



בית הדין הקהילתי
SANDRA CAPLAN
COMMUNITY BET DIN



ANNUAL REPORT
2022

LETTERS FROM LEADERSHIP



The work of our rabbinical court includes providing loving support post conversion. Life after the actual conversion ritual sometimes feels more like falling off a cliff than reaching a destination. The community of Intro to Judaism classmates may disappear. Even with a Jewish partner, extended family, or congregation, many new Jews actually struggle with their new identity.

Our Torah instructs us to “love the *ger*” (the Hebrew word for convert), and our Conversion Mentoring Program, launched in November 2020, shows how to fulfill this mitzvah by ensuring ongoing dialogue and connection with another Jew-by-Choice. Our Post-Conversion Course for New Jews is another form of support that was offered for the third time in Fall 2022, with 9 participants. 2022 focused on strengthening mentoring and online learning to support “the whole journey” of those who commit to Judaism. With their creativity and passion, Jews-by-Choice continue to enrich and strengthen the Jewish community beyond measure.

Muriel Dance, PhD, Executive Director



I am very proud of the accomplishments of our Bet Din over the past year. Our Conversion Mentor Program has grown with the help of a Jews of Color Initiative Grant, and our board is exploring and considering the needs of our conversion candidates who do not fit traditional gender identities.

With the closing of the *Mikvah* on the campus of the American Jewish University at the end of September 2023, we are exploring alternatives—including a more robust natural *t’vilah* option, which we began to offer extensively over the past 2 years due to COVID.

We offer our thanks to all who have financially supported our work, noting particularly that the funds raised at our Shavuot-season event honoring Rabbi Jerrold Goldstein enabled us to provide Shabbat starter kits for our new Jews. Finally, we note with sadness the death of Suzanne Gallant, whose generosity over the past years has greatly strengthened our work.

Rabbi Stephen Einstein, Chair of Board of Governors

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By The Numbers

It can be difficult to sum up the work of a non-profit, especially a religious one, by the numbers. However, 2022 was a record year for SCCBD, with 64 candidates coming before our Bet Din.

790

Conversions

Since our founding in 2002, we have converted **790** candidates, with an all-time high of **64** in 2022. We then help usher these new Jews into the community through our support programs.

115

Rabbis

We have over **115** involved rabbis, representing all major progressive traditions, including transdenominational movements. This ensures that our program meets the majority of conversion standards.

30

Conversion Mentors

The pride of SCCBD is our Conversion Mentor Program, which supports new Jews through their first year of Jewish life. Currently, we have trained **30** mentors with plans to grow in 2023.

25

Governors

Rabbi Elliot Dorff: Founder - Rabbi Stephen Einstein: Chair - Rabbi Jonathan Bernhard: Vice Chair - Rabbi Sara Goodman: Secretary - Rabbi Lisa Bock: Treasurer

Rabbi Mark Borovitz - Rabbi Lynn Brody Slome - Rabbi Corinne Copnick - Rabbi Lisa Edwards - Rabbi Ilana Grinblat - Rabbi Joshua Hoffman - Rabbi Jonathan Klein - Rabbi Jonathan Kupetz - Rabbi Warren Levy - Rabbi Janet Madden - Rabbi Michelle Missaghieh - Rabbi Laura Owens - Rabbi Robin Podolsky - Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben - Rabbi Eva Robbins - Rabbi Eric Rosenstein - Rabbi Jason Rosner - Rabbi Daniel Shevitz - Rabbi Neal Weinberg - Rabbi Dvora Weisberg

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Conversion Support

Joining a new community with 4000 years of history can be intimidating. Through our **Conversion Mentor program**, we offer **New Jews a friend to guide you in that journey**. Whether you just need a listening ear or help deepening your practice, your mentor is there to support you through your first year as a Jew. Many of our mentors are also Jews-by-choice, so they understand what challenges you may face.



We also offer a post-conversion course for recent converts. Many Jews-by-choice hit a slump after their *Mikvah*. You've spent a year learning about Torah, rituals, holidays, and culture with your sponsoring rabbi, and now you don't quite know what comes next. The post-conversion course can help you continue to study texts, explore how to deepen your practice, and make friends with other new Jews.



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Rabbi Support

All rabbi members of SCCBD are invited to an annual Day of Learning (*Yom Iyun*). In-service training has consisted of continuing education on conversion topics such as:

- *Hattafat Dam Brit* and *Brit Milah*
- Issues in the Conversion of Children
- Transgender Folk in the Conversion Process
- *Mikvah* as a Contemporary Spiritual Practice

In 2022, our first hybrid *Yom Iyun* at Temple Beth Am focused on "Why Don't Jews Proselytize? One Question: Three Rabbis." 35 rabbis registered and 4 attended remotely.

Our three featured speakers gave the following lectures:

- Rabbi Lisa Edwards: I Don't Proselytize, I Invite; I Don't Convert, I Welcome
- Rabbi Joel Rembaum: ואהבם את הגר: First Second Temple Notions of the Ger...It's Complicated
- Rabbi Dvora Weisberg: Do We Love or Fear Converts? Tensions in Rabbinic Literature



Rabbi support includes answering their questions about the nuances of conversion. For example, one rabbi wanted to know if there was a *mohel* who performed *Hattafat Dam Brit* on transgender men—there are, and we were able to connect the rabbi and candidate to one. Another wanted to know if we could provide a non-binary witness for a non-binary candidate—we found a non-binary volunteer from our extensive network. If our Executive Director cannot answer the question, we have the resources of our *Roshei Bet Din*: Rabbis Daniel Shevitz and Michelle Missaghieh.

\$32,000 1-YEAR GRANT

Because SCCBD is committed to representing the diversity of the Jewish people, we received a one year grant to invite seven Jews of Color, who have chosen Judaism, to become a part of our Conversion Mentor Program and guide other people of color as they join the Jewish people. Some of the learning from this project was showcased at a web seminar co-sponsored by Rising Tide, the *mikvah* network sponsored by Mayyim Hayyim.

As our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Consultant, Jill Housen was involved in securing this grant and working with SCCBD to help bring Jews by Choice of all backgrounds into the Jewish People. She was also a speaker in the aforementioned Rising Tide seminar.



The findings of the program prove that multiple entry points into the Jewish community are essential, especially for Jews of Color. The Jews of Color Mentoring program should be incorporated into Intro Judaism classes, Beginning Hebrew classes, and congregations to ensure we deliver on our commitment to building communities of belonging. Jews of Color are willing to step up and help new Jews despite the tremendous load we already carry. We are capable of stepping into leadership roles. The opportunities to lead need to be offered to us.

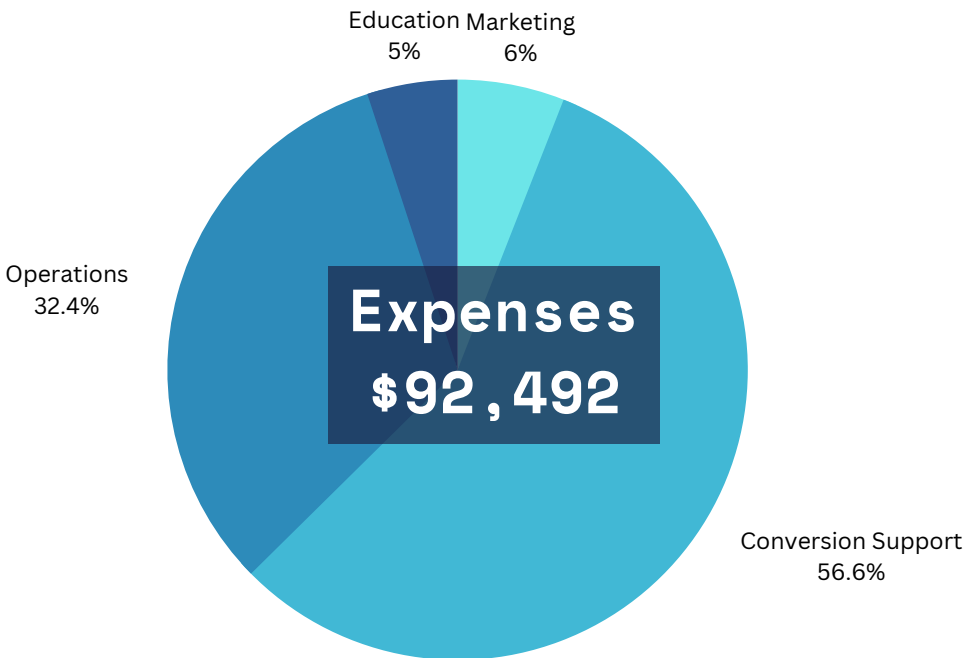
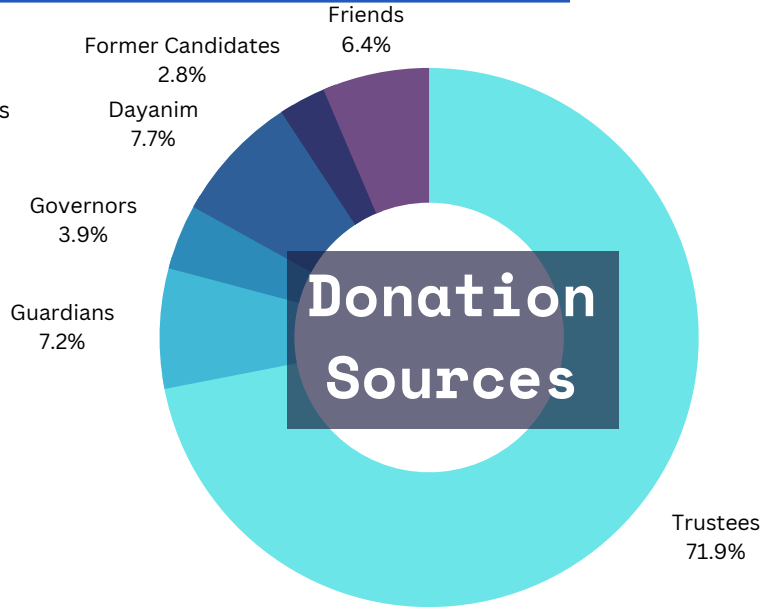
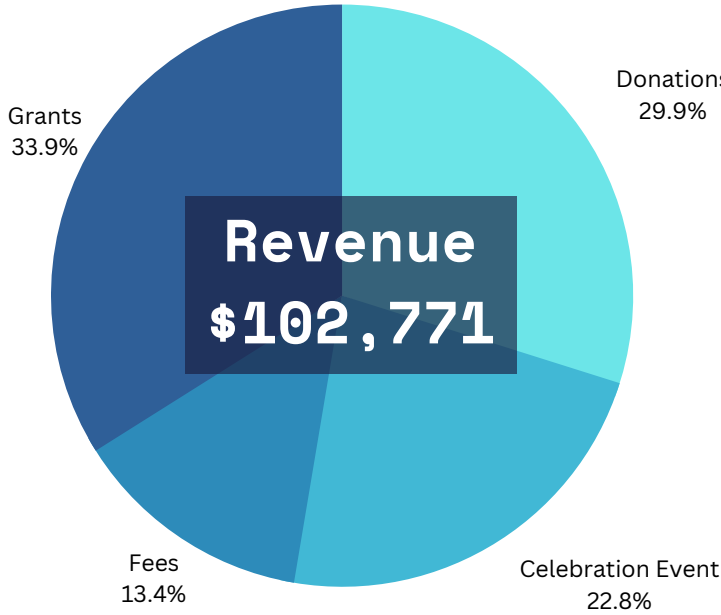
-Jill Housen

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Fundraising

2022 Celebration: We All Choose Judaism

In May of 2022, we gathered on the grounds of Leo Baeck Temple to prepare for Shavuot, the holiday of choosing Judaism. The event honored one of our founding rabbis, Jerrold Goldstein, for his 60 years performing the sacred work of conversion. 80 people attended in person and 120 people supported the event with donations.



Rabbi Jerrold Goldstein, Frances Goldstein, and Muriel Dance

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Trustees and Guardians

SCCBD relies on support from the Jewish community. Year after year we are honored to receive donations from our Trustees and Guardians, who go above and beyond to ensure that we can fulfill our mission of welcoming new members of the Jewish People.

Trustees

\$2000+

George Caplan, Chair
Lynn Beliak
Rabbi Lisa Bock
Hon. Eli & Arlene Chernow
Muriel Dance
Rabbi Elliot Dorff
Suzanne Gallant(z"l)
Rabbi Jerrold Goldstein
Elana Jassy
Norman Levine & Barbara Mack
Rabbi Janet Madden
Rabbi Laura Owens
Dr. Joel & Rabbi Lori Shapiro
Eric Stockel
Rabbi Mark Borovitz & Harriet Rossetto

Guardians

\$500+

Paul A Beck
Rabbi Ken Chasen
Rabbi Lisa Edwards
Margaret Erlich
Virginia Maas
Tory & Max Roman
Peggy & Ed Robin(z"l)
Rabbi Lynn Brody Slome
Richard & Ellen Sandler
Rabbi Stephen & Robin Einstein
Rabbis Gershon Zylberman & Rayna Gevurtz