

June, 2021

When our families joined Temple Emanu-El years ago, many Temple members shared that TE felt like a second home. It has been a joy for us over the past twelve years as both teachers and Religious School Co-Directors to see your children make so many connections through Religious School and, we hope, for your families to find that same sense of belonging and Jewish community. We feel honored to be part of your children's Jewish education and blessed to work with Rabbi Marc and Hazzan Sherry, as well as with so many talented and dedicated teachers, faculty assistants, and young emissaries. However, with our youngest children heading off to college in the fall, we have each made the difficult decision that the time has come for us to pursue new goals next year and step down from our roles at Religious School.

We are excited to announce that Temple leadership has selected Rachel O'Brien to be the new School Director, beginning officially on July 1st. Many of your children have had the pleasure of having Rachel as their teacher in the younger grades. What you may not know is that, in addition to her strong background in Judaics and Hebrew, Rachel is also a CT Certified K-12 Teacher and Certified School Counselor. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Child Psychology and a Master of Education degree in Counseling from Fordham University, and has experience in public schools in both Connecticut and Westchester, NY. In addition to teaching in Religious School, Rachel has also previously served on the Temple board and she and her family have been members of Temple Emanu-El for the past nine years.

Rachel brings a tremendous amount of energy and enthusiasm, along with lots of new ideas, to this position and you can expect to hear from her over the summer about plans for next year. Thank you very much for your support and encouragement during our tenure. It has meant a great deal to both of us and we look forward to seeing you at services over the summer and other Temple events next year. Over the next month we will assist Rachel's transition into her new role and are available if you have any questions.

Thank you especially for your support during this past Covid year. What a year it's been! Because of our fantastic teachers and your commitment, Religious School was able to continue in a meaningful and educational way this year. Please visit the website to see the beautiful video Armi made to celebrate your children. The great news is that the current plan for Religious School is to be back in the building next fall (as long as Covid circumstances permit). Be on the lookout soon for your registration packets and please send them back as soon as you can to assist in planning for next year.

Lastly, we are pleased to share two other pieces of great Religious School news. First, Steve Panikoff, whose background is in education and school administration, has agreed to chair the Religious School Committee. We know the school will benefit from his leadership and participation. Please let us know if you are interested in joining this committee. Second, we would like to gratefully acknowledge several anonymous donations that were recently made to benefit Religious School. Todah rabah – we are very appreciative of your generosity and your commitment to the future of TERS.

Shalom,

*Armi & Jennifer*