



The Holiday Nexus: Asking Questions, Finding Answers

Faith, food, family: a powerful nexus that draws us all at this time of year, whatever our religion.

Does your heart lift at the prospect of midnight services? Or did you already have your spiritual “high” at the sounding of the shofar? Does your mouth water in anticipation of savory, crispy latkes, or is it the thought of spicy, luscious gingerbread that gets your juices going?

Whether your household is an actively dual-faith one, or one in which one faith is practiced by all except one partner, menu choices and even religious observances can be negotiated to everyone’s satisfaction with a little good will and flexibility all around.

The crunch comes in the “family” element of the holiday trio. Do you have fond childhood memories of gathering around the tree on Christmas morning, or is it singing and playing in the glow of the Hanukkah menorah that fills your heart? In my observation over years of involvement with Dovetail, this is the area interfaith couples have the most difficulty dealing with. We all want to pass on to our children and grandchildren the experiences and practices that bind us to our own most treasured traditions, perhaps even more than we want to pass on our religious beliefs.

Then, of course, there are the inevitable strains in nearly every family dynamic—the uncle who drinks too much, the cousin who

bullies the other kids, the exhausted and cranky mother, the critical or carping father. An interfaith marriage in the mix can be like a lens that both magnifies and distorts existing stresses, and may also create new ones. Your aunt may think your partner is going to hell; your partner’s grandfather may be convinced you are a closet anti-

Semite. One grandmother may pout because she can’t give religious artifacts to your children; the other grandmother may gloat because she can.



So what’s the answer? I’ll tell you: I don’t know. I only know some of the

questions—and therein lies the key. Identify the questions, and try to keep them specific and as free of emotional baggage as possible. Not “Why do you want to rob our children of such a wonderful experience?” but “How can we give the kids the kinds of fond memories

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Plea for Volunteers

Dovetail desperately needs assistance with clerical duties. They break down into three areas:

- 1) brochure and subscription renewal notice production and distribution;
- 2) order fulfillment;
- 3) database maintenance.

Each of those takes about one day per week. If you might be interested in taking on one or more of these tasks, please contact Mary at 502-549-5440 or DI-IFR@Bardstown.com to discuss details.

Search for Director

Mary has announced her plan to resign as Executive Director of the Dovetail Institute as of January 2006 at the latest. Please call 502-549-5440 or email DI-IFR@Bardstown.com if you think you might like the job, or want to suggest someone else. *Note: we are hoping to make this a salaried position eventually, but at the present time it offers only a \$500 per month stipend to cover expenses.*

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we have without transgressing the terms of our family religious choices?" Not "Why is your brother such a jerk?" but "Can we arrange things so that I don't have to deal with your brother?"

And finally, there are the questions you can ask yourself: Why is this holiday important to me? Which aspects of its celebration are religious, which cultural, which personal nostalgia?

Dovetail's website:

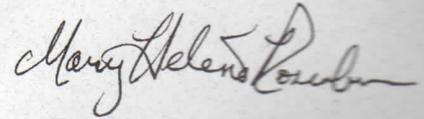
www.dovetailinstitute.org.

Online discussion group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/interfaith> (Dovetail members only).

Dovetail's mission is to provide a channel of communication for interfaith couples, their parents, and their children. No matter what their specific choices regarding faith for their home and children, the more interfaith families can share their ideas, experiences, resources, and support, the more they can make peace in their homes and communities. Jewish and Christian perspectives can dovetail.

Believing that there are no definitive answers to the questions facing interfaith families, Dovetail strives to be open to all ideas and opinions. Editorial content attempts to balance and respect the perspectives of both Jewish and Christian partners in interfaith marriages, as well as the diverse perspectives of parents and children of interfaith couples. Inclusion in Dovetail does not imply endorsement. Dovetail accepts a thoughtful and constructive discussion of all related issues in the Letters to the Editor section, and reserves the right to reply.

Asking—and answering—these questions won't make them go away. But as you read this issue of Dovetail, you may find comfort in the variety of possible responses to them, and inspiration in those that chime with yours. And whatever your choices, in the words of that great intermarried American icon, Irving Berlin, "May your days be merry and bright...." 



Please remember us in your will and trusts.

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Dovetail welcomes article submissions, letters to the editor, and comments or suggestions. Send to **Debi Tenner, Editor, 45 Lilac Ln., Hamden, Ct. 06517, DebiT4RLS@aol.com;** **Review Editor Carol Weiss Rubel, 310 Tulip Circle, Clarks Summit, PA 18411-0213, CarolW44@aol.com.**

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My Interfaith Marriage Made Me a More Committed Jew

by Ellyn Bache

People are often shocked to hear me say I am a more committed Jew today after three decades with my late husband, a Christian, than I was as a young woman. How can that be, they wonder. Here is someone who, for many years, has allowed a holiday tree (a Christmas tree?) to be erected in her living room. True, she's active in her temple. She goes to services; she studies. She belongs to the Sisterhood. But still....

In my own mind, there is no "but still...." It was my interfaith marriage, far more than anything before it, that prompted me to "choose" Judaism in a committed way. I sometimes wonder if I would have known or cared as much as I do if I'd married a tepidly religious Jewish man. Growing up Jewish in a big city was almost too easy. My family was Jewish, of course, but so was everyone else in the neighborhood. If we didn't light the Sabbath candles, if we didn't go to synagogue even on the High Holidays, no one seemed to care. After all, we celebrated with festive dinners featuring gefilte fish and matzoh ball soup. We gave each other small gifts at Hanukkah. At Passover we ate matzoh. Surely that was enough.

Marriage Choices

Then I married Terry. My friends and family forgave me, mostly on the basis of my advanced age: I was 27, which was quite old for a bride of my generation. Since I'd never gone to services anyway, I didn't much care where the wedding took place. Terry wasn't religious, either, though when pressed he would admit to being a Christian. We

had the ceremony in a Unitarian Church out of respect for his devoutly Catholic mother.

Then, like many other interfaith couples, neither of us set foot in a church or synagogue again until we had school-age children. Terry wasn't very interested in their having a religious education, but I was. Being raised a secular Jew had been like being raised "nothing." It wasn't until college that I'd discovered Jews were not only "something" but "something different," about which I knew very little. If I'd married a non-observant Jewish man and lived in a Jewish community, this might not have mattered. But as an intermarried woman, I saw my children as vulnerable, and didn't want them to find themselves, as I had, in the position of being too ignorant to defend a faith others would pin on them and then criticize. It was put-up-or-shut-up time—my first experience of having to make a considered, conscious choice about religion.

I wasn't going to raise my children as "nothing," and the only "something" that made sense to me was Judaism. I joined a Reform temple and registered the first of our four children for religious school. That was the beginning of my own education as well as theirs; we ate apples and honey after children's services at Rosh Hashanah, we cast our sins (and our bread crumbs) to the ducks in the lake, we hung gourds in the temple's sukkah. While going to services with them, I discovered that the prayer book was poetry, and full of wisdom, and became enchanted with music I wanted to hear again and again.

*Ellyn Bache is the author of five books of fiction, including a novella, **Holiday Miracles: A Christmas/Hanukkah Story**, and a novel, **Safe Passage**, which became a film starring Susan Sarandon.*

[T]here is sometimes a built-in prejudice against [interfaith couples], even in Reform temples where many members are intermarried and the official policy is to welcome them.

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I also discovered, as many in intermarried families do, that there is sometimes a built-in prejudice against them, even in Reform temples where many members are intermarried and the official policy is to welcome them. Terry, raised as a Catholic, no longer cared for organized religion at all, mine included. Although he always came to temple when the children were involved, and to social events even when they weren't, he was simply "not Jewish" and wasn't going to be anything else. Perhaps as a result, a handful of temple members expected the rest of our family to rise to a higher standard of "Jewishness" than they demanded of themselves. Did we have a seder at our house? Why didn't I volunteer at the Sunday school? (Never mind that I had a baby at home.) I smiled and went my way.

Then there was the "holiday" tree. For us, it wasn't a religious icon; it was a symbol of family closeness and warmth Terry had grown up with and wanted to pass on to his children. Try explaining that to your Jewish friends. We celebrated Hanukkah by lighting the menorah, eating latkes, and playing dreidl, but we exchanged presents mostly at Christmas. Close friends visited all through the season, but we invited casual Jewish acquaintances before or after the holidays, not during them—not because we were uncomfortable with our choice, but because they were.

Mixed Messages

That said, the children and I acquired a lot of friendships, an education, and a place in the community. If at times temple membership tested

both our stubbornness and commitment, there was never any question we would stay. Yet it seemed a gift, if not a relief, when we moved to another town where over half the temple's congregation was intermarried (reflecting the national statistic), and interfaith families were welcomed as openly as single-faith ones.

It was here, finally, that I began to study in earnest. What mother wants her children to know more Hebrew than she does? In the adult beginners' class, our endlessly patient rabbi taught us not just to translate the prayers, but to understand them in the larger context of Jewish belief. I joined other discussion groups, asked questions out of ignorance, and was never made to feel stupid or marginalized. Gradually, by fits and starts, I became not merely a woman with a Jewish background, but a Jew. Nobody told me I "had" to do any of that. If my interfaith marriage hadn't set me on the road to religious commitment, I probably wouldn't have. I have lived a richer life because I did. 

From One Grandparent To Another

by Irene Davis

In my grandchildren's home there is a Christmas tree in the corner and a Hanukkah menorah on the mantel, the lights from one beckoning a friendly welcome to the other. My grandchildren and their parents celebrate both holidays, with everyone joining in the accompanying rituals. In this way, our son and daughter-in-law hope, the children will grow up appreciating both their mother's and their father's cultural background and religion.

Once such a scenario was comparatively rare, but these days countless families around the country are melding two cultures and religions. And like myself, hundreds of grandparents are learning to walk the fine line of transmitting their culture and traditions to their grandchildren without pushing it as "the right way," or treading on the beliefs and sensibilities of their child's spouse. How well we succeed will probably determine whether our relationship with our children and grandchildren is warm and loving, or whether it is uneasy or even hostile. To help us all find our way, I asked Resa Eisen, a family therapist with a special interest in grandparenting issues, for some pointers.

At the top of Eisen's list was: "Don't bad-mouth or put down the child's parent or his or her religion. That creates a very uncomfortable situation for the child." Instead, she advises, be open to different traditions so the child is not afraid to talk about his or her "other religion." In fact, encourage the child to talk. Ask, for example, what they are doing at school to celebrate the holidays. Perhaps the child is making a Hanukkah menorah or writing a letter to Santa Claus. With older

children, she suggests asking, "What's it like for you to celebrate two different holidays, to have two different religions?"

Eisen's most important piece of advice, I think, is that grandparents remember their place in the scheme of things. "It is not the grandparents' role to judge how the parents make decisions in this area," she points out, "but to be supportive, so that everyone feels comfortable and the relationship can be maintained."

When you think about it, it comes down to respect: for your child and his or her choice of life partner, for your child's spouse, for the spouse's family—the other grandparents in the equation—and yes, for your grandchildren, for you are showing them that you love and value their family, with all its traditions, and therefore that you love and value them. So enjoy and celebrate those traditions with them.

How to celebrate?

Gifts are appropriate for both holidays. Hanukkah calls for "Hanukkah gelt"—small sums of money given to the youngsters in the family. We like to stock their piggy banks with loonies and their tummies with chocolate Hanukkah gelt (gold and silver foil-wrapped chocolate coins). We also provide dreidls—small tops imprinted with the Hebrew letters that begin the words "[A] Great Miracle Happened There"—to spin and play traditional games with.

Because I love books, I also give books, handing out such favorites as *Goodnight Moon*, *Where The Wild Things Are* (and other Maurice Sendak goodies), and Dr. Seuss books to my preschoolers. This

Irene Davis is a Toronto-based writer and grandmother. Irene came across Dovetail while surfing the Internet and agreed to share her story with Dovetail as the Jewish grandparent of three intermarried children. She has seven grandchildren ranging in age from 14 down to 4—two in Adelaide, Australia, two in Apex, North Carolina, and three, happily closer to home, in the Toronto area.

When you think about it, it comes down to respect...

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not necessarily imply endorsement of the articles and
opinions expressed herein.

year I'm including a subscription to
Chickadee, a wonderful magazine for
3- to 8-year-olds. I also look forward
to giving them some of my child-
hood favorites when they're older:
Anne of Green Gables and the other
Anne books, *Alice in Wonderland*,
Mary Poppins, *Five Children and It*,
and *The Secret Garden*.

With Disney issuing on video the old
animated movies we loved, classics
like *Pinocchio* are also contenders.

For Christmas, of course, Santa
brings sleighloads of wonderful
things, and the space under the
Christmas tree blossoms with such
traditional favorites as skates, train

sets, doll houses, and workshops as
well as the latest in computer games.

In either tradition this season is the
Festival of Lights. Hanukkah lights
shine out a call for freedom—
freedom from oppression and
freedom of religion; the Christmas
message is one of hope, peace, and
goodwill. The child who is heir to
both traditions cannot help but be
enriched, and if we as grandparents
can truly share this time with our
children and grandchildren, we will
be enriched, too. 

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*Barry Marks serves as rabbi of Temple Israel in
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Making Hanukkah and Christmas Your Own

by Susanne Hicks Newman

Celebrating Hanukkah and Christmas takes a bit of planning, especially in terms of food. Every year we make about twelve loaves of Christmas bread, and the kids deliver them to neighbors and friends.

We have a standard family Hanukkah menu, but have experimented quite a bit with the latkes, or potato pancakes, so I have included our two favorite recipes.

Hanukkah

One relative gave us a three-day stomachache the first time she made potato latkes. While she followed a family recipe closely, she did not heat the Crisco to a high enough temperature before cooking the latkes. Consequently, they absorbed a great deal of fat, leaving us quite uncomfortable. I have experimented with about half a dozen recipes, and found the following two to be the most tasty and foolproof. Serve them plain, or with applesauce and sour cream on the side.

Potato Latkes #1 (6 servings): Mince a small onion and add to it 2 eggs, 2 tablespoons flour, 1 tablespoon baking powder, and 2-3 medium sized potatoes that have been peeled, grated, and patted dry. (I like Yukon Gold potatoes best for this recipe.) Add salt and pepper to taste. Form about a dozen small pancakes, and saute in melted butter over medium heat until golden brown on both sides.

Potato Latkes #2 (6 servings): Peel, grate, and pat dry 5 potatoes. (Again, I like Yukon Gold potatoes the best, but any russet potato will work fine. Red potatoes do not work well in this recipe.) Melt about 3 tablespoons

butter in an 11- or 12-inch non-stick skillet and heat until frothy. Add the grated potatoes, pressing and shaping them into a skillet-sized pancake. Salt and pepper the top. Cook on high heat for 3 minutes, until the underside of the pancake is crispy and dark gold. Carefully flip the pancake over. (I do this by sliding the pancake onto a dinner plate, then flipping it over by turning the plate upside down over the skillet.) Turn the heat down to low and continue cooking, uncovered, for 17-18 minutes. Slide onto a serving plate and cut into 6 equal portions.

Christmas

Cranberry Applesauce (6 servings): Chop 2 cups of cranberries and 3 peeled and cored Granny Smith apples. Put the chopped fruit in a pot with 3/4 cup of apple cider, 1 cup of sugar, and a dash of nutmeg. Cook until the fruit is soft, the sugar has dissolved, and the mixture has thickened.

Christmas Bread: The following recipe is for one loaf. I do at least 6 loaves at a time and bake them in disposable aluminum bread pans (sprayed with Pam) so that I can leave them in the pans and wrap them as gifts.

Mix 2 cups flour, 1 cup sugar, 1 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon baking soda, and 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder. Add 1 egg, 3/4 cup orange juice, and 2 tablespoons olive oil. Chop 3/4 cup pecans and 1/2 bag of cranberries coarsely in a food processor and fold into the dough. Spray a bread pan with Pam, pour in the dough, and bake at 350 degrees for about 1 hour or until a toothpick comes out clean. 🍴

From Latkes and Milk for Santa (unpublished); © copyright 2004 by Susanne Hicks Newman, all rights reserved; reprinted by permission.

Interfaith Families: Personal Stories of Jewish-Christian Intermarriage, by Jane Kaplan (Review)

Interfaith Families: Personal Stories of Jewish-Christian Intermarriage, by Jane Kaplan (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004)

Book Review by Carol Weiss Rubel

Carol Weiss Rubel is an educator who holds a bachelor's degree in English and advanced degrees in English and education. A community activist, her creative approach to problem solving has resulted in the formation of an alternative high school program for at-risk teens (Scranton City School District, Pennsylvania) which has been presented as a national model. Sought after as a resource and motivational speaker, Carol embraces collaboration as the optimal problem-solving model in professional and personal avenues. Carol Weiss Rubel is the adult child of an interfaith marriage; she is a practicing Roman Catholic married to an observant Conservative Jew.

It was not until I had completed reading Jane Kaplan's new book that I discovered the forward was written by Phil Donahue, the legendary television talk show host. Rather than that being an interesting side note, the connection between Donahue's introduction and the book's content crystallized my conviction that I had just finished reading the literary version of a television reality show.

Granted, there are no isolated islands in Kaplan's work—unless, of course, one considers the island of isolation from a birth family to be every bit as real and even more terrifying than “made for television” banishment to a tropical island. Likewise, there are no vignettes depicting starvation and wasting away due to lack of nourishment—unless, of course, one believes that nourishment for the soul and spirit is as vital to the human condition as a requisite number of calories.

Actually, I found Kaplan's collection of individual stories to be a true “piece of reality” far more significant than prime time drivel and far more likely to personally affect anyone who reads the work. In the best spirit of Dovetail's mission, this book explores a range of options for interfaith couples.

“There are stories about men and women who are adamant about wanting to raise their children as Jews even though they aren't particularly religious themselves,” Kaplan writes. She begins her book with a section called “Choosing a Jewish Family Life.” In it, the reader meets couples who discover that the initial choice of choosing to love each other is only the first step

toward navigating the waters of intermarriage. Kaplan's sensitive portrayals of individuals' inner turmoil as well as their public declarations of intention to preserve religious tradition entice the reader to continue.

In a wonderfully balanced manner, Kaplan's second section presents some couples who are choosing to create a Christian family life. However, as the author notes, far fewer are choosing Christianity instead of Judaism as the primary religion: “Pressure on the couple to have a Jewish life can be very strong.” That said, the very real option of establishing a home in the Christian religious mainstream of this country—an option that speaks to the omnipresent and overarching fear of intermarriage for most Jews—is discussed with candor and sensitivity.

Kaplan next moves toward the ways in which couples can integrate both traditions into their home by acknowledging that, while this choice is not particularly common, “it no longer seems as unusual as it once did.” Finally, Kaplan presents the possibility that neither Judaism nor Christianity may work for some, and that alternatives (ranging from other religious traditions to no religion at all) may, in fact, be the best choice for some intermarried couples.

Interfaith Families is “reality” at its best: honest, clear, sensitive, and riveting. Pick it up and turn off the television if you truly want to discover what life as part of an interfaith marriage is. 

God Forgive My Christmas Tree

by Deborah Vilardi

I hang another butterfly on the Christmas tree. Another year has passed, and I still wonder about it and its place in my life. I still wonder what God thinks looking down on me. Can God, will God forgive my Christmas tree?

Like most good little girls, I grew up with a dream of the man I would someday marry. He would be tall, but not too tall, have dark hair and eyes, and be Jewish. The last part was a given even though I lived in an Italian neighborhood and went to public school. There was one other Jew in my high school class, and one girl from an interfaith marriage. I didn't get along with the kids in Hebrew school, so my dream prospects were slim. I met Greg in 1987 at the end of my senior year of high school. He's 6'5" with light brown eyes and hair that reddens in the summer sun. He's Catholic. It was no surprise to me that I agreed to go out with him. It was time to date someone. My parents said that one date, the second of my life, wouldn't likely lead anywhere. College would give me more prospects. I broke up with Greg at the end of the summer, but we stayed friends and he told me we would marry one day. We got back together the following spring.

The rest is my mother's fault. Really. After we dropped Greg off at his house one evening, my mother turned to me and presented a list of his attributes: he's smart, caring, he has good job prospects, and he really seems to like you a lot. The list went on until, "It's too bad he's not Jewish." Immediately, I knew she was right; he was almost perfect. I thought, "If that's the only thing

that's wrong with him, I can live with that." It was not the response my mother intended. It wasn't my mother's decision.

Ghosts

Some members of our families accepted us, but some also stood against. They were like the ghost of Jacob Marley advising us about our future and lamenting the evil that could come of our union. We heard everything from "as long as they're happy" to "I'll cut her out of my will." We didn't listen to them. It was our decision to stop or go forward, but I couldn't leave God out of it. Intermarriage isn't something one does. What would God think?

Confusion came like the Ghost of Christmas Past, throwing tradition in my face. Wasn't I the little girl who ended my parents' holiday arguments by reminding them how we'd celebrated in previous years? They argued about the differing traditions they grew up with. I became the keeper of the compromises they'd made for our family. What would happen to those traditions now? Greg went to church every Sunday. I went to temple for the High Holy Days, but only because I still lived in my parents' house. We began to explore each other's religions and ask questions about belief. I went to church with him a few times, and he came to Hillel with me. We found the lines between what the religion taught and what each of us actually believed. Tradition is learned. It can be taught and shared.

Then another ghost appeared, Guilt. My grandfather developed cancer. What if this was God's response? My punishment? Confusion fed off Guilt

*Debbie Vilardi began writing in the eighth grade to rave reviews from her teachers and parents. She resides in Commack, New York with her husband of thirteen years. They have a toddler and a baby on the way. Debbie writes essays, short stories, and poems. She is also working on a picture book and a middle grade novel, **Darklands**.*

I became the keeper of the compromises they'd made for our family. What would happen to those traditions now?

Radio Interviewees Sought

Looking for couples whose union bridges a difference... of faith, race, or culture. I am working on a project for public radio to be broadcast around Valentine's Day 2005. This will be a thoughtful, respectful, informative, and emotionally engaging exploration into romance and long term commitment between individuals from different backgrounds: the challenges they face and the resolutions they find. There is no connection with any particular religion or sect and will not be used for any kind of proselytizing. There is no confirmed broadcast outlet at present, but for more information about the production company and the kind of work we do, visit our web site at www.flaneurmedia.com. Anyone who ends up being included in the story would have to give explicit written permission, so there is no obligation simply in contacting me for more information.

We are particularly interested in couples who live in or between Washington DC and New York City so that we might do the actual interviews in person. If at all interested, feel free to contact me directly.

Julia Hammid
juliahamid@yahoo.com
410-254-6890

and spawned a third, more powerful specter, Fear. I tried to push Greg away. He was halfway across the state at school, but he refused to let that separate us any more than breaking up had. He knew that my grandfather's illness had nothing to do with us, no matter what I felt about it. What kind of God would punish the grandparent for the sins of the grandchild? Why was it a sin anyway? We cried on the phone into the very early morning. Love means something to God too. That's the conclusion we came to.

Realities

We were married in the most acceptable way for both religions. Greg filled out dispensations for the church, and we had a Jewish ceremony. Both families came. We agreed to raise our children with both religious traditions as well. Greg fasts for Yom Kippur and I don't eat meat on Fridays during Lent. We light Hanukkah candles and an Advent wreath.

We periodically revisit the decisions we've made to see if they still work. We've addressed the challenges of Confusion, Guilt, and Responsibility to our families and heritages. Fear remains as nagging doubts. Have we made the right choices for ourselves and our children? Will our beliefs change incompatibly with the passage of time or the passing of the generation before us? Can God, will God, forgive this Christmas tree?

I hang the Baby's First Christmas ornament near the ones we received as gifts expecting that I'll always wonder. 

The Best of Both Worlds

by Laura Sagar

When I was younger, I knew my father's side of the family was Jewish, but I wasn't sure what that meant. I never heard my father talk much about his faith. My grandparents would send cards for the Jewish holidays, but I had no idea what these holidays meant. I did know every year at the same time, I would receive cards with money inside.

My parents respected each other's religions. They discussed raising us as both Jewish and Christian. Because my father, for the most part, did not practice Judaism, my mother raised my brother and me as Christians. I have always wondered what my father's parents thought about this decision, but have never had the courage to ask. I was baptized in a Christian church, but I was also named in a Jewish temple. I have attended services and church school at Methodist and Presbyterian churches. I think that church school was very beneficial for me because I learned not only about my religion, but also about my father's.

As I grew older, I learned more of the meaning of the Jewish holidays. I understood why we lit Hanukkah candles for eight days, the importance of Passover, and the true reasons for celebrating at a Seder. I attended a bar mitzvah for my second cousin, and while I did not understand most of the service (in Hebrew), I enjoyed being there to celebrate with the Jewish side of my family.

We have always celebrated Christmas, but when we were younger, we celebrated Hanukkah also. We did not receive gifts for those eight days, but my brother and I looked forward

to lighting the menorah every night. We'd turn off the lights and my dad would light the "server" candle; we'd take turns each night lighting the other candles.

Christmas in our household was pretty standard. We put out the cookies and milk for Santa Claus, and attended Christmas Eve service. My parents have since divorced (not because of religious differences), and we no longer celebrate both holidays. Still, it was significant that we celebrated both when we were younger because we were exposed to what both sides of the family do.

When I was a teenager, I was confirmed in the Presbyterian Church where I am now a member. This church and faith is where I was raised. I have chosen to continue to study this religion for the rest of my life. I feel like part of my church family, and when I have children, I plan to raise them as Presbyterian.

My brother and I still exchange religious cards with our Jewish grandmother. We respect her religion as she respects ours. I think she's happy that we learned about her faith while also learning about our own. Although I was not raised Jewish, I was exposed to Jewish traditions and beliefs; I received the best of both worlds. I consider myself lucky to have been raised knowing both my parents' faiths. Interfaith marriages can have problems, but they can also lead to happiness and excitement. The sharing of two partners' faith and traditions can strengthen and enrich the marriage. ■

Laura Sagar is an MBA student at Niagara University. She is the assistant manager for Barnes & Noble College Bookstores at D'Youville College in Buffalo, NY.

I consider myself lucky to have been raised knowing both my parents' faiths.

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This kit is designed to help interfaith couples make decisions regarding their wedding ceremonies. Topics covered including finding a suitable officiant or officiants, choosing a locale, the inclusion or exclusion of symbols and words, appropriate music, resolving conflicts, working with extended family members, and much more. Formats are varied, including articles from *Dovetail, A Journal by and for Jewish/Christian Families*; transcripts of discussions on the topic from the Dovetail Institute's three previous national conferences; a video of Steve and Cokie Roberts discussing their interfaith wedding in 1966, their marriage, and their children's weddings in 1998; excerpts on diskette from an unpublished book by Rabbi Reeve Robert Brenner entitled "Jewish, Christian, Chewish or Eschewish? Interfaith Marriage Pathways for the 21st Century;" an up-to-date list of officiants; and a copy of Joan Hawxhurst's book *Interfaith Wedding Ceremonies—Samples and Sources*.

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- __ T20:04 Rabbi, Prophet, Messiah, King: Jesus and Judaism
- __ T21:04 Inter marriage and Conservative Judaism
- __ T22:04 Pursuing the Anecdotal: A Look at the Emotional Development of the Children of Inter marriages
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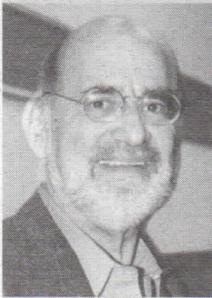
- ___ Older and Adult Children
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Clergy Counseling



Rabbi Allen Secher, a founding board member of Dovetail Institute, is available for counseling interfaith couples and their families in person, on line, or by telephone.

Rabbi Secher is a longtime adviser to the largest interfaith group in the country, and has been an officiant or co-officiant of interfaith life cycle ceremonies for the past 40+ years. His breadth of knowledge, warmth, sympathy, and commitment to exploring the needs of both Christian and Jewish partners make him an indispensable support to couples throughout the country and abroad. For details, call (312) 913-9193 or e-mail sech1@aol.com.

Rabbi Secher's counseling services are independent of the Dovetail Institute and do not necessarily reflect its policies.

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Bulletin Board

Interfaith Support Around the Nation

To be listed as a contact person for a group, or if you are seeking to join or form a group, please send information to:

Dan Josephs
1175 S. Euclid Avenue, Oak Park IL 60304
Tel: (708) 660-9503; Fax: (630) 574-8089
E-Mail: JosephsDA@aol.com

Dan is one of the founders and coordinators of the Chicago Jewish Catholic Couples Group. We look forward to hearing from you.

California, Sacramento
Interfaith Discussion Group.
Dale Kasler & Twila Morris
(916) 492-2815

California, San Francisco Bay Area*
Alicia Torre (650) 474-0644

California, San Francisco Bay Area*
Interfaith Connection Groups. Helena McMahon, Director (415) 292-1252

California, San Diego Area and Colorado*
(also Belize)
Seven Blessings Seminars: Connecting Soul Mates. R. Shelly Moss (970) 532-3396

Colorado, Denver*
Interfaith Community of Denver
(303) 320-6637
or info@interfaithcommunity.org

Colorado, Denver
Stepping Stones: Jewish identification.
Stacey Delcau (303) 554-5854

Connecticut, Hamden
Stepping Stones to a Jewish Me.
(203) 288-3877

District of Columbia, Greater Washington *
Interfaith Families Project.
Susan Ryder (301) 270-6337

District of Columbia, Greater Washington *
Jewish Catholic Family Network.
Eve Edwards (703) 893-4447
Brenda Benesch (703) 528-2016
Patrice Thomas (301) 299-6821
Jcfamilynetwork@comcast.net
http://mywebpages.comcast.net/jcfamilynetwork

District of Columbia, Greater Washington
Bethesda Jewish Congregation welcomes interfaith families.
Hazzan Sunny Schnitzer (301) 469-8636

Georgia, Atlanta area*
Staci & Aaron Melton forming group.
404-636-8160 or asmelton@attbi.net

* Group not sponsored by a religious institution.

Illinois, Chicago metropolitan area*
Jewish-Catholic Couples' Dialogue Group.
Abbe & Dan Josephs, (708) 660-9503, or
Patty & David Kovacs (773) 275-5689

Indiana, Bloomington
Mutifaith couples group. Bill & Diana Harwood (812) 323-7519
wharwood@indiana.edu

Louisiana, New Orleans
Courtney Nathan, Jewish Family Services.
(504) 831-8475

Maryland, Baltimore
Jacqi Ashkin, Jewish Family Services
6 Park Center Court, Suite 203
Owings Mills, MD 21117
(410) 356-8383, x 351

Maryland, Rockville
JCC of Greater Washington, DC. Tracey Dorfman, Director (301) 881-0100, x 6762

Massachusetts, Boston*
Adina Davidson & Joel Nitzberg (617) 776-3235

Michigan, Ann Arbor
Jewbilation: Jewish Roots with Interfaith Wings. Lauren Zinn (734) 996-3524;
www.jewbilation.org

Minnesota, Minneapolis*
Joan Cleary and Jerry Helfand (651) 698-7987

Minnesota, Minneapolis
Jewish FCS of Minneapolis. Barbara Rudnick

Missouri, St. Louis area*
Joanne and Larry Eisenman (314) 918-7992

New Jersey, Bergen Co.
Lani Martin (201) 891-1818

New Jersey, Hasbrouck Heights
Temple Beth Elohim: Welcomes non-Jews.
R. Fredric S. Dworkin (201) 744-3304

New Jersey, West Orange
Jewish Community Center.
Lynne Wolfe (973) 736-3200, x 233

New Mexico, Albuquerque
Archdiocese of Santa Fe Ecumenical Office.
Father Ernest Falardeau or Heddy Long,
Family Life Office

New Mexico, Las Cruces/El Paso, SW NM*
Kathy Hollett (505) 373-0244;
khollett@mh.lcps.k12.nm.us

New York, Albany Area
Marie or Rob Dropkin (518) 439-3732

New York, Long Island
Long Island Havurah for Humanistic Judaism
Leonard Cherlin (516) 889-8337

New York, Long Island/Suffolk County*
Eileen Horowitz (516) 345-0095

Please note: Dovetail does not interview or investigate groups listed here.

New York, New York City
Temple of Universal Judaism.
www.tuj.org (212) 535-0187

New York, NYC Greater Metropolitan Area*
InterfaithCommunity, Inc.
Manhattan, Westchester, Orange/Rockland.
Sheila Gordon (212) 870-2544
info@interfaithcommunity.org
www.interfaithcommunity.org

New York, Rochester
Interfaith Connection, JCC. Michele Ruda Leve, C.S.W. (585) 461-2000, x 232

Ohio, Cincinnati*
Christine M. Segal (513) 793-2866

Ohio, Columbus
Gateways: The Jewish Interfaith Connection
Carol Folkerth (614) 231-2731

Ohio, Dayton
Jewish Interfaith Network: Interfaith group
Tonda Learner (937) 853-0372

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Area
Jewish Converts & Interfaith Network
Lena Romanoff, Dir. (610) 664-8112

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
Faithways, JFCS of Greater Philadelphia
R. Rayzel Raphael (215) 540-3737

Tennessee, Memphis*
Jan and David Kaplan (901) 767-4267

Texas, Houston
Stepping Stones to a Jewish Me
5601 S. Braeswood, Houston, TX 77096
713-729-3200, x 3257 Rabbi Eve Ben-Ora or
3197 Barbara Shepard

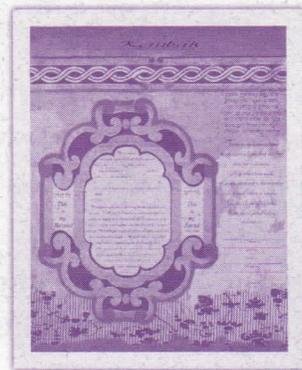
Virginia, Northern Virginia area
Cong. Beth Emeth. Judi Cloutier, Outreach Coordinator (703) 860-4515, x 142

Wisconsin, Milwaukee
Interfaith Connection, JCC of Milwaukee:
Joyce Gutzke, IF Coord (414) 967-8215

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Des Moines, IA
Indianapolis, IN
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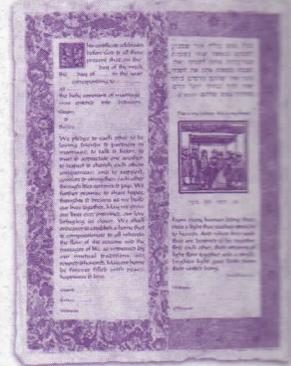
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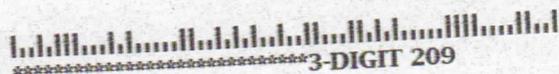
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