

Celebrating Chai

In Her Own Words: An Interview with Rabbi Judith Schindler

In April 2016, Rabbi Judith Schindler will celebrate 18 years leading the clergy of Temple Beth El. We asked her to reflect upon her time at Temple Beth El. Here is what she said.

What do you think makes Temple Beth El special?

I am most proud that Temple Beth El is a community that lives the values of Jewish community. Our members understand the power of a minyan not just in prayer but in study, in celebrating sacred time, in healing each other, and in healing our world.

For example, our S.P.I.C.E. program captures our commitment to creating vibrant community. Our active retirees (and even those who are still working) flock to Temple two Mondays a month for learning and lunch. More than one hundred people regularly attend. S.P.I.C.E. has travelled to Israel, engaged in annual courses of serious monthly study, provided support for Sterling Elementary School, and most of all, SPICE members have been family to one another. They have studied together, traveled together, socialized together, celebrated together, and grieved together as they mourned the deaths of those they loved.

How have you seen Temple Beth El grow closer as a community?

Our Chevra Kaddishah typifies our commitment to being there

fully for one another. More than a decade ago, we created our own Temple Beth El Chevra Kaddishah. If we believe in the Reform principle of choice and support our congregants' autonomy to make Jewish choices based on knowledge of the mitzvot and commitment to being Jewish in life then we need to support their decisions surrounding their deaths. The commitment of our congregants to be ready to change the course of their day to fulfill a commitment to Jewish community is also reflected in other Caring Community groups such as those that prepare meals for and visit those who are sick or who make bereavement phone calls to check in with those who have lost a loved one.

How has Temple Beth El formed community outside the congregation?

Temple Beth El has built a strong reputation in Charlotte and the region for its commitment to social justice and action. From being the lead organization to inspire the creation of a Shalom Park Freedom School and Shalom Park environmental initiative (Shalom Green), to 19 years of Room in the Inn providing meals and shelter to our homeless neighbors and 19 years of Mitzvah Day, Temple Beth El fully practices what our ancient Biblical Prophets preached. We use our hands to

make meals at Urban Ministry, our minds to tutor at Sterling Elementary, and our voices to work for equality, equity and justice. I am proud of Temple Beth El's civic engagement on issues of affordable housing, LGBTQ rights, public school education, domestic abuse awareness, and issues surrounding aging.

What was one of your proudest moments?

On Sunday, September 5, 2005, 523 Hurricane Katrina evacuees from New Orleans arrived at the Charlotte Coliseum. Some were rescued from attics and plucked from rooftops just hours before.

They were dazed, disoriented, and asked for maps to see where Charlotte, North Carolina was located. On Monday, just one day later, our Sisterhood organized an undergarment campaign for the evacuees and within hours, the office was covered with donations. We quickly partnered with Unity Fellowship Church Charlotte and Grubb Properties and found eleven families places to call "home." We set up an instantaneous free store for our adopted families to furnish their homes and clothe their bodies. In caring for these 25 individuals through the next year, we learned the

power we had at Beth El to organize, collaborate, lift up, and save lives.

What message would you like to give Shalom Park and greater Charlotte Jewish community?

We are tied together. Each institution has great gifts to share. Visit and celebrate and care about them all. Consider multiple affiliation. That is a value my grandfather embraced in Germany (as he belonged to Orthodox and Reform synagogues in Munich) and passed down to me. ✧

Havurat Tikvah Guest Professor James Walsh

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children. We are a diverse group of families, singles, and Jewish and interfaith couples who participate in projects that promote social justice.

We value and depend upon member participation and leadership for our religious services, spiritual growth and governance.

Havurat Tikvah is an affiliate of the Jewish Reconstructionist Communities, in association with the

Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

For more information on upcoming services, programs, membership or other queries, call 980-225-5330, write to Havurat Tikvah, P.O. Box 12684, Charlotte, NC 28220, email membership@havurattikvah.org or visit havurattikvah.org. Havurat Tikvah is also on Facebook at facebook.com/groups/havurattikvah/✧



Jewish Reconstructionist Communities
In Association with the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College



A WEEKEND TO HONOR RABBI JUDY

April 8 - 9, 2016

FRIDAY, 7:00 PM - SHABBAT SERVICE

Honor of Emerita Bestowed

SATURDAY, 7:30 PM - CELEBRATION

Music, Dancing, and Fun

Hors d'oeuvres and Drinks

Snappy Casual Attire

Tickets \$54/person

RSVP required at www.templebethel.org



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The entire Charlotte community is invited to join us.

