

Rabbi Megan Brumer's Installation Speech

(preceded by remarks by Rabbi Stoller)

April 5, 2024

Rabbi Stoller's Remarks at Rabbi Megan's Installation

This is an exciting time for Temple Beth-El!

After enduring the extreme and unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, our congregation is taking bold actions to rebuild and reenergize our community and write the next chapter of TBE's exciting story.

Bringing Rabbi Megan Brumer on as our assistant rabbi and youth education leader has been a critical part of that. Rabbi Megan brings a genuine and beautiful passion for kids and for helping them form a lifelong connection to Judaism and Jewish identity. We are blessed to have her on our team.

Most newly minted rabbis, in their first position right out of school, spend their time focusing on the basics: learning what it means to have a full-time job, getting to know the congregants, gaining experience officiating funerals and b'nei mitzvah, and beginning to build their confidence and their identity as a communal leader.

Since joining our team in July, right after her ordination, Rabbi Megan has not only been doing all that, but she has also been charged with a leading project that is much more pressing and critical to our congregation's future—and that is: designing and launching a youth education program for our TBE kids from scratch.

Some of you might not know this, but for the last several years we have not had a religious school at Temple Beth-El. Our kids have been going to religious school at Temple Israel down the street. The original intent was for it to be a joint program, but unfortunately it didn't play out that way.

It soon became clear to our temple leadership that we needed to change course and bring our TBE families and their children back home—to their own building, with their own clergy, and their own congregational community. And in order to make that happen, we would need someone with a passion for Jewish youth education and the knowledge of how to rebuild a program from the ground up.

We are blessed that this is exactly the kind of challenge Rabbi Megan was looking for in her first rabbinic position. She chose to come to TBE because *this* is the work she wants to do.

So, soon after joining our team in July, Rabbi Megan put together an outstanding working group of congregants—Kasi Bowen, Ethan Brown, Michael Freeman, Jenn Still-Schiff, and Joanna Stolove—to develop a new religious education program for TBE's children.

Under Rabbi Megan's leadership, this group has designed our new program, The Kehillah Project, which we announced last week. It's creative, unconventional, outside the box, and driven by Reform Jewish values, and I think it's exactly what we need to rebuild our young-family community.

This endeavor has been far more complex and time intensive and has required a significantly higher level of leadership than most first-year assistant rabbis are asked to take on; and you should know that Rabbi Megan has done it with incredible grace, determination, and skill. I am so proud of the work she's doing for our community, and I hope you all are, too.

The most important thing to know about Rabbi Megan, though, has nothing to do with her skills or accomplishments. It has to do with her character.

Rabbi Megan is an incredible colleague—among the best clergy colleagues I have ever worked with.

She is kind, gentle, and caring. She is collaborative, thoughtful, and decent.

She is eminently reliable and always willing to help out her teammates. All of us on staff know we can count on Rabbi Megan to be there for us and for our congregation.

She is eager to learn and receives feedback graciously and without a hint of defensiveness. She's supportive, easygoing, and friendly. She is a genuine joy and pleasure to work with.

These are the kind of things that can't be taught, and they're not easy to come by. That Rabbi Megan possesses not one, not two or three, but *all* these qualities is a tremendous blessing to me, to our team, and to our community.

Thank you, Rabbi Megan, for being our rabbi, and for being *you*.

Rabbi Megan Brumer's Installation Speech

I remember, very vividly, the first time I came to Temple Beth-El. I immediately felt welcome and knew that this was a place I could see myself starting my rabbinate. The congregation was warm, approachable, and kind. Fast forward a little more than a year later, and here I am, standing in front of you, at my installation service as your new assistant rabbi.

As soon as I entered rabbinical school, I always knew that I wanted my rabbinate to include education in some way. My years at Jewish summer camp and my time working at my synagogue's religious school sparked a love of Judaism and a love of education that I wanted to pursue.

As a rabbi here at Temple Beth-El, I hope I will inspire, teach, and help lead TBE into the future. I want to be your partner in helping to guide you along your Jewish journey.

I want to be here during your happy times—and also the sad. I want to be here to teach you something new, or maybe just talk through something you know well but want to dig into deeper. I want to be here as we complete a social action project in the community and spend time together in the synagogue. I want to be here for your family in every way that I can.

In the past nine months, I have been able to do this in a multitude of ways: family programming, singing with the ECEC, teaching Torah study and adult ed, responding to the tragedy of October 7 through art,

praying together on Friday and Saturday, and so much more. I am excited to continue this journey together as we look toward the future.

As I mentioned last week, the biggest project on the horizon is our new youth education program, The Kehillah Project. I am so excited to bring it to life and to help our students find their connection to Judaism, whatever that looks like. I hope that when they leave our building, they have a love for Judaism and continue to be proud of their Judaism when they eventually leave home. As a community, we get to be a stepping stone in their Jewish journey.

I am excited to continue teaching adult ed, incorporating my female perspective, and learning about characters who might be ignored. I am excited to come together for good and conduct social action projects throughout the community.

Most of all, I am excited to continue getting to know each one of you, finding out more about who you are, why you do what you do, and why you are a part of our TBE community. I have loved our one-on-one conversations, learning about your family, your jobs, and your volunteer work. And I want you to get to know me, my passions, my reasons for coming to TBE, and my joys in life.

I will continue to bring my passion and love for Judaism, youth, education, and music, as well as my desire to learn every day as I come to work; and I hope that in return, you will continue to participate and show up for our congregation.

As I encourage my b'nei mitzvah students to do, I want to end with gratitude.

Thank you to Andy Aaron and my search committee, Justin Meservie, Julius Myer, Gary Slobin, Gabby Verkman, Jackie Moshen, and Jenn Still-Schiff, for putting in the work and making sure that we—TBE and me—were a good match.

Thank you to Joanna Stolove, Julius Meyer, and my welcome committee, Arlene Nevens, Nancy Lowenkron, Chandeeep Peress, Leah Krigsher, Rojeen Cohan, and Barbie Lieber, for making sure that I had a smooth transition into the job last summer, setting up many different meet and greets to help me get to know you as a congregation.

Thank you to my installation planning committee, Danna Sobiecki, Randi Weiler, Amy Brown, Sharon Freeman, Jenn Still-Schiff, David Sutin, and Sherry Goodman, who worked to make this weekend a success, as well as Joy Allen who helped oversee the whole event.

Thank you to all my lay leaders and committee members: the Young Family committee, the Teen Family committee, the Religious School working group, and other congregants who I work with on different programs and projects. Your work and guidance have helped immensely as I have learned what works and what doesn't work here at TBE, and I look forward to being your sacred partner in the years to come.

Thank you to the staff who without them, this whole place would not function.

Thank you, Chava, for sharing your voice with us this weekend. I remember looking up to you as a kid and wanting to be a songleader just like you. It is a privilege to be sharing the bima with you tonight.

Thank you, David, for coming as my mentor. You have watched me grow into a leader and a Jewish professional during camp and beyond. When I thought about who I wanted here as my mentor, you were

the one I thought of immediately. You are there to lift me up when I need it, and also to make me laugh when it might not be the best time, like when I need to be serious at camp.

Thank you to my family and friends for coming to participate in this important milestone in my rabbinic career.

And most importantly, thank you to you, the TBE community, for welcoming me in and supporting me as a new rabbi, allowing me to learn, shape my rabbinate, and be the best rabbi I can be.