June 27, 2023

“Ch-ch-ch-changes - turn and face the strain…” (David Bowie)

“For four things can change the fate of a person... Tzedaka, prayer, changing the name and changing deeds... and some say (also) changing one’s place.” (Talmud Rosh Hashana 16b)

Dear Beloved NAJC Members,

In organizational life, in Jewish life, in any life, nothing stays the same. Part of our work as chaplains is helping people facing the strain of change. At the same time, our tradition (as the rabbis wisely taught) teaches us that change can be seen as an opportunity for growth. We have some important news about changes in leadership for NAJC.

I am thrilled to announce that our board has unanimously and happily appointed Rabbi Benjamin Flax of Winthrop MA as our new NAJC Executive Director. This followed a long process that involved our personnel committee doing an extensive study of the job description as well as our organizational needs. We posted the job and received 34 resumes; we interviewed many of them. We were very pleased with the high quality of candidates we received.

Rabbi Benjamin Flax grew up across the US as a child of an Air Force Chaplain. He has a BA in Religious Studies and History from the University of Alabama, and an ALM in Management from Harvard. His rabbinic ordination is from Yeshivat Pirchei Shoshanim. He also has a Graduate Certificate in Gerontology and Palliative Care from YU’s Wurtzweiler School of Social Work. He has spent the past decade working in various fundraising and advancement roles in education, Jewish life, and election campaigning. He currently lives in the Greater Boston area, serves as rabbi of Tifereth Israel of Winthrop, and is proud to serve as a member of the Chaplain Corps for the Massachusetts Army National Guard. He brings vision, creativity, energy, and experience to NAJC.

We are also delighted to announce that we have promoted Allison Atterberry to NAJC Director of Operations. This is in recognition and appreciation of the wonderful work she has already done for NAJC, knowing that she is ready to carry further responsibility. Allison is deeply devoted to and cherished by our members.
We feel confident that we have a terrific leadership team who can take NAJC to the next level in our organizational development and service.

Ben assumes his post on July 1. I hope you will take the time to get to know Ben during the next few months.

We have to again offer our deepest thanks to Rabbi Dr. Maurice “Moe” Kaprow, who has served us with distinction and devotion for so long. I was honored to be present at both the NACC and APC conferences (not to mention our own!) where he was warmly honored for his service to the field of professional chaplaincy. Moe has served in almost every capacity for NAJC, but especially as a past president and for the last few years as executive director. He has taken us through periods of strain as well as periods of growth. He retires leaving NAJC in excellent shape, for which we are incredibly grateful. We are lucky that he will be assisting in the transition as well as staying an active NAJC member.

I want to again thank the members of the Personnel Committee who so ably worked on this endeavor: Bryan Kinzbrunner, Alissa Thomas-Newborn, Lynn Liberman, Rebecca Kamil, and Neal Loevinger.

We believe that these changes will happen with a minimum of strain, as well as become vital opportunities for the growth of NAJC and Jewish Professional Chaplaincy.

May your Fourth of July be a joyous and safe one.

Kol tuv,

Joe

Rabbi Joseph S. Ozarowski, D. Min., BCC
President, NAJC – Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains