



The search committee has been meeting regularly since its formation and I have some exciting progress to report to you.

The committee has facilitated two very productive focus group sessions on the rabbinic search process. If you were unable to attend a focus group meeting, you may complete a questionnaire, which has been distributed in a congregation-wide email and is available on the congregation's web site. **Please return your responses to Congregation Har Shalom or email them to rabbisearch@harshalom.org by Friday, March 6, 2009.** We are now preparing a document to reflect your input. We will share that document with the Har Shalom community and with each candidate whom we interview in person.

The committee has divided itself into working groups to handle the following tasks: completion of the Rabbinical Assembly Questionnaire, initial resume screening, telephone interviews, due diligence/off-site visits to candidate's home shuls, initial on site interview, and Shabbatonim. As we approach each phase of the search I will update you as appropriate through this column and emails to the Har Shalom community. Please understand that to protect the confidentiality of the process both from candidates' and shul's perspective, we will not announce names of our candidates until we have invited a candidate to be a finalist and that rabbi has agreed to the Shabbaton visit. At that time you will receive a full biography and other information which will also be posted on the web site. After each visit, we will make available a questionnaire for direct member feedback.

The process for conducting telephone interviews has begun. I am pleased to report that we have 15 rabbinic applicants. As you read this, we are scheduling and conducting telephone interviews with many of these candidates. Thereafter, we will evaluate these interviews to determine which *rabbanim* to invite to Har Shalom to meet with the full committee and our senior staff. In addition, other subcommittees are actively laying the groundwork to complete the rabbinic search process which was laid out in my past update.

The process for conducting our due diligence and planning our shabbatot for finalists has also begun. **We would greatly appreciate your donation of airline mileage to help reduce the cost of travel expenses.** Please consider making a donation of airline miles by contacting us at rabbisearch@harshalom.org.

Our many focus groups and Kadimah meetings underscore this basic truth: our future is bright not for who we might select as a rabbi but for who we are as a community. Today this congregation of doers is building something very special: a future which is commensurate with its iconic status as one of the leading conservative congregations in the mid-Atlantic area. So, let me conclude this update with a report on the tone of the search committee's deliberations. Our time together is joyful. Our interactions are not marked by frivolity, mind you, but with an exuberance that comes from the following recognition: we are blessed to have this opportunity together in strength to find a rabbi who will inspire us and further enhance the bonds of friendship and learning among us.

As always, I hope that you will not hesitate to contact me at rabbisearch@hashalom.org if you have any questions or concerns.

B'Shalom,

Jonathan