Lori Feldstein-Gardner

Lori grew up in Riverdale, NY, surrounded by a vibrant Jewish community. After visiting a new religious school when she was in third grade, she came home and proclaimed to her parents that there is an amazing holiday called Purim that is all about this brave queen who saved the Jews, and she asked, *Did they know that?!?!* Lori’s passion for Judaism only increased from there. She had her *bat mitzvah* ceremony at Riverdale Temple and remained its youngest active member while she was in high school. It was there, at age 16, that Lori was so inspired that she knew she wanted to be a rabbi. Lori was very active in the Jewish Student Union at Mount Holyoke College, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in theater and history. After college, Lori earned a Master of Library Science degree from Simmons College. Lori loved working as the librarian at a K–3 girls’ school in New York City. At the end of a particularly moving picture book, however, she wanted to say *ken y’hi ratzon* (May it be God’s will). While she loved teaching, she realized there was something missing, and she returned to her childhood dream of becoming a rabbi.

Lori discovered Reconstructionist Judaism in college and was a member of Reconstructionist congregations Jewish Community of Amherst and West End Synagogue. There was no question that if Lori was going to be a rabbi, she was going to be a Reconstructionist rabbi. During her time at RRC, Lori has continued to be passionate about teaching. She has worked with children and teens at Beth Tikvah B’nai Jeshurun for six years, and as education director at Reconstructionist congregation Kol Tzedek. She has been blessed to serve as rabbinic intern at both Susquehanna University and West Chester University.

Lori is moved beyond words that she has made it to this day. This would not have been possible without the tireless support and generosity of her parents, Fred and Joan Feldstein; the love of her wife, Tracy; and the spirit, smile, laughter and singing of her daughter, Josie.

Spread over us the shelter of Your peace.
—*Hashkivenu, ma’ariv* service

Judaism is a way to access the Divine and feel as close as possible to the oneness of the universe. In those brief, fleeting moments in which we are actually able to connect with the God that is within us and all around us, we are wrapped in God’s *sukkat shalom*—God’s shelter of peace. The Torah tells us how our ancestors were able to access God. It is, therefore, one path for us to find the Eternal in our own lives. As a rabbi, I am excited to help Jewish people discover more access points to Judaism and, therefore, more ways to enter into that *sukkat shalom*. 