

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) REGARDING SENIOR RABBI TRANSITION

How will the Temple-Tifereth Israel address the simultaneous departure of two rabbis?

The Temple has benefitted from stable leadership. We have a rabbinical team that is skilled, caring and diligent in their work on behalf of the congregation. The departure of two rabbis presents unique challenges, but also offers opportunity. We are confident that we will navigate this transition with grace and move The Temple from a position of strength to greater strength. While we will miss Rabbi Block and Rabbi Haim, we will cherish their legacies as we move forward into an exciting future. We now look ahead to a bright and strong next chapter for Tifereth-Israel under Rabbi Cohen's skilled and compassionate leadership. Our congregation has a glorious past, a dynamic presence and a promising future. We are proud that this thread will remain strong bolstered by the continuity of our clergy, Rabbi Klein, Rabbi Schlein and Cantor Sebo, who look forward to welcoming Rabbi Cohen to their team and to this Temple.



Rabbi Jonathan Cohen

How was the Search Committee appointed?

The search committee was selected to represent the range of individuals who make up the 1350 households that comprise our membership. Attention was given to those who were lay leaders – including past presidents – and to those who are congregants participating in the many activities we provide such as TWA, Temple Brotherhood, Chai Lifers, Learning Center, Social Action, Arts, Spiritual and Prayer and Adult Learning. Approximately 50% of the committee were board members. Of the 25 members, 15 were women and 10 were men. Ages ranged from 17 to 93. At the formation of this committee, all signed a covenant to be open, objective, free of bias, respectful of each other and to listen to and thoughtfully consider fellow members' opinions. They adhered to this sacred agreement throughout the entire process.

How was the search process conducted?

A national search was conducted following the policies and procedures of the rabbinic placement office of the CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis). We worked in consultation with Rabbi Cindy Enger who is the CCAR Director of Rabbinic Placement. She was briefed at each step of our process. A comprehensive application describing TTTI and the desired attributes of our senior rabbi was completed and filed with CCAR. The opening was posted with the CCAR rabbinic placement service.

Applicants' resumes were forwarded to the committee by the CCAR. Of these a number were selected and asked to complete both written questions and to give a one-hour video interview with the entire committee. The committee developed questions for the video interview and each candidate was asked the same questions. An opportunity for each candidate to ask us questions was also provided. Rabbi Haim, our internal applicant, completed the initial interview in person with the understanding that she would be in the final group of applicants.

Committee members were asked to provide written impressions of the responses and the committee as a whole met a number of times and selected 2 external candidates to invite for the onsite visit and interviews. The decision of the committee regarding the selected candidates was unanimous.

The onsite visits included interviews with current clergy and senior staff. There was one dinner session with the committee and another one with the executive committee. Each of the 3 candidates provided a learning session and answered questions. A breakfast learning session was conducted with the board of trustees.

With feedback from all who did interviews, from executive committee members and those trustees who provided impressions, the selection committee met, reviewing all material available, and made a recommendation to the board of trustees of its choice of the next senior rabbi.

Who is Rabbi Cohen? What is his background?

Rabbi Cohen is passionate about Judaism and its relevance to our daily lives. He is a "people person" and a connector, an experienced and avid teacher, a scholar, and an effective organizational leader. Rabbi Cohen loves music, art, theater, and books. Rabbi Cohen's parents live in Israel, his wife is a French-born professional musician, and he and his wife have three young children. He was trained as a lawyer, wrote his doctorate on Jewish and comparative law, and worked at HUC-JIR as a faculty member before becoming Dean. He was born in Israel and lived in Israel, France, and the United States throughout his childhood. He served in a unit of the armored corps in a combat unit of the Israel Defense Force (IDF).



What skills and experiences does Rabbi Cohen bring to our congregation?

Rabbi Cohen has been a teacher, mentor, and advisor for two decades. Throughout the past seven years, Rabbi Cohen has led a multi-constituency Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) campus in Cincinnati. He has worked with prospective students, students, faculty, staff, alumni, board members, and members of the community at large. In this capacity, he has functioned as rabbi to many members of his greater community who have experienced life changes, celebrations, as well as loss and pain. He has officiated in numerous life cycle events, taught, and engaged in pastoral care visits for members of his extended congregation. Prior to his appointment as Dean, Rabbi Cohen served for many years on the Ethics Committee of Greater Cincinnati's Jewish Hospital where he engaged with patients, members of their families, medical professionals and hospital staff in numerous consults and in teaching and training. We believe that Rabbi Cohen's expertise in a variety of rabbinic, teaching, administrative and civic roles offers strong preparation for his work at The Temple-Tifereth Israel (TTTI).

Much of his programmatic work focused on strengthening and developing the community in three areas: ethics and social justice, arts and culture, and interfaith relations.

- **Ethics and social justice:** During his tenure as Dean, the HUC-JIR Cincinnati campus welcomed a Jewish Family Service (JFS) Vital Support Center that includes a food pantry and counseling facility. In collaboration with JFS, HUC-JIR's Cincinnati campus created a community garden that has supplied fresh produce for the food pantry, and organized, hosted, and executed a number of community events on social concerns including one of the largest conferences on poverty in the region in the past five years. In addition, Rabbi Cohen initiated and supported an extensive program on implicit bias and gender for his entire campus community;
- **Arts and culture:** Rabbi Cohen's tenure has been marked by significant growth in the Skirball Museum at HUC-JIR in Cincinnati, which now boasts one of the largest Jewish museum collections in the Midwest. With the Skirball Museum's growth, they developed new events and programs for children and adults on art appreciation, artistic expression and Jewish music. Throughout each of the past three years, the Cincinnati campus' arts and culture programs have included thousands of members of the community;
- **Interfaith relations:** Rabbi Cohen has led an effort to strengthen interfaith relations in his community, building and strengthening relationships between Christian, Muslim, and Jewish clergy. He has led interfaith services, teaching programs for interfaith audiences, and interfaith efforts to address issues of common concern.



Will he officiate interfaith weddings?

Rabbi Cohen has already officiated in a number of interfaith weddings. He is committed to listening to and learning about every couple that seeks his counsel and assistance. In his discussions on this issue Rabbi Cohen emphasizes openness, inclusion, and deep respect for the story and experience of each couple.

Will Rabbi Cohen be serving any national organizations when he comes to TTTI or just serving our congregation?

Rabbi Cohen is a scholar of Jewish law and ethics, and currently serves as Chair of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) Responsa Committee. The Responsa Committee is charged with responding to Jewish law questions on behalf of the CCAR, the rabbinic organization of the Reform Movement. As Rabbi Cohen joins us, he hopes to continue to serve our movement in this capacity.

Will The Temple hire another rabbi?

Rabbi Cohen is working with the clergy and temple leadership to address the issue of hiring another rabbi. Several options are being considered and we will notify the congregation as soon as a decision has been made.

When will he start officiating life cycle events?

Rabbi Cohen is scheduled to start his tenure as Senior Rabbi at TTTI on July 1, 2018. Starting on July 1, he will engage in all aspects of rabbinic work with members of our congregation and looks forward to officiating life cycle events.



Many of us have asked Rabbi Cohen, "Why TTTI? What does it mean to you to come to our congregation?" Here is his answer, in his own words:

"My path to and in the rabbinate has been one of ongoing discovery, learning, and yearning for community, relationship building, and intellectual growth in the preserving and advancement of our Judaism and the gifts it can bring to our lives and to our world. Throughout the past two decades, I have learned, taught, and mentored, built community and developed programs, and accompanied friends and colleagues at times of crisis, sadness, and joy. Throughout the past few years, I have sought to participate in a community that would engage and nurture its members at all stages of their lives with a rich variety of religious experiences, learning opportunities, cultural activities, social justice causes and projects, and the network and infrastructure for relationship development and community building.

When the opportunity arose for me to seek to become part of the TTTI community and story, I could hardly contain my excitement and enthusiasm. In time, it has grown. The difference between gathering information and learning about TTTI and discovering this Temple community may be likened to the difference between learning the path and process towards Mount Sinai, seeing it in the distance on the one hand, and finding oneself at the foot of the mountain, experiencing its beauty, complexity, and majesty on the other.

As I started to meet members of the congregation, I have encountered people whose lives were touched and Jewish identities formed by generations of rabbis, going back to Abba Hillel Silver. I have discovered the impressive array of prayer services and programs and experienced the joy and elevation they can bring. I have taken my first steps in learning about the beautiful collection of artifacts and arts programs that members of our community steward and grow with great love, dedication, and care. I have witnessed a glimpse of the engagement and learning that take place with young children, teenagers, and adults of all ages. Yet, above and beyond these wonderful experiences and discoveries, my family and I have received the unique gift of a welcoming, supportive, loving, enthusiastic embrace.

In the coming months, I look forward to developing new relationships, meeting members of this extraordinary community and developing friendships, praying, learning, and engaging, so that we may walk and climb the paths of our lives together. May we be enriched as we nurture and sustain each other in community, and may our efforts grow and deepen our identities as human beings and Jews; may we live to bring blessing in our lives, in the lives we touch, and in those of future generations."

