Temple Rodef Shalom

Michael A. Shochet
Senior Cantor

Dear Friends,

Nearly 30 years ago, on July 1, 1998, Denise and I arrived at Temple Rodef Shalom with Jake, 6, and Zack, 2, beginning a journey that would shape our lives in ways we could never have imagined. TRS quickly became our home, and you became our extended family.

It is, therefore, with a heart filled with gratitude, pride, love, and more than a little emotion that I share with you my decision to retire as Senior Cantor of Temple Rodef Shalom, effective **June 30, 2028**.

When I began as this congregation's first cantor, I was given an extraordinary opportunity: to build upon the beautiful musical foundation established by Rabbi Laszlo Berkowits and to help make TRS a singing congregation. My hope was that music would be something our congregation created together — that through our voices, we could deepen our connection to prayer, to one another, and to Judaism itself.

Over these years, our musical life has evolved in ways I could only have dreamed. We built choirs and instrumental ensembles for children, teens, and adults. We welcomed extraordinary Jewish composers and artists into our community, embraced both the ancient sounds of our tradition and the newest music of our time, and created a congregation in which generations of children and adults have learned that their own voices belong in Jewish prayer.

Today, Temple Rodef Shalom is celebrated as a home of Jewish music and culture, alongside our commitments to learning, spirituality, and social action. The congregation that numbered 900 families in 1998 is now more than 1,800 families strong. I am enormously proud to have been part of that remarkable journey and that music has become so deeply woven into the identity of TRS, helping us encounter the sacred.

None of this could have happened alone. I am profoundly grateful to Rabbi Amy Schwartzman, who embraced me not simply as the cantor who would lead our music, but as her partner in the sacred work of leading a congregation. I entered this profession to become a clergy person — to teach and preach, to counsel and comfort, to officiate at lifecycle moments and conversions, with music at the heart of that work — and Rabbi Schwartzman gave me the opportunity to live that vision fully at TRS. Together, I believe we helped our congregation understand that a cantor can speak as well as sing, and that the cantor's voice belongs not only in our music, but in every dimension of congregational and spiritual life.

I am equally grateful to Cantor Michaeli, Rabbi Saxe, Rabbi Stein, Jessica Ingram, our extraordinary staff — past and present — dedicated lay leaders, and the countless singers, instrumentalists, accompanists, teachers, students, student cantors, assistant cantors and rabbis who have shared this journey with me.

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Most importantly, I could never reflect on these thirty years without expressing my deepest gratitude to Denise, who has supported my calling, shared the joys and demands of congregational life, and made it possible for me to give so much of myself to the community we both came to love as our second home.

And most of all, I am grateful to you. You gave me the extraordinary privilege of being your cantor: of singing with you and for you, teaching your children, standing beside your families at moments of great joy and profound sorrow, and sharing three decades of Jewish life together. There could have been no greater honor.

While I will retire from my position as Senior Cantor, Denise and I are not leaving this community. I am deeply honored that I will become Temple Rodef Shalom's first Cantor Emeritus, and I look forward to supporting the cantor who follows me and cheering on the next chapter of TRS from a new place in our community.

My hope is that Temple Rodef Shalom will never again imagine itself without a cantor as an integral member of its clergy team.

For thirty years, you have allowed me to help Temple Rodef Shalom find its voice. And what a beautiful voice it has become.

With all my love and gratitude,



Cantor Michael Shochet
Senior Cantor