

Northeast Queens JCC welcomes Rabbi Bodzin to our community.

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The Jewish Week, 11/10/2009

In Northeast Queens, ‘Tradition And Change’ at Conservative Synagogue



Rabbi Robyn Fryer Bodzin is trying to revive Israel Center’s youth while tending to her aging flock. Michael Datikash

by Sharon Udasin
Staff Writer

Claire Heymann, an Auschwitz survivor who grew up in a strictly Orthodox home in Germany, had a bit of trouble adjusting to the idea of an egalitarian synagogue.

But a female rabbi? Don’t ask.

About five years ago, when northeastern Queens shul memberships began to dwindle and local purse strings tightened, Heymann’s traditional “Conservadox” synagogue, the Israel Center of Hillcrest Manor, made the decision to merge with two other local congregations — the Electchester Jewish Center and the Conservative Synagogue of Jamaica Estates. Together, they formed the fully egalitarian Israel Center of Conservative Judaism in Flushing Meadows, which now has a total of approximately 265 families.

In making the decision to merge, “We had to make a choice, [so] that we shouldn’t sell the synagogue to a Korean church,” said Heymann, 85.

After the merger came the big change. Last summer, the Israel Center hired a female rabbi — the first female rabbi at any Conservative synagogue in Queens.

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