

Nevada Clergy Association Welcomes New Imam & New Tahoe Rabbis



(from left to right) Sparks Mayor Geno Martini, Hindu leader Rajan Zed, Rabbi Evon J. Yakar, Imam Abdelwahed Ali Awad, Rabbi Meredith Cahn, NCA President Rt. Rev. Gene Savoy Jr. PHOTO: Debbie McCarthy

Clergy of various religious faiths and denominations welcomed the new imam and two Tahoe rabbis into the regional interfaith community at a reception organized by the Nevada Clergy Association (NCA) at the India Kabob & Curry Restaurant in Reno on September 27, 2011.

Abdelwahed Ali Awad, the new imam of the Northern Nevada Muslim Community Center in Sparks, and Evon J. Yakar, the new rabbi of Temple Bat Yam in South Lake Tahoe, California, and Rabbi Meredith Cahn, the new head of of North Tahoe Hebrew Congregation in Tahoe Vista, California, were garlanded by Sparks Mayor Geno Martini as a gesture of welcome to the area.

Imam Awad, born in 1956 in Upper Egypt, started studying Islam and memorizing the Quran when he was fifteen. After earning his BS in geology from Egypt's Assiut University, he traveled

to Saudi Arabia and Yemen as a visiting scholar. He has worked as the educational supervisor and a teacher of Islamic studies at the Islamic School Group in Egypt, and during the last five years has delivered numerous lectures on Islam in Yemen, Niger, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Ghana.

His vision of the nonprofit Northern Nevada Muslim Community, established in 1980, is for it to “become the center for developing and sustaining a vibrant Islamic community in Northern Nevada in accordance with the Quran and the Sunnah” with a mission “to promote the values and teachings of Islam.”

Rabbi Evon Yakar, besides serving at Temple Bat Yam, also works with the Synagogue Without Walls community. A University of Wisconsin–Madison graduate, he was ordained at Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, where he earned two master’s degrees. He arrived in Lake Tahoe from Temple Chai in Phoenix, Arizona, where he was associate rabbi and director of education. For the last twelve years, Rabbi Yakar has worked with Jewish youth, fostering creative youth engagement programs, and is passionate about building and fostering healthy relationships across generational gaps and among faith communities.

Temple Bat Yam is a Reform Judaism synagogue on the South Shore of Lake Tahoe whose motto is: “It’s beautiful. It’s spiritual. It’s casual.” Besides South Lake Tahoe, the synagogue also serves Jewish needs and interests in the Carson City, Carson Valley, and Dayton areas.

Rabbi Cahn, a University of Pennsylvania graduate with a master’s in public health from the University of California at Berkeley School of Public Health, was ordained at the Academy for Jewish Religion California, where she earned a master’s in rabbinic studies. For the past two years, she has worked as rabbinic intern at Congregation Shomrei Torah in Santa Rosa, California, where she taught adult education and provided pastoral care to senior congregants.

North Tahoe Hebrew Congregation, which was founded in 1979, is a Reform synagogue serving the North Shore of Lake Tahoe and Truckee and welcomes all who walk through its doors. Its aim is "to enable its adherents to develop a relationship with God through communal worship, study and assembly."