

WHY LEGACY GIVING IS IMPROTANT

This is a personal story. I was encouraged to tell it after having an intimate Jewish conversation at the LIFE & LEGACY Celebration in March. I was asked what led me on my Jewish journey to end up here. As we spoke, I realized that my story is why legacies are important, so here it is.

I was born and raised a Catholic. I was educated by the Jesuits who are a pretty cool group of intelligent men. Over time, and for many reasons, I grew away from that faith.

My husband is the son of two Jews who grew up in anti-religious, politically active, culturally Jewish families in the Bronx.

When our first child was born, I was looking for something for us as a family. I like spirituality and ritual even if I'm not drawn to organized religious belief. I like that a lot of Jewish practice happens in the home, and that women take a leading role in home ritual. I like that Jews are encouraged to be active, thinking members of the community, to debate, question and search for answers individually, not just have answers handed down to them.

I researched several Reform synagogues near us, and we found one where the community fit. I converted there. My husband had a bar mitzvah there as an adult, the first person in his family in over 100 years to do so! Last month, my son became a bar mitzvah there, and in three years, my daughter will become a bat mitzvah there.

Recently, our synagogue had its 50th anniversary. As we celebrated, I learned a lot about the members I know and love who were our founders. They were Jews looking for just the right place for themselves and their kids. They formed a small worship group, but were committed to more. They built a building, hired a professional rabbi and started a religious school with a professional director and teachers. They did all of this even after their kids were adults. They did this even though they knew they would retire and move away someday. They did it to create a legacy.

I'm sure they didn't think that someday their work would lead a former Catholic to draw her Jewish husband back into the spiritual life of Judaism and start another generation of Jewish kids who would be steeped in Jewish learning, but that's exactly what they did. That's the kind of thing that happens when people create legacies that will benefit others that come after them.

I am so grateful to the people who made my Jewish journey part of their legacy. I am so grateful to the 200 plus people in Central Massachusetts who are making Jewish legacies for the next generation. We are all part of the same story, a story that has over 5000 years in the telling.

If you want to talk to me about how you are part of that story, reach out to me at legacy@jfc.org. I'd love to hear your story.