

TEMPLE SINAI

Rabbi Gibson's Retirement Frequently Asked Questions June 2019

Rabbi Gibson's Plans

When will Rabbi Gibson be retiring officially?

Rabbi Gibson's retirement will take effect on June 30, 2020. His last Shabbat on the pulpit will be June 19-20, 2020, which he also plans to be his last working days as our Senior Rabbi. This fall (2019) will be his last High Holidays with us as Senior Rabbi.

What will he be doing until then?

Until June 2020, Rabbi Gibson will continue to be our senior rabbi as always. He may take some of his earned sabbatical time, and will coordinate his schedule with other clergy, staff, and lay leadership.

Will Rabbi Gibson and Barbara Gibson stay in Pittsburgh after June 2020?

Yes, although they plan to do some traveling, not least to see their children and grandchildren!

How will we celebrate Rabbi Gibson's accomplishments?

There will be a number of opportunities to celebrate with Rabbi Gibson and his family. One such celebration involves writing a new Torah, in Rabbi Gibson's honor, for Temple Sinai.

We will announce other plans as they develop.

A new Torah?

Yes—this is a big deal! We have engaged a soferet: a woman specially trained to write Torahs. "Soferet" is the female form; "sofer" the male form. Temple Sinai members and other community members will be involved in the process, with the soferet, of physically writing the Torah, which is very exciting! We will be announcing more details soon and there will be plenty of opportunities for the Temple Sinai and larger community to participate in this exciting project.

How can I say “thank you” to Rabbi Gibson?

In addition to a number of anticipated formal opportunities to thank Rabbi Gibson, of course Rabbi Gibson will be continuing as Senior Rabbi through June 2020, and there will be ample opportunity to talk with him (and Barbara Gibson) during that time. As always, he is happy to talk with members of Temple Sinai in his office and at events.

Will Rabbi Gibson be available for lifecycle and other events, as well as leading services, before June 30, 2020?

Yes, Rabbi Gibson will be available to meet, perform lifecycle and other events, as well as lead services. However, we do anticipate that Rabbi Gibson will also be taking some extended sabbatical time during his final year leading up to June 30, 2020.

Will Rabbi Gibson be Rabbi Emeritus? What role will Rabbi Gibson have at Temple Sinai after he retires?

In general, the term Emeritus (or Emerita for females) is given to longstanding holders of senior clergy or academic positions when they step down. At Temple Sinai, the Emeritus title is voted on by the Board of Trustees, generally right around the time the rabbi steps down.

When Rabbi Gibson retires as Temple Sinai’s senior rabbi, he will have conferred the title of Rabbi Emeritus (subject to Board vote). However, he and Barbara Gibson plan to stay in Pittsburgh, which has been their home for more than 30 years.

Will Rabbi Gibson be able to perform Temple Sinai lifecycle events for my family after he retires?

In general, the Rabbi Emeritus is not involved in lifecycle events. We are guided by the CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis—the principal organization of Reform Rabbis in the United States), Ethics Code which says that a Rabbi Emeritus may only participate in lifecycle events with the express permission of the Interim or successor Senior Rabbi.

Senior Rabbinic Leadership**What happens after June 2020 with respect to senior rabbinic leadership?**

We are planning to have an Interim Rabbi for one year: July 2020 through June 2021. We are in contact with the CCAR. CCAR has a standard process and guidelines for matching us with an Interim Rabbi and there are a number of Reform Rabbis whose principal role is to act as Interim. A Search Committee will be convened to work with Saul Straussman (who will be President beginning June 5, 2019) and the Personnel Practices Committee to identify a good Interim Rabbi for us.

Why an Interim Rabbi? What is his/her role?

Having an Interim Rabbi for a year is considered good practice because it create a space following Rabbi Gibson, who has had an enormous effect on our culture and direction. We will use this space to reflect on who we are as a congregation and where we want to go.

An Interim Senior Rabbi will also help us reflect on who we are and who we want to be in the future as a congregation. He/she will generally be able to help us look at ourselves with fresh eyes.

Interim Senior Rabbis are a common practice. In fact, some rabbis do this year to year. Interim Senior Rabbis do so with the understanding that they will not stay on and become the “settled” Senior Rabbi.

Just how will we reflect?

We are working on the full process, but we have had the benefit of guidance from Rabbi Sam Joseph, an educator at HUC-JIR (Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion, the principal educational institution for Reform leaders). Rabbi Joseph is an expert on synagogue organizations and transitions. We will explain the process as it unfolds.

Our clergy

What will happen with Rabbi Gorban and Cantor Berman during the Interim Period.

We look forward to their remaining with Temple Sinai in their present roles.

Will Rabbi Gorban be appointed as the next Senior Rabbi?

At this time, no decision has been made about future senior rabbinic staffing. We are committed to celebrating Rabbi Gibson's time with us as we prepare for the transition once he retires. At the appropriate time, we will meet with staff, lay leadership, and congregants to discuss next steps.

At the same time, Rabbi Gorban will be thinking and talking with us about her own future path.

Search Processes

How many searches will there be?

We will conduct two consecutive searches: one for the Interim Senior Rabbi for the 2020-2021 year, and one for the “settled” Senior Rabbi, who will be with us beginning in July 2021.

How will the search for a settled Senior Rabbi, after the one-year Interim, happen?

As with the Interim Rabbi, we will work within the standard search process set up by the CCAR, which helps with many searches per year. We anticipate setting up a Search Committee with a great deal of opportunity for members of the congregation to express views about future direction and the characteristics that we seek in a settled Senior Rabbi.

Can you elaborate on the search process?

Plans are early, but we anticipate a pool of applicants, especially for the settled Senior Rabbi position and a schedule of interviews, with an expanding group as the pool is narrowed down.

The goal of our searches is to combine as much transparency as possible, on the one hand, with the discretion and confidentiality expected by the rabbinic candidates (especially in the early stages), as with any job search.

What's the timeline?

We anticipate approximately as follows:

- *Underway—preparation to understand process and best practices via conversations with the URJ (Union for Reform Judaism) and CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis)*
- *Summer 2019—search begins for Interim Senior Rabbi, including preparing descriptive documents for and with the CCAR and opportunities to provide input*
- *Fall-Winter 2019 (after High Holidays)—search and interviews*
- *Spring 2020—reach agreement with the selected person and announce Interim Senior Rabbi*
- *Summer 2020—search begins for settled Senior Rabbi, including preparing descriptive documents and opportunities for the Temple Sinai community to provide input*
- *Fall-Winter 2020 (after High Holidays)—search and interviews*
- *Spring 2021—reach agreement with the selected person, Congregational vote, announce new Senior Rabbi of Temple Sinai*

How can I be involved in the process?

The selection of a Senior Rabbi is an important decision for a congregation, and Temple Sinai leadership will welcome the participation and input from all interested members in our community. The specific process is still being developed but we know there will be many opportunities for members to express their views.

To be clear, participation on a Search Committee is only one of many ways to express one's views, especially as a Search Committee is relatively small and there are many voices to be heard.

There will be a number of opportunities for the Temple Sinai community to provide guidance and input to the search process. And as in past senior staff hiring, there will be several opportunities for the Temple Sinai community to interact with the candidates, especially for the settled Senior Rabbi position .

Will Rabbi Gibson participate in the search process?

*No. Generally, best practice is **not** to have the retiring Senior Rabbi participate in the selection of his/her successor.*

Will the staff have a voice?

Yes. Staff are both members of the congregation and have an important day-to-day perspective on the Senior Rabbi and other Temple matters.

Will community partners have a voice?

Generally, most of our community partners have active participants who are also Temple Sinai members. That is one way to have their perspective inform the process. There may also be others added, as the process is developed.

Who we are**How will we maintain our values during the search?**

The goal of the search(es) is to find and attract senior rabbinic leadership who share our values. To some degree, these will be articulated in the search documents and position descriptions. They will also be the subject of various community conversations.

What else?

We anticipate forming a Transition Committee to help make the transition as smooth as possible for the Temple Sinai community and to help articulate our values and culture.

How can I learn more?

As the process moves forward, we will put additional information and updates on the Temple Sinai website.