

A RABBI FOR ALL FAITHS

By Jordana Levine

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Rabbi Tina Grimberg of Congregation Darchei Noam sits behind an antique wood desk in her office. She is a small woman with a warm smile and sparkling eyes who immediately suggests moving to the couches and armchairs to provide a more comfortable and intimate arrangement for the interview.

Although Rabbi Tina is the leader of a Jewish community, it is a Reconstructionist community, focused on egalitarianism and inclusion. She has a greater goal that combines both her past experiences as a therapist and her current situation as a rabbi, mother, and wife. She strives to make sure that all people, regardless of their faith, feel welcome and important in a community.

"My deep spiritual journey started not only with the first rabbi I met, but with a Christian woman I met," she says. "I was so moved by her demeanour." The woman made Rabbi Tina



Sharing the joy of community

realize that her Jewish faith is only one of many important things to pay attention to in the world.

"Synagogue is the home for all people, and I feel that God speaks through us all," says Rabbi Tina, who welcomes anyone interested in her synagogue to come and pray there, whether they are Jewish or not. "People who come to our door have things to say that absolutely belong to the divine," she explains confidently. "So they belong to a house of God."

Rabbi Tina is driven to find beauty in the world. "You look for a place where God manifests Himself in a beautiful way," she says. "Monet is in a world of debris, but that's not what he paints."

Rabbi Tina is driven to find beauty in the world


She recalls her own childhood, growing up in Kiev. "I came from nothing. One dress in the winter, one in the summer." Her childhood "looked like absolute poverty from the outside ... but it never felt poor." She acquired her love of books and education from her parents and her grandmother. "You had such vitality of spirit and intellect," she explains with a smile. It is apparent from the wall in her office of floor-to-ceiling books that this part of her life has grown stronger over the years.

There are many parts of Rabbi Tina's past life that she keeps with her and tries to

apply to her current life every day. She recalls the day she came from Kiev to Indiana as a young woman. "Upon arrival to the US [was] the first time I was faced with Jewish volunteers giving their time. There were perfect strangers in the airport saying, 'We are your family.' They were busy ... had lives, struggled. I'm still doing my best to live up to this. I bring it to my work and also [to] my life in general."

Along with taking a profound interest in people from every religious background, Rabbi Tina strives for integration of all sorts. "My goal in life, if I look at it from the future back, of someone delivering a eulogy of me, would [be to] see that it's the same woman at home with my son as with the congregation, that it's integrated." She wants her family and her congregation to see her in the same way: as a caring person with wisdom and kindness, but also someone who isn't perfect, who obsesses over things and yells sometimes. "I have a partner who shares my love for learning ... I have a beautiful child ... a real life, messy life, up to my elbows in chicken, but I seek integration between my home and my Darchei Noam family."

"[It's a] very natural fusion and completion," she says. "It's very whole. I am extremely, profoundly satisfied."

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Rabbi Tina Grimberg of Congregation Darchei Noam