

My husband, Steve, and I joined Congregation Rodeph Sholom when we decided to send our first daughter to the day school. We had already come to the decision that we would raise our children Jewish before we had children, but as a non-Jewish parent, I knew we needed help to do it the way I wanted. We decided to leave the synagogue we had been affiliated with to join the Rodeph Sholom community.

I was raised a Catholic. I attended Catholic schools my entire life and came from a religiously observant, caring, loving and extremely large family. That life gave me a feeling of thankfulness and security that I wanted my children to have. I wanted them to identify themselves as 100% Jewish and feel great about it, but not at the exclusion of others. I worried about whether I would feel like I belonged as well, or if someone would question their Jewishness because their mother wasn't Jewish.

Rodeph Sholom School and Shul gave us exactly what we were looking for and it happened organically. Our kids loved their school and synagogue. They learned so much in the classroom, at Shabbat services geared to their ages, at holiday celebrations, as part of the choir, and on Mitzvah Day, etc. They came to completely and proudly identify themselves as Jews. The amazing thing was that I learned right along with them and never felt like a stranger. Often, the learning was right in the classroom with them, or in the synagogue, attending holiday celebrations together. The school would send home wonderfully age-appropriate reference guides for celebrating all the holidays.

The adult education was as compelling for me as the school was for my children. I attended as many Adult-Ed classes and lectures as I could and even learned Hebrew. My involvement in the School and Shul was always welcomed and embraced. Serving on the Executive Committee of the Rodeph Sholom School Parent's Association for three years and being an active member of the Inclusion and Outreach Committee of the synagogue for the last three years has been a wonderful experience and a great way for me to feel completely part of this community.

My oldest daughter became a Bat Mitzvah recently and my next daughter is preparing for hers. My large Catholic family embraced Anna's celebration, including doing an Aliyah on the Bimah, and can't wait to celebrate with us again. All of our extended family has always been very supportive of Steve and me as we attempt to provide our children with a Jewish upbringing and home. The journey has led me to identify the Jewish religion as my own now, and Congregation Rodeph Sholom as my faith community.

Amy Lipin