



## RUDERMAN SYNAGOGUE INCLUSION PROJECT



### WHAT INCLUSION MEANS TO OUR CONGREGATIONAL PARTNERS

“Congregation Beth El-Atereth Israel of Newton Centre strives to be inclusive. The *peroches* (mantle) that covers our ark displays this prayer: ‘*Barchenu Avinu Kulano Kachad* (Bless us our Father, all of us like one).’ The oneness of our community is strengthened when we make the synagogue experience accessible to as many people as possible. We feel privileged to participate in the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project.”

*Rabbi Gershon Segal, Congregation Beth El-Atereth Israel, Newton Centre*

“At Temple Aliyah, we have long aspired to be a dynamic, warm, and inviting egalitarian Conservative congregation. We are excited about our efforts to be even more inclusive, including our recently launched Mental Health Initiative, but we know there is more to do. Being part of the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project is an honor, and we’re delighted to join with others to highlight the importance of inclusion.”

*Rabbi Carl M. Perkins, Temple Aliyah, Needham*

“Temple Beth David aims to make our synagogue an increasingly welcoming Jewish home by embracing all people and extending *kavod* (honor) to people with different needs and abilities. We are opening our doors wider to allow full participation in Jewish education, worship, lifecycle, and fellowship. In partnering with the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project, we look forward to fulfilling the vision of building a holy community.”

*Rabbi Karen S. Citrin, Temple Beth David, Westwood*

“The members of Temple Emanu-El are intentional, creative, and eager in our pursuit of inclusivity. As expressed in our prayer book, *Mishkan Tefila*: ‘May the door to this synagogue be wide enough to receive

all who hunger for love, all who are lonely for fellowship. May it welcome all who have cares to unburden, thanks to express, hopes to nurture.”

*Rabbi David J. Meyer, Temple Emanu-El, Marblehead*

“While we all can agree that being a caring, loving, accepting community is a wonderful goal, RSIP has shown us that it's about much more than smiles and warm greetings. Our work with RSIP has helped us to make Temple Emmanuel of Wakefield a comfortable home for anyone who desires to enter.”

*Rabbi Greg Hersh, Temple Emmanuel of Wakefield*

“In striving to be a sacred community (*kehillah kedoshah*), Temple Israel of Natick provides multiple gateways for both the mind and spirit. Since partnering with the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project, we have begun to address physical as well as spiritual and intellectual diversity. This new journey is an unfolding revelation for us, and we are grateful for this expanded vision.”

*Rabbi Dan Liben, Temple Israel of Natick*

“‘*Reyim*’ means friends, and at the heart of friendship are the values of inclusion, full participation, and honoring and loving every person who joins us on a spiritual path. We are grateful for this opportunity to work towards fulfilling our potential as a fully inclusive congregation that strives to meet every person ‘*b’asher hu sham*’ — wherever they are.”

*Rabbi Daniel Berman, Temple Reyim, Newton*

“Temple Sinai strives to honor each person for who they are. Our synagogue is supposed to be like Abraham and Sarah’s tent: open on all sides in an act of welcome. Our task is not to try to make people fit in but to arrange community around each unique person. We believe in the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project mission of inclusion and that everyone has something to teach and something to learn.”

*Rabbi Joseph B. Meszler, Temple Sinai, Sharon*

“The Young Israel of Brookline is proud to partner with the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project to strengthen our core values of welcoming all individuals into our community. We believe that every person, no matter background, education, or ability, is a unique spark of the image of God, and it is our responsibility to help each person contribute his or her irreplaceable gifts and feel appreciated.”

*Rabbi David Hellman, Young Israel of Brookline*

“For us, inclusion begins with a deeply held conviction that every person who journeys with us is entitled to a full and meaningful participation in Jewish and congregational life. With the help of RSIP and all the partnering congregations, we look forward to discovering new ways to remove obstacles and make our community even more open to all.”

*Rabbi David Thomas, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley*

“A fully inclusive worldview rewards itself by enabling its beholder to be more fully human.”

*Rabbi William Hamilton, Congregation Kehillath Israel*

“As a deaf Rabbi, I am inspired by Kerem Shalom’s deep understanding of the need to embody and honor the full spectrum of humanity in all its varied abilities in order to create a true *kehillah kedosha*, sacred community. We are so grateful to RSIP for supporting us and others as we continue our efforts to make the Jewish community a place for all.”

*Rabbi Darby J. Leigh, Congregation Kerem Shalom*

“Congregation Shirat Hayam holds that inclusion extends beyond the fundamental belief that all human beings are of infinite value. Inclusion is a clarion call to honor the uniqueness of each one of us. As a Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project Partner, we commit to the creation of a warm, accessible, safe, and sensitive spiritual home. When we love our neighbor as ourselves, we all thrive!”

*Rabbi Michael Ragozin, Congregation Shirat Hayam of the North Shore*

“We are grateful to CJP, RSIP, and the Ruderman Family Foundation for enabling us to set aside and dedicate this year for the purpose of developing a mindset of inclusion, truly understanding and addressing ways that our fellow Jews might need to feel more included.”

*Rabbi Yaakov Jaffe, Maimonides Kehillah*

“To be a *kehillah kedosha* — a holy community — is to constantly strive to be the best we can. To welcome and include everyone that enters through our doors. We like to think of ourselves as an ‘open door’ congregation, but we know that opening our doors is not enough, and thanks to RSIP we can strengthen ourselves to become more inclusive and welcoming. We are grateful for the opportunity.”

*Rabbi Claudia Kreiman and Rabbi Moshe Waldoks, Temple Beth Zion*

“We are moved by the humanistic dignity and fervent inclusive compassion at the very core of RSIP. As fellow travelers, we intend to expand the wisdom of our sages by ‘saying much and doing even more.’ ”

*Rabbi Alan Turetz, Temple Emeth*

“To ensure the prophetic injunction that our house shall be a house (of prayer) for all people demands sacred intention and constant and relentless effort to enact the inclusion and deep welcome of every person in our physical, spiritual, psychological, and intellectual spaces.”

*Rabbi Elaine Zecher, Temple Israel of Boston*

“Temple Sinai of Marblehead and Swampscott embraces and welcomes each individual as an equal and contributing member of our family. We celebrate the uniqueness of each person. We strive to provide accessibility, positive experiences, and opportunities to all who enter our House. We hope to clear any stumbling blocks to provide a meaningful and well-lit path to our Jewish souls, mind, and body.

‘Clear the way; remove the obstacles from the way of My people.’ Isaiah 57:14.”

*Rabbi David Cohen-Henriquez, Temple Sinai of Swampscott and Marblehead*

“I am thrilled that Dorshei Tzedek has been selected as a Partner congregation in the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project. As a smaller congregation, we greatly appreciate the resources and expertise that membership in the RSIP offers. We are looking forward to fostering a learning environment at our religious school where every child can be celebrated, challenged, and appreciated for his or her unique gifts. By bringing an inclusion specialist on staff, we are confident that we will raise the quality of learning for all of our kids. We are also looking forward to thinking more broadly about inclusion in our congregation, and exploring ways to make everything from Shabbat morning services to communal meals accessible to all who wish to attend.”

*Rabbi Toba Spitzer, Congregation Dorshei Tzedek*

“Temple Beth Shalom is honored and excited to have been selected as a congregational Partner for the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project! Through the committed partnership between our professional team and lay leaders, we have made great strides over the past few years to make TBS a comfortable, welcoming, and accessible place for all of our members and our visitors as well. Yet, there is still much work to be done, and we truly appreciate the opportunity to learn from experts at CJP and the Ruderman Family Foundation and to share our own learning experiences with other congregations as well. This shared commitment to common goals will only further our ability to make the Jewish community a setting of full inclusion for all.”

*Rabbi Todd Markley, Temple Beth Shalom*

“Inclusivity. Welcome. Equality. These are the watchwords of our era. They are ideas. Ideals. Lovely and warm and gracious. But how do we translate ideas and ideals into reality? How can Temple Emanuel make sure we are doing our best for every person who walks through our gates? We hope our partnership with the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Program will accomplish two worthy goals. One, it will allow us to do right by all the persons who enter our community. Two, whatever we learn, we are happy to share with other synagogues and communal organizations in Greater Boston. Together, may all of us in Jewish communal life seek, find and respond to the *tzelem Elohim*, the image of God, that is in every one of us.”

*Rabbi Wes Gardenswartz, Temple Emanuel*

“Temple Isaiah is honored to be part of the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project and to receive consultation and learn about best practices for inclusion. We have a staff member who focuses on inclusion and differentiated learning in our school, and we are working to expand our efforts beyond education across the spectrum of our congregation and to be thoughtful and welcoming to all. This initiative helps make us accountable and provides inspiration for us to fully commit ourselves to such important work.”

*Rabbi Howard Jaffe, Temple Isaiah*

“Inclusion has been central to our synagogue. We’re excited to partner with the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project to take this core commitment to an even higher level and use this opportunity to learn best practices and to promote our inclusion work. Earlier this month, we hosted Loretta Claiborne, a world-class runner and special Olympian, who discussed overcoming her disability. Currently we’re in the process of conducting on-on-one interviews and putting together a survey so that we can better understand the needs of our community and ensure that everyone is able to participate to the fullest.”

*Rabbi Sonia Saltzman, Temple Ohabei Shalom*

“Temple Shalom is really excited to be part of this congregational change initiative around something that is so fundamental to who we are. We have always been dedicated to creating an inclusive community and we welcome everyone from every background. The Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project helps us to organize and really look at our efforts in a cohesive way. Our Task Force is developing and implementing a strategic plan, and we are looking for ways to deepen our commitment and truly live the values taught by our tradition.”

*Rabbi Allison Berry, Temple Shalom*

“Temple Sinai strives to be a synagogue for all who want to be part of our community. We want anyone, whether they have a disability or not, whatever their background or individual story, to find their Jewish home. We are honored to be part of the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project. We’ve never done anything like this before and we are grateful to have the wisdom and the experience and insights of the Ruderman staff to guide us. Our committee of lay leaders has developed a detailed action plan to expand our inclusion efforts for people of all abilities — ranging from our signage and physical space to our programming and website. As it says in Genesis, Chapter 1, all people are all created in God’s image. This is a living and articulated value of our synagogue.”

*Rabbi Andy Vogel, Temple Sinai*

“We would like to put together a robust educational program for the whole community so that the principle of inclusion is fully realized. Young Israel of Sharon is grateful to the Ruderman Family Foundation for this thoughtful and compassionate inclusion project that instantiates the most essential spirit of Torah, as expressed by Isaiah 58:7-8: ‘Give bread to the starving, bring the downtrodden poor to your home, if you see someone naked clothe them, and from your own flesh and blood do not hide.

Then shall your light break forth like the morning and your healing shall quickly grow, your righteousness shall go before you and the glory of God shall gather you in.' "

*Rabbi Dr. Meir Sendor, Young Israel of Sharon*

"Parashat Nitzavim teaches that all of us, 'men, women, children...from the wood chopper to water drawer...enter[ed] into the covenant with God.' Temple Emunah, led by the Inclusion Committee and its partnership with the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project, strives to create a welcoming environment that is accessible to all by reducing physical barriers and social stigmas associated with disabilities through intentional relationships, advocacy, and programming. Through these efforts we hope to recreate that pivotal moment at Sinai, and stand together once again."

*Rabbi Michael Fel, Temple Emunah of Lexington*

"At Shaarei Tefillah, we pride ourselves on our warm, welcoming, Modern Orthodox community. However, we have learned over the years that creating an inclusive environment requires more than good will. A sincere call for inclusivity must be conveyed not only with greetings and invitations, but must be expressed through architecture and access, signage, wordage and programs. The strength of a kehillah (community) should be measured not only in membership units and the length of weekly announcements, but also by its commitment to inclusivity and the dignity of difference. We are proud to partner with the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project to better our shul's inclusive culture, and work collaboratively with all our RSIP partners to establish best practices and imagine new possibilities of engaging Jews of all abilities in Torah, Tefillah, and Mitzvot."

*Rabbi Benjamin Samuels, Congregation Shaarei Tefillah*