

My name is Burgandy Holiday and **I belong here**. I've belonged here since 2008, but I've been a member since 2010, when I married my husband. Today, I serve as the inaugural Vice President of Belonging of Germantown Jewish Centre. I work with a mighty team of congregants in the GJC Anti-Racism Leadership Committee: We've committed to calling it GARLiC, and do much to support the work of the Tikkun Olam Coordinating Team here at GJC. Between GARLiC and TOCT, we dream to do this work by offering support to our congregation around conflict resolution, bring engaging speakers and conversations to our community, and continue to talk about injustice, welcome new immigrant families, explore ways of eradicating oppression and eat ice cream. You should come to an event or two sometime.

Many people have asked me what VP of Belonging means over the last few months, and I've been in a process of figuring that out myself. In this newly minted role, it is my goal to support our community in creating a vision for welcoming and including the wide and varied diaspora of Judaism, which includes people of color and non-Jews in various situations. Here is how I envision the outcomes of this work:

I have two lovely daughters, and they will have B'Nai Mitzvot one day. On those days, there will be a large collection of people who look like me coming to our synagogue to celebrate in the mitzvah with us. In this role, the work of this moment is to think about what preparation, work, awareness and experiences do we as a community need to make this a lovely experience for my Orthodox family members, as well as my Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Unitarian, Black, Brown, and Asian, young, old, single and coupled, immigrant,

different bodied, and LGBTQIA family members and friends. Those people that I love and want to share these mitzvot with, that I would love you to meet, greet with joy, and understand me better by knowing who I care for.

The work of the VP of Belonging thus, is to support the process of identifying and implementing a plan to enhance GJC's already wonderful way of being inclusive and welcoming humans into our GJC community and the wider world beyond. This is my interpretation is what repairing the world looks like.

The Haftorah reading today is linked to Yom Kippur by its focus on fasting and one of my favorite topics, eradicating oppression.

It asks you, "What kind of fast are you hear for?" My response? To render from ourselves these harsh parts of humanity, to release from ourselves these accumulated hurts, resentments and even internal shame. We are all hungry, and our appetites are not always filled by food. There is the hunger for acceptance, belonging, safety and rest.

I interpret the experience of fasting as sitting in meditation so deeply, that one does stop, even to eat. Imagine the healing power we have collectively, when we sit in deep contemplation of how to change the world for better? To eradicate harm to one another and our environment, this singular home we rely upon.

So here is my reimagining of our fast- a moment of freedom from our imperfect humanity, with the intent of becoming closer to that version of us that G-d invites, requests, demands, encourages and inspires us to be. I imagine we would let go of our wickedness, those things that bite away at the corners of our

beautiful humanity. That we'd be able to look around this room, compassionately and forgive and receive forgiveness. And what would happen if we were able to take this practice into our daily lives?

May your fast lead you away from hatred, miserliness, and cruelty to self and others, and feast on compassion joy, love and generosity.

Thank you and Shana Tova