accessible."*

*"We won't find another Rabbi Perlin, but we need to find a rabbi with some of her qualities."*

*(Focus group participants)*

### What did we learn from our teens?

- What they mostly value about TBS is the sense of community, the friendliness, and the relationships
- Rabbi qualities they seek include: approachable/relatable, a good sermonizer, someone who connects with congregants during services and motivates the teens to attend services, and who can be silly and fun
- They appreciated that Rabbi Perlin was current and made class relevant, embracing sensitive issues with frankness and without judgment, and they want the same for the TBS students who come after them.

**More to say about the Self-Study & Rabbi Search?**  
Contact us with your ideas and questions at [Transitions@TBS-online.org](mailto:Transitions@TBS-online.org)