



# Central Reform Temple of Boston

a progressive jewish congregation

## In Memoriam Rabbi Howard A. Berman

### **Rabbi Howard A. Berman (1949-2024)**

Rabbi Howard Berman was the founding rabbi of our congregation, Central Reform Temple of Boston. In 2004, in partnership with Rabbi Devon Lerner, they established a Back Bay Jewish congregation under the initial name of Boston Jewish Spirit. In keeping with Classical Reform Judaism's approach, he provided an accessible and inclusive community, welcoming interfaith families and members of the LGBTQ+ communities. Services were uplifted by the beautiful music of Classical Reform Judaism, particularly from the German 19<sup>th</sup> century Jewish composer Lewis Lewandowski. Rabbi Berman's commitment to accessibility extended to using the Union Prayerbook (Sinai edition) with Hebrew and English readings, as well as High Holy Day prayerbooks emphasizing universalist and social justice themes, co-authored with Rabbi Lerner.

Over the years until his retirement in 2020, Rabbi Berman grew a thriving congregation with many special highlights, including his annual Chanukah cantata 'A Light through the Ages', his blessing of animal companions, the *sukkah* on Newbury Street, and many more. Most uniquely was the relationship developed with Emmanuel Church and its rector, The Rev. Pam Wertz. This unique connection led to the creation of Emmanuel Center, where important religious and social action programs were developed together. Central Reform Temple became the only synagogue community to have a covenantal relationship with a church, marked by a historic document that continues to this day. Rabbi Berman was influential in national organizations, including the founding of the Society for Classical Reform Judaism (now Roots of Reform Judaism).

Rabbi Berman was dear to his congregants, offering care and concern in their times of trouble, and joy and celebration for happy lifecycle ceremonies, including interfaith and LGBTQ+ weddings and blessings. He led many 'pilgrimages' to Jewish sites and places of interest in the US and overseas. He

loved history and music, the arts and all things Jewish which he infectiously transmitted to all those around him, Jewish and Christian. His force of character is remembered by many as he fulfilled the role of rabbi, teacher, and guide.

*Zecher tzaddik l'viracha* – May his memory be for a blessing, as we build on his legacy and the work of his hands.

*The work of your hand enriches my life and the lives of others.  
You are like a burning candle, lighting our homes with vision and  
confidence, comfort and warmth.  
We learn the Torah of love from your lips.*

*(Proverbs 31 adapted)*

**Rabbi Dr. Michael Shire**  
**Rabbi, Central Reform Temple and Emmanuel Church**

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