

Rodeph Sholom: by Steven Fuchs

In the late 1950's my family joined a synagogue in Westchester County. Over the years we all felt less comfortable as the synagogue leaned towards orthodoxy. However, and most importantly, as the years passed and we moved geographically further away from the synagogue, it was the gathering place for over a dozen members of my family. When Brian (a gentile) and I became a couple in the mid 1980's my Dad even bought him a seat for the high Holidays. We tolerated the intolerance at the shul for the sake of us all remaining in one congregation.

I share this background information, as it was a wrenching decision for me to leave the family synagogue after a half century knowing I would not be spending the holidays with them. I never felt I would feel as much love again in a sanctuary without my family.

About seven years ago, when we were in the midst of trying to have our first child through surrogacy, we started looking for a spiritual home in Manhattan. We visited several congregations and networked with friends. We were very soon attracted to Rodeph Sholom for a variety of reasons. We enjoyed the breadth of activities and the intimacy of the shul. The services were uplifting, meaningful and enjoyable. We were very pleased to learn about the excellent Rodeph Sholom School. Importantly, we wanted to be in an environment where we felt welcomed and included. From the moment we met with Rabbi Levine in his office we knew we had found our new home.

In the relatively few years we have been members we have experienced many lifecycle events. All the clergy take such a heartfelt interest in our lives and share extraordinary wisdom with us. We have experienced the clergy officiating at the two Mikvah/conversion ceremonies for our children Anna (5) and William (3), and the genuine outreach of all the clergy when Brian's Dad passed away two years ago. We are now planning our wedding to be officiated by Rabbi Grushcow and Brian is in the midst of attending conversion classes (with me) at Rodeph Sholom.

Both of our children attend the outstanding nursery school at the Rodeph Sholom School. I have been a class parent for three years and participant in the wonderful parenting class entitled "How to raise a Mentsch".

We have made several good friends at Congregation Rodeph Sholom and everyone we have met there has been so warm. When we attend high holiday services and sit in our reserved seats the members behind us and to our sides always greet us as old friends.

In summary, I would say that Rodeph Sholom has become our second home. While the congregation is large, most everyone is so personal and thoughtful. Did I mention we are a Gay headed family? At Rodeph Sholom, we feel like we are just another active congregational/school family!