

## **Cantor Rachelle Faith Nelson to Receive Doctor of Music at HUC-JIR Graduation Ceremony in New York**

**Cantor Rachelle Faith Nelson**, Cantor at **Temple Beth Am**, Miami, FL, will receive a Doctor of Music, *honoris causa*, from the **Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR)**. The degree will be granted at HUC-JIR's New York Graduation ceremony on Thursday, April 30, 2009 at Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York.

Cantor Nelson is the first female cantor and graduate of the School of Sacred Music to serve in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. She has been recognized by the American Committee for the Weitzman Institute of Science as a "Woman of Valor."

**Rabbi David Ellenson, Ph.D.**, announced HUC-JIR alumni recipients who will be awarded honorary Doctorates of Divinity, Music, Jewish Religious Education, and Jewish Communal Service, as well as the Founders' Medallion, in recognition of their 25 years of distinguished professional service.

Rabbi Ellenson said, "Cantor Nelson has served Temple Beth Am in Pinecrest with exceptional devotion for close to two decades. Her published compositions and CD recordings have enriched congregational prayer, and she continues to mentor young people in their quest for excellence in the cantorate."

Cantor Nelson is a graduate of the University of Miami, cum laude, in both music education and music theory composition. After graduation from the University of Miami in 1979, she continued on to HUC-JIR's School of Sacred Music and was invested in 1984.

Cantor Nelson is the first female Cantor and graduate of HUC-JIR to serve the Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. She presently is celebrating her 17<sup>th</sup> year with Temple Beth Am in Pinecrest (Miami), Florida. She is skilled in several instruments: voice, piano, flute and guitar. She has performed in concerts and workshops throughout the United States and Europe and has taught Jewish Music history at the University of Miami.

Cantor Nelson is highly recognized throughout the United States as a composer of Jewish music. She has had several compositions published by Transcontinental Music in New York City. To add to her compositional success, Rachelle has collaborated with her colleague, Rabbi Terry Bookman, for several years. They have published three CDs: "Bless Our Days" (prayers for inspiration and healing), "Bless our Years" (songs for the cycle of life), and "Bless our Holy Days" (the holidays and festivals of our Jewish year). Along with these CDs, Cantor Nelson has published both sheet music and songbooks to accompany them.

Cantor Nelson and Rabbi Bookman have created "In the Spirit Music Foundation" to encourage the writing and publication of new and inspirational Jewish liturgical music.

Several of their compositions can be found in several publications, including: The Cantor's Manual; R'fuah Sh'leimah; The Complete Book of Jewish Rounds; Kol Dodi; Shabbat Anthology II, III and IV; the Music for Shabbat Worship from the 68th URJ Biennial, as well as many other publications.

In 2005, Cantor Nelson was honored by the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science as a "Woman of Valor." She has also helped lead services for Shabbat evening, Shabbat morning and Havdalah services at the URJ Biennials.

Cantor Nelson is an extremely proud mother of twin daughters, Leah and Rebecca. Rebecca aspires to become a doctor, while Leah has decided to walk in her mother's footsteps in hopes of becoming a Cantor.

For more information on the HUC-JIR Graduation, Investiture, and Ordination ceremonies in New York, Los Angeles, and Cincinnati, please visit <http://www.huc.edu/newspubs/pressroom/article.php?pressroomid=271>.

*Founded in 1875, **Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion** is the nation's oldest institution of higher Jewish education and the academic, spiritual, and professional leadership development center of Reform Judaism. HUC-JIR educates men and women for service to American and world Jewry as rabbis, cantors, educators, and communal service professionals, and offers graduate and post-graduate programs to scholars of all faiths. With centers of learning in Cincinnati, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, and New York, HUC-JIR's scholarly resources comprise renowned library and museum collections, the American Jewish Archives, biblical archaeology excavations, research institutes and centers, and academic publications. HUC-JIR invites the community to an array of cultural and educational programs which illuminate Jewish history, identity, and contemporary creativity and which foster interfaith and multiethnic understanding. Visit us at [www.huc.edu](http://www.huc.edu).*

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