



Rabbi Suzanne Singer to leave Riverside's Temple Beth El

Donald Trump's election was a major factor in her decision to pursue social justice work, she says.

By ALEJANDRA MOLINA / STAFF WRITER
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Rabbi Suzanne Singer of Riverside's Temple Beth El announced Wednesday, Dec. 28, that she will be leaving the congregation to focus on social justice work because of what she calls uncertainty surrounding Republican Donald Trump's presidency.

"I'm very worried about what's going to happen in this country and I feel like I need to do something about it," said Singer, who has led Temple Beth El nearly nine years. "For the most part, congregations, that's not their primary job, to get involved in social justice."

"I need to be out there doing more," she added.

Singer said she's worried about immigrant and Muslim communities, and other vulnerable people who lack medical care and other resources. She added she doesn't yet have a job, but aims to work for a nonprofit dealing with issues affecting children, economic and criminal justice. Singer will stay at Temple Beth El until July 1.

During her time in the Inland area, she has spoken against the pay for warehouse workers and advocated for universal health care, criminal justice and Syrian refugees.

"I'm taking a big chance here," Singer said.

Singer's idealism has defined her career moves throughout the years.



Rabbi Suzanne Singer of Riverside's Temple Beth El announced Wednesday, Dec. 28, that she will be leaving the congregation to focus on social justice work amid the uncertainty surrounding Republican Donald Trump's looming presidency.

She spent 20 years as a television programming executive. While at the Public Broadcasting Service, she produced a show that taught children social skills and respect for diversity. She won two Emmys for other programs.

Singer didn't grow up in a religious family and rarely attended synagogue.

She was in her 30s when she began reading the Bible and pondering what it meant to be a Jew. That began a journey that led her to rabbinical school and later to Temple Beth El.

"I think the congregation is in a really good place," Singer said. "(It) has managed to survive and be quite a cohesive community for many years despite some adversity."

"Working together we were able to get to a place where the congregation felt like a safe place," she added.

Before her arrival, Temple Beth El had about five different rabbis over 10 years, she said.

Singer said she's proud of what Temple Beth El accomplished, citing creation of its adult education programs and Torah study Saturday mornings. She said a number of people have joined the congregation through their introduction to Judaism program.

Also, she's inspired by Temple Beth El's involvement with a program through the Union for Reform Judaism, which seeks to identify social justice issues on which the congregation can focus.

Harry Freedman, president of Temple Beth El's board of directors, said in a message to congregants that a search committee will be created.

"As unhappy as we are with Rabbi Singer's decision, we certainly respect it ... She clearly deserves a position that best meets her needs and goals," Freedman said.

Singer is unsure where she will end up, but hopes she'll stay in Southern California.

"Sometimes you got to do what's pushing you," she said.