

Topics Special Edition

July 2012 / August 2012 (Tamuz/Av)

Welcome Rabbi Litcofsky



On Friday night July 6, I had the privilege of celebrating my first *Kabbalat Shabbat* service as part of the Temple Emanu-El family. What a wonderful evening it was for me and my family. We were overwhelmed that over 100 people on a holiday weekend joined us in celebration, song and prayer. Since my family and I have arrived in Livingston, the community and the congregation has been warm, caring and inviting – and we are grateful.

I would like to thank Rabbi Mark Kaiserman for his eight years of leadership to our temple community; he and Rabbi Kasdan have been invaluable in helping with my transition. It has been a pleasure getting to know the amazing professional team of Temple Emanu-El: Cantor, Sherry, Ellen, Robin, Carol, Mike, Anthony, Elainia, Ruth and Mary. We are blessed to have a team such as this helping us to build our sacred Jewish community together. Thank you!

There have been countless people who have gone out of their way to help make me, my wife Rachel and my children feel at home at Temple Emanu-El. Thank you! I am especially grateful to Abby Sakwa and her entire transition team.

(continued on page 2)

President's Message



On behalf of Temple leadership, it is my honor to say *Baruch Haba*, welcome, to Rabbi Greg Litcofsky and his wife, Rachel, and children, Noa and Ami as they become part of our Temple Emanu-El *mishpacha*.

Together with Rabbi Litcofsky, leadership and our entire community will bring their many talents, skills, and ideas to help make our vision and dreams become reality.

As lay leaders we have a strong personal desire and, indeed, a sacred responsibility to facilitate and unleash our collective talent so that, by every measure, Temple Emanu-El fully realizes its potential to be the most extraordinary Reform synagogue it can be; so that congregants' lives are filled with meaningful moments whether by the work of their hands, the feelings in their hearts or the thoughts in their minds.

As lay leaders, in partnership with the clergy and all our staff, we are responsible for contributing to the growth and enhancing the engagement of our congregation.

A new rabbi's transition is about far more than just the initial welcome or even the first year. It is an ongoing learning process for him, his family, and for us. We must all make ourselves accessible and available to listen, to talk, to reveal, to trust, to grow with him and his family over time and through shared experience ---- not only at Temple, but in our homes, on the soccer field, at the supermarket, at Town events and wherever else our paths will cross.

And, as I mentioned in June TOPICS, we are so pleased to welcome Carol Nathan, director of operations. To get to know Carol, please read more in this issue of TOPICS.

Please plan to join us for Erev Shabbat services, the planned events listed in this issue of TOPICS, and to just stop in to introduce yourself and chat.

Theresa Edelstein

What You Should Know About Rabbi Litcofsky

Rabbi Greg Litcofsky officially joined Temple Emanu-El on July 1, 2012 from Temple Shir Tikva in Wayland, MA, where he served as Assistant Rabbi from 2007-2009 and Associate Rabbi from 2009-2012.

Rabbi Litcofsky wrote about his rabbinate, "Each and every one of us has a story, our own Torah. Who are we? Where do we come from? Who do we want to be? These stories bind us together as a community and move us to build something sacred with one another...."

"As Rabbi, it is my job to help people find their own unique path to Torah learning and to help them understand how the words of our tradition can help them bridge the gap between the people they are and the people they want to be. It is also my job to bring together members of the community to meet face-to-face, to get to know one another and to share their own stories.

Rabbi Litcofsky was born and raised in Philadelphia where both of his parents were Jewish educators. He graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a degree in History, after which he received his M.A. in Bible and Ancient Semitic Languages from the Jewish Theological Seminary. Prior to ordination by HUC-JIR, Rabbi Litcofsky was the rabbinic intern at Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale, New York.

Rabbi Litcofsky lives in Livingston with his wife, Rachel, and their children, Noa (6) and Ami (3). In addition to his family, he loves golf and Philadelphia sports teams.

Welcome (continued from page 1)

They have helped us feel right at home from the moment we arrived, planning informal gatherings for us, helping us locate pediatricians, doctors and even the supermarkets, showing us around town, just to name some of the things that they have done. I look forward to the fall and beyond when they will be helping to plan more opportunities for me to meet members of our community.

The foundation of all community is built upon relationships, and I believe the way in which we build those relationships is by meeting together face-to-face. When we meet together, we can share our stories, who are we, who do we hope to be and what is it that we want to build together. I look forward to getting to know you – and I am always up for a cup of coffee – so please do not hesitate to reach out . My door will be open!

Rabbi Greg Litcofsky

Meet our new Director of Operations—Carol Nathan

Carol Nathan joined the Temple Emanu-El staff on June 4 as our first Director of Operations. Carol's position was created to provide day-to-day management of all facility and administrative functions at Temple, as well as to assist the clergy, professional staff, and lay leadership with budget preparation and oversight and membership engagement and growth.



Prior to joining our community, Carol served as Administrative Director at Kerem Shalom, a 300-family synagogue in Concord Massachusetts. She managed the day-to-day business issues. Working collaboratively with the staff and lay leadership, she participated in the promoting of adult programs and the Hebrew school, coordinating building use and strengthening member commitment.

Her background includes 14 years in finance and banking doing sales, analysis, strategic planning and marketing. Carol has also done consulting to non-profits in the areas of fundraising and management; was a volunteer coordinator for her local council on aging; and served as District Director for a Massachusetts State Senator.

Carol lives in Lake Hiawatha with her furry friend, Manny the Springer Spaniel. Her older son Tom recently finished active duty as a Marine Sergeant and is now a full time student in Oceanside, California. Her younger son Charles is an Airman First Class who is stationed at Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio. On the weekends, you'll find her doing something outside. It could be gardening, hiking, skiing or hitting a golf ball. Please join us in welcoming Carol to our Temple Emanu-El Family.

Topics

is a publication of
Temple Emanu-El of West Essex
264 West Northfield Avenue, Livingston, NJ 07039
Temple: 973-992-5560
Religious School: 973-992-5147
Early Childhood Center: 973-992-6174
www.emanuel.org

Greg Litcofsky..... Rabbi
Sharon Brown-LevyCantor
Peter E. Kasdan Rabbi Emeritus
Sherry Nemiroff...Religious School Director
Ellen Levitt ECC Director
Carol Nathan.....Operations Director
Theresa Edelstein President
Kenneth Lieberman.....Editor

Please send your comments to membership@emanuel.org.

Please send your contributions to cnathan@emanuel.org.
© 2010 Temple Emanu-El of West Essex

Questions About our new Rabbi

Even though he had been here only one week, we had the chance to ask Rabbi Litcofsky some questions:

1. **How will you build a sense of community at Temple Emanu-El?** “The foundation upon which all community, I believe, is built are deep and meaningful relationships ... by getting to know one another, and asking each other “who we are, where we come from, what are our hopes, our dreams for ourselves, our kids, our grandkids and our temple.” I believe that it’s not just up to me to build a sense of community, but also up to each and every one of us together to build community by listening, by sharing, by studying Torah together, by doing justice together, by doing mitzvahs together and by living our Jewish values together inside the walls of the temple and outside temple. Community is about people and I am looking forward to continuing to build a sacred Jewish community of people acting on our Jewish values together!”



2. **How do you engage young people and young families?** “I think the same way we engage any other cohort – by listening and by building relationships. There is no magic wand that we can wave that will automatically engage any specific constituency in temple life. It takes time, effort, leadership, and most importantly, relationships. Indeed, families with young children do have different needs from families whose kids are grown or who are school age, but it’s up to us as a community to figure out with them what it is that we would like to build together. As a parent with young kids myself, we also have to manage our expectations as to how much families with young kids can do, but I think we have an obligation to make our temple as open and as welcoming as possible so that they and their children can become stakeholders in our community and feel like they are an important part of the temple community.”

3. **How will you enhance spirituality and a sense of Jewishness in our congregation?** “Each and every one of us comes to our Judaism and spirituality in our own way – for some it’s through Torah study, for others its worship, for other it’s a walk through nature and yet for others it’s via our friends and family. I think it is my job as a rabbi and our job as a congregation to give folks the chance to flex their spiritual muscles - sometimes in ways in which they are comfortable and sometimes in ways that will stretch them beyond their level of comfort. I do think that the temple needs to be a space in which we have an open and honest dialogue about God and the role God plays in our lives, and I believe that the temple is the place to challenge us to experience the divine in new ways.”

4. **How will you reach out to our community?** “I am grateful to Abby [Sakwa] and her team for setting up the summer informal gatherings for me to meet some of the members of our congregation, and I am looking forward to more in the fall and beyond. The best way I know how to get to know the temple community and the community at large is by meeting as many folks individually as possible, so that they can get to know me and I can get to know them. I plan on drinking a lot of coffee over the next year! I am looking forward to doing a lot of listening and asking questions like- “what are you most proud of about your temple” and “what is it you would like to see from out temple that we are currently not doing?”

5. **How will you interact with our Religious School and the ECC?** “My son Ami will be enrolled in the 3 year old class in the Fall so I will have the privilege of being a parent of an ECC student. I love the ECC kids, and I can’t wait to sit down on the floor with them to sing songs, celebrate the holidays and play games! One of the reasons we came to Temple Emanu-El was because it truly is a temple with a life-long learning experience – our kids’ Jewish education begins the moment they enroll in our ECC and continues for the rest of their lives. I also look forward to getting to know the ECC teachers as they, and the Hebrew School teachers, are perhaps the most important members of our temple team, as they spend the most time with our kids! Every parent who decides to send their child to our ECC or Hebrew School has made a choice to give their child a Jewish education, and our job is to support them in the best way possible. For me that means helping our teachers be the best they can be! I would also say the same of our Hebrew School teachers and I look forward to working with our faculty and getting to know them on an individual basis. They are a part of our community – and I look forward to being their rabbi as well!”

Questions (continued from page 3)



Temple Emanuel-El of West Essex
264 West Northfield Road, Livingston, NJ 07039
www.emanuel.org 973-992-5560

6. **Are you looking to make changes in how we do things at temple?** “My plan is to meet with temple leadership from the board to committee chairs and to listen and learn and hopefully ask good questions. I am sure there are some things we would like to change together, but the key is together. My hope is that together with the community we can figure out what is working well – and what isn’t working so well and then together make the changes necessary to continue to build a more cohesive sacred Jewish community.”

7. **Which religious leader do you most admire?** “Rabbi Rick Jacobs the president of the URJ. I worked for Rabbi Jacobs as an intern at Westchester Reform Temple when I was in rabbinical school. Rick was and continues to be an inspiration to me as a rabbi and as a leader. It’s a great time to be a Reform Jew and Reform congregation, and I am looking forward to all that Rick and his team at the URJ have in store for the future – from the Campaign for Youth Engagement to the restructuring of the Union.”

8. **What is one thing you hope to accomplish in your lifetime that you haven’t yet?** “A hole in 1 on the golf course – but maybe to be more realistic – shoot under 80 and run a marathon.”

9. **What’s something people might be surprised to know about you?** “I love to cook – and we are foodies!”

10. **What is one of your more memorable projects or events?** “My wedding!”

11. **What is a common misconception you find people have about being a rabbi?** “That I am a “real” person – with real problems, real concerns like everyone else. I think in many ways folks still think of the rabbi as the old man with long white beard – and of course that’s not me at all.”

12. **What’s on your to-do list for you, your family and this temple?** “We are of course still settling into the Livingston community, so we are looking forward to exploring the area and the surrounding towns. We lived in NYC for 10 years, and we are looking forward to getting back into the city for good food and shows.

13. **What was your first job?** “I was 15 working at Flamingos Frozen Yogurt.”

14. **What’s the worst job you ever had?** “Doing data entry as a temp – I lasted 2 days!”

Save the Date: Sunday, September 9th
Opening day of religious school, 8:45 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. It’s also our Rabbi Transition Temple-wide Picnic from 10:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. DJ, Games, Crafts, Bounce House & BBQ!!!