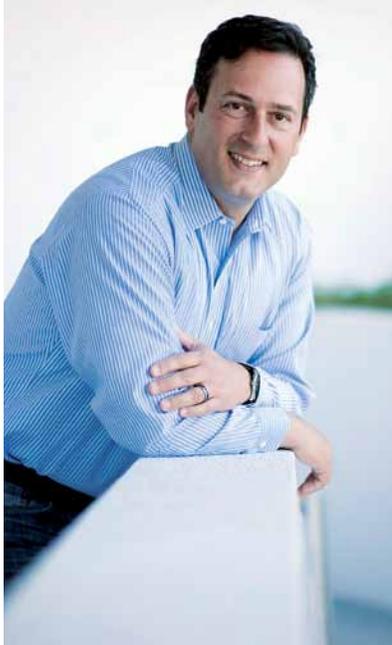


# New Spiritual Leader Looks to the Future at Plantation Synagogue

BY JULIE LEVIN



Rabbi Howard Needleman

**F**OR THE FIRST TIME IN NEARLY FOUR decades, Temple Kol Ami Emanu-El is welcoming a new spiritual leader.

Rabbi Howard Needleman officially assumed the post at the Plantation Synagogue in July and led the congregation through his first Shabbat service July 12. It was the first step in what promises to be a busy year for the Rabbi. "My agenda right now is to prepare for the year, build relationships with people and to create an engaging worship environment, as well as a shared vision for the year with the community," Rabbi Needleman said.

Rabbi Needleman comes to South Florida from Temple Beth David in Commack, New York. Rabbi Needleman said he was drawn to South Florida not only as a fantastic place to raise his family, but by a congregation with a rich history that had a strong vision for the future. "It was a natural fit," he said. "I found a dedicated leadership and a great partnership in the senior staff throughout the Synagogue."

Rabbi Needleman said he hopes to inspire a love of Judaism in others by creating a modern house of worship where people feel connected. He and temple leaders bill it as a "new beginning" in keeping with today's times. "Part of my vision is

to create a modern reform temple that is both engaged in how we are within the Synagogue walls, with our worship, our learning and outreach to all that seek to make Kol Ami Emanu-El their spiritual home," he said.

To that end, Rabbi Needleman said the Synagogue will put a priority on making its spirituality and programming interactive for all generations, including the use of technology and social media to keep everyone connected. In order to create a "virtual relationship with the congregation before arriving in South Florida, the Rabbi created a blog so congregants could get to know him. The Rabbi also hopes to work within the broader community through Social Action and "Tikkun Olam" or projects that repair the world.

Temple Kol Ami Emanu-El began the search for a new spiritual leader following the retirement of longtime senior Rabbi Sheldon Harr, who now serves as the "Founding Senior Rabbi Emeritus." Before selecting a new Rabbi, temple leaders held a series of focus groups to learn what congregants wanted in a new leader.

"Our Temple Family wanted a Rabbi who would connect with them and help them with their issues and Jewish spirituality as well as help our young parents to teach their children how to live with a Jewish perspective in today's world. Rabbi Needleman was by far the leader in fulfilling that role. He is young, progressive and has the right combination of compassion, intellect, vision and spirituality to lead our Temple," said Calvin Helitzer, the Temple Kol Ami Emanu-El President.

When not working, Rabbi Needleman enjoys spending time with wife Beth and children Noah, 12, and Abby, 8. Look for him around South Florida riding his Harley Davidson motorcycle or playing in a competitive game of Ultimate Frisbee.

Visit Rabbi Needleman's Facebook page at Rabbi Howard Needleman, or his blog at [www.rabbineedleman.com](http://www.rabbineedleman.com). A formal installation and gala is planned for November 1 and 2. For more information, phone 954-472-1988 or visit online at <http://www.tkae.org/>

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