

Congregation Mishkan Or

New synagogue community of
Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple and The Temple-Tifereth Israel

December 30, 2024

Dear Congregants:

As we celebrate Hanukkah, I am reminded of the enduring strength and resilience that illuminate our community, guiding us through moments of change and growth. It is in this spirit that I share with you my decision to retire as Senior Rabbi in 2026. When I retire, I'll have completed 40 years of serving Jewish communities in various roles including what will be 25 years as a congregational rabbi, the last 16 as a Senior Rabbi in Cleveland, Ohio.

As a recent cancer survivor, I know this is the right time for me to plan for retirement. When I was first diagnosed with stage IV cancer, doctors could not assure me that I'd survive to see my eldest graduate college, let alone my youngest graduate high school last spring. This past May – I reached remission, a term I never believed would apply to me. For the foreseeable future, I expect my scans to no longer evidence metastatic disease. Recently, this has also led me to discern that I am living on “bonus time”—precious moments I don't want to take for granted.

Let me assure you: my decision to retire in 2026 is not in response to the challenges we are addressing as we unify our two historic communities. I am choosing to retire entirely based on my internal reflections. I've made a promise to myself. My goal is no longer just survival; I want to flourish—in every dimension, as long as health and hope allow. My retirement will provide space and opportunity for this flourishing.

This past Shabbat, our Torah offered a profound lesson in the example of Joseph in Genesis. When fearful premonitions are confided to Joseph, his response shows what we've come to praise as the qualities of *chochmah* (wisdom) and also *n'vunah* (discernment). He applies wisdom with compassion and humility and speaks difficult truths already apprehended in his heart. This example guides my own personal reflections.

I'm filled with gratitude to be Inaugural Senior Rabbi for Congregation Mishkan Or and to hold a Chair in Rabbinics honoring the names of two righteous people: Will & Jan Sukenik. My career has also included mentoring hundreds of young people in Ohio, Virginia and Maryland and in our Reform Jewish camps and youth movement. Leadership in interfaith work has been a great privilege, especially when I was the 2017-18 co-chair for Greater Cleveland Congregations and when our Jewish-Muslim partnership in Northern Virginia garnered international recognition.

Finally, I'm so proud to have collaborated in the last 2 ½ years with leaders and stakeholders of two special communities to me, blazing a new path and founding Congregation Mishkan Or. It is important to me as well to support the selection of our community's next senior rabbi and encourage them through finishing my full-time rabbinate with every conviction in my heart. I want our next leader to succeed and help us thrive as a new community. He or she or they will be my rabbi, and I want to be a champion for *Mishkan Or* long into my future.

For now, there is still important work to do at Mishkan Or, and I intend to prepare our congregation for exciting chapters ahead. My work will focus on ensuring the foundation we've built remains strong and resilient. As Senior Rabbi, I will continue to support our Mishkan Or clergy and staff teams who've been instrumental to our success.

The depth and creativity of my colleagues — Rabbi Joshua Caruso, Rabbi Yael Dadoun, Rabbi Roger Klein, Cantor Vladimir Lapin, Rabbi Elle Muhlbaum, Cantor Kathy Sebo, Senior Rabbi Emeritus Richard Block, and Cantor Laureate Sarah Sager — bring tremendous vibrancy, experience and wisdom to our congregation. Our Executive Director Julianna Johnston Senturia insightfully guides our dedicated staff, who inspire my confidence in a bright future. Indeed, I believe the light of *Mishkan Or* will radiate with beauty for generations to come.

Chazak, chazak, v'nitchazek—be strong, be strong, and let us strengthen one another and the people of Israel.

Robert Nosanchuk (pronouns: he/him)

Inaugural Senior Rabbi and Will & Jan Sukenik Chair in Rabbinics