

Steven D. Reece

From: Steven D. Reece <sdreece@matzevah.org>
Sent: Saturday, June 23, 2012 12:25
To: Bruce and Jane Mussey; Daniel Compton; JoAnn Siegienski; Kevin Little; Robin Park; Slawek Laskowski
Cc: Robin Park; Chelsea Bennett; Elaine Brown; John Mark Folker; Monika Radkiewicz (Yahoo); Rachel McRae; stephen.folker@lawrencedrive.org; Wes Plunk
Subject: Follow-up from Meeting with Rabbi Schlesinger

Greetings,

Stephen Folker and I meet with Rabbi Larry Schlesinger of Temple Beth Israel in Macon, GA this past Friday for lunch. Stephen met Rabbi Schlesinger at a community event and introduced our work to him which led to this meeting. Rabbi Schlesinger is not Orthodox but Reform Judaism, which we would understand in terms of being not conservative but liberal. He also serves on the city council for the City of Macon, GA.

Rabbi Schlesinger was very open to us and gave us a great deal of useful advice regarding funding and networking. Regarding the letter of introduction that we would like to send to Jewish leaders across the country he advised us to set up a meeting with key leaders in our various locations and deliver letter personally rather than sending out the letter as a mass mailing. He said that we can certainly mail the letter but said that in today's busy world, it may find the "round file cabinet" (trash can).

Regarding networking, he is not part of the Atlanta Jewish community and does not have any direct contact with them so he cannot help us there. However he does know a few people who do. I will share a synopsis of his networking counsel for us below:

1. Cooperative Baptist Fellowship: Wayne Martin and Frank Broome

Rabbi Schlesinger on more than three occasions advised me to contact these men and introduce myself to them because they work with the Jewish community of Georgia. He said that these men could introduce me to Jewish leadership who may be favorable to us. He emphasized the importance of connecting with people who could guide us further into the Jewish community. You have heard me mention before about "People of Goodwill," who are able to protect us and give us guidance into an unknown situation. He said that these men could give us credible introductions.

I know for some of us you might not like the idea of approaching the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) due to past history in the Southern Baptist Convention; nevertheless, we must consider every option as a means to make connections in the Jewish world. Interestingly, I asked Rabbi Schlesinger with whom we most intersect in the Jewish community and he said, "Reform and Secular Jews." The CBF also intersects with this group of Jews due to the fact that they focus more on community ministry and social justice issues or a more moderate approach in the proclamation of the gospel.

I will contact these men on Monday and try to meet with them next week, so that they can help us make introductions into the Jewish community of Atlanta. I would really like to meet with a few Jewish leaders before I leave for Michigan and later Poland. If not it will have to wait until late August.

Rabbi Schlesinger wants me to let him know how this goes.

2. United Jewish Communities or Federation (Rabbi Schlesinger is not sure what the name is as it has changed) – We will have to research this organization.
3. Rabbinic Federation: These are local associations of rabbis. He advised us to “get on their agendas” and introduce ourselves and our work in one of their meetings.
4. Breman Museum: Set up meeting with director or someone to introduce our work.
5. Contact author Deborah Lipstadt of Emory University and introduce our work.
6. Contact Rabbi Peter Berg of The Temple in Atlanta and introduce our work (this is the congregation where Bernie Marcus attends).
7. Contact the United States Holocaust Museum and introduce our work (probably letter or through one of the above contacts).

Rabbi Schlesinger said by approaching these individuals and groups we may be able to raise funds for operations and Jewish cemetery restoration projects. He also advised me to contact the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York with whom we are partnering through the Auschwitz Jewish Center to restore the Jewish cemetery in Oświęcim. He thinks that they may be able to help us secure some grant funding for our operations. I do not if this is possible but I will follow up with his suggestion.

All in all, I think that our meeting with Rabbi Schlesinger was very helpful in that it allowed me to see things from a Jewish perspective. One thing that he also asked about was whether or not we had a Jew on our board. I think in the future we must consider how to do this by placing a Messianic Jew on our board.

Finally, he was very intrigued by the fact of how we selected the name “Matzevah” for our non-profit. I told him through prayer, Scripture and reflection upon our work that the Hebrew word, “matzevah” best captured our purpose and identity. He said that our name is “perfect.”

Blessings,

Steven

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