

RABBINIC SEARCH: WHERE WE'RE AT AND WHERE WE'RE GOING



Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the Congregation Shaarie Torah survey following this year's High Holidays. We had a great response, with nearly 150 individuals sharing their hopes, concerns, and feedback on the future of the synagogue. This information has proven invaluable to the Search Committee as they've been preparing the candidate materials.

Chaired by Anne LeVant Prah, the committee is comprised of members who represent the wide range of ages, stages and views of our congregation: Aaron Bloom, Eric Brown, Eva Celnik, Hannah Cohen-Cline, Annette Demsey, Allison Fowler, Marje Jacobson, Mylen Shenker, Michael Stokamer, Trudi Stone and Sara Sturtz, as well as Board President Daniel Petcher and Executive Director Jemi Kostiner Mansfield. The group has been meeting weekly to compile the massive (30+ page!) Pulpit Rabbinic Search Questionnaire required by USCJ and Rabbinical Assembly. This document is our opportunity to tell potential candidates who we are and what we are seeking in our next Rabbi. Our chance to put our best foot forward. That's where the results of the recent survey come into play.

In going through the data, a few themes consistently emerged. First, the majority of respondents were satisfied with how CST is running. While this is always a great place to start, we paid attention to the fact that only one third of respondents were "very satisfied" with how things are going. We see this is a mandate to continue to improve the religious services and Judaic programming we offer. While there is a lot that continues to attract and keep people in our community (people highlighted our connection to the Conservative Movement and our Rabbi), we know there are areas where we can further innovate and deepen our impact. Given that two-thirds of survey respondents recommended we "allow for change while maintaining some tradition," we feel that there is ample interest in finding those opportunities and further developing what we offer our *kehillah* (community).

Another theme that came across clearly in the survey data is how important and unique our community is. The number one response to "Why do you remain affiliated with CST?" was because people feel a sense of community. And when people shared the top priorities for the future of the synagogue, "community" was the #3 choice, coming in just behind creating a place to worship and finding a new Rabbi. In short, the survey data supports what we all know to be true: CST distinguishes itself because of its warm, *hamish* nature. This is something people across the board recognized as our greatest asset and something we will continue to prioritize.

As we look to take our next steps as a congregation and find the right Rabbi for us, we know that we have a great deal to offer him or her. We have an engaged congregation with a deep passion for Conservative Judaism, eager to deepen and expand our community and further enrich our spiritual lives. We look forward to sharing these truths with rabbinical candidates in the coming year. If you are interested in seeing the full results of the survey, which have been skillfully charted by Board Secretary Raphi Rosenblatt, please contact Jemi: executivedirector@shaarietorah.org.

The next steps for the Search Committee will be to submit the finalized questionnaire to the Rabbinical Assembly, officially putting us into the active search phase. This will happen before the end of December. In January the focus of the committee's work will shift to interview preparation and planning for eventual virtual visits by the candidates. We will continue to update you about the search progress in regular messages, which will also be posted on our website. If you have specific questions about the committee's work, please contact chair Anne LeVant: anne@prahls.com or Marje Jacobson: marje2@gmail.com.

Joshua Rose
Rabbi

Aaron Vitells
Cantor

Jemi Kostiner Mansfield
Executive Director

Dr. Sharon L. Pollin, Ed.D
Education Director

Executive Committee

Daniel Petcher
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