

Dear Temple Emanu-El,

I am beyond thrilled to be your Assistant Cantor and join your community starting in July. I am a Jersey native and grew up in Asbury Park, where my journey to becoming a cantor began: at seven years old my cantor encouraged me to sing on the bima and I haven't stopped since! My experiences as a child singing in synagogue, wrapped in the music of our people, sparked a passion for Judaism and music.

My love of music led me to Lawrence University in Appleton Wisconsin where I received my BA in religious studies and music with a minor in psychology. I then spent a year working at Hillel International in Washington DC before starting cantorial school. During my time at HUC-JIR I served as a cantorial intern at several diverse pulpits including Temple Micah in DC, Scarsdale, Poughkeepsie, and East End Temple in New York, where I had the pleasure of bringing hundreds of b'nai mitzvah students to Torah, leading Shabbat, Festival and High Holiday services, and teaching music for ages starting as young as three months old.

I have especially valued my training as a chaplain at Bellevue Hospital where I completed over 800 hours of clinical pastoral care training providing spiritual counseling and listening to the stories of patients ranging from psychiatric wards, chemical addiction, prison, emergency, trauma, ICU, and oncology units. The most recent unit was during the COVID 19 pandemic serving front-line workers, patients, and their families.

This year has been deeply challenging filled with loss and pain, but there have also been times of hope for the future and this is one of them: I am so excited to celebrate this moment of coming together in celebration as I join your community. Throughout my interview process, I was continually inspired by your incredibly smart, kind, and creative team of clergy, and I am ecstatic to be able to add my voice to this team to continue to build and grow for the future. I am particularly looking forward to bringing singing and joy to the ECE, nurturing a spark and love for Judaism within the hearts of our youngest members. Becoming a cantor is about fulfilling a role that echoes the very deepest parts of my being. As your cantor I will strive to cultivate a holy community where connection thrives and each individual feels seen, heard and valued.

I am joining the community with my husband, Alex. I have tons of energy, partly because I am obsessed with Rook cold brew coffee. I also love green smoothies and obé fitness workouts. I like to warm up for erev Rosh Hashanah services by throwing around the softball. I can't wait to get started and meet you all!

B'shirah (in song),

Cantor Ilana Goldman