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Rabbi Johanna Hershenson with Jake Olander. Photo courtesy of Lester Dober

Temple Beth Tikvah welcomes Rabbi Johanna Hershenson

When Rabbi Johanna Hershenson saw an opening at Temple Beth Tikvah in Bend, she knew she was ready for her next adventure. Born in Washington, DC, and raised in Maryland, her 18-year rabbinic career has taken her to Los Angeles, Alaska, New Zealand and even the Czech Republic. She arrived June 19 with her husband, two teenage daughters and a well-traveled Australian shepherd, and looks forward to working as the young congregation's first resident rabbi.

"I've been fortunate," she says. "I've been in interesting and exciting places. In New Zealand, I did an adult learning project that led to partnering with my husband to make a documentary film called 'A Torah Tale.' We traced the journeys of a Torah scroll and the last living Jew from a rural Czech town. It's been quite an adventure. I led services and did a lot of teaching in Prague." She has applied to the Bend Film Festival, hopes to work with the Portland Jewish Film Festival and enjoys leading lectures and informal discussions about her research.

"Temple Beth Tikvah is thrilled and excited to have a new rabbi with the experience, knowledge, leadership and warm personality of Rabbi Johanna Hershenson moving to Bend to be part of our congregation and community," says Beth Tikvah President Mark Schindel.

Of her move to Bend to serve the Central Oregon community, the rabbi says, "I have had the joy of working globally; now I look forward to living and teaching within a single community. I want to get acquainted with each and every member of our congregation. I like knowing people well enough to call on them to share their talents and skills to enrich the community at large. On a personal level, my family loves the outdoors and we are excited to live, work and play in this beautiful area."

She earned her BA from University of Wisconsin, Madison, with distinctions in history, Hebrew and Semitic languages, and History of Culture. She was ordained by Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in 1995, where she received a master's degree in Hebrew letters.

"I've had a fair amount of experience in congregational life, and to be part of an organization at the beginning and work with the people who have started it is a special treat and exciting," she says. "How often do you get to start from the beginning?"

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