**Commitment to Inclusion 2016-2017**

Over the past year, Temple Isaiah created a new Inclusion Committee and initiated several inclusion projects with support from a Ruderman Foundation grant. Thank you to the participants who contributed to our monthly meetings. I am pleased to share our accomplishments.

**Inclusion check list:** Temple Isaiah now has a comprehensive check list to ensure that services and programs are inclusive in design and implementation. Copies are available in the office and on the website.

**Document review:** Sue Tafler and Barb Chandler reviewed temple documents and our web site for inclusive language. They contributed meaningful suggestions for the committee to review and changes have been made to publications.

**Accessibility flyer:** Barb and Sue also created an Accessibility Flyer, which features helpful information for temple visitors. Please see the website or hard copies in the foyer.

**Mental health programs**: Working with the Mental Health Committee, we provided financial support for three programs: Living with Bi-Polar, Opiate Addiction in MA, and Body Image & Eating Disorders. Thank you to Dolly Sadow and Cynthia Piltch for serving as Mental Health Committee liaisons.

**Teen engagement:** We were also joined by Eli Brodner and Jackie Benjes who served as the new Teen Inclusion Coordinators for the teen community. They shared their roles and responsibilities of making all feel welcome and included in teen events.

**K’Sharim Hanukkah party:** In December we hosted a Hanukkah party serving adults with different abilities. Thank you to Ruthie Liberman, Cantor Doob, Rabbi Amy Hertz, and the huge number of community volunteers. We look forward to next year’s event.

**Inclusion Panel:** In February, a paneldiscussed the complexities and successes in creating an inclusive community.  Thank you to Ruthie Liberman for sharing a thoughtful d’var Torah on disability and community, Dolly Sadow who spoke on the stigma of mental health, Susan Offsey who addressed issues of a medical disability related to Celiac disease, and Casey Lan who shared the many complexities living with physical and intellectual challenges.

**Special Shabbat service:** Also in February, we gathered for a special Shabbat service focused on our Jewish responsibility to inclusion.  Rabbi Perlman and Cantor Doob led a lovely service interspersed with personal stories from congregants Sam Zachary, Zach Kon, Sam Fisher, and Francine Stieglitz regarding what an inclusive congregation means and feels like. Thank you to Ros Shamash for facilitating our oneg Shabbat that modeled inclusive seating, social connections, and allergy sensitive snack selections.

As chair of the Inclusion Committee, it has been my pleasure to oversee the Ruderman Foundation grant to further Temple Isaiah’s Commitment to Inclusion. The most unexpected outcome for me was the many amazing people I met throughout this process. Thank you for sharing your stories, struggles and successes.

The Inclusion Committee will meet next on May 8, 2017 at 7:30 to 9:00pm at Temple Isaiah to begin planning for next year. We will have a conversation about social inclusion effecting all ages and stages as well as how we might use technology to further our goals around inclusion. If you have a topic you would like addressed in the coming year, please join us or contact me by email Rebecca Winters, Inclusion Specialist, at *inclusion@templeisaiah.net.*