

From: Rabbi Dr. Joel Zeff <jzeff@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 3, 2020 10:17 PM
To: Childers, Jana <jana_childers@redlands.edu>
Subject: PC(USA)

Dear Dr. Childers,

I read today your email concerning the attempt at excluding SFTS from the PC(USA).

I am far from a typical beneficiary of the important work of the SFTS but would like to offer my support. I am an Orthodox Rabbi, living in Israel. I completed the DMin program in pastoral counseling a few years ago. Chimes magazine did a feature on me in which I told my story.

The highlights are that, after many years as a congregational rabbi and teacher in Jewish theological seminaries (including serving as Dean), I wanted to pursue advanced formal training in counseling. Though there were many counseling programs, they were way beyond my budget and, given my age at the time (late 50's), I could not hope to recoup the expensive tuition of those schools through subsequent income.

I was referred to SFTS and Dr. Scott Sullender by the Beck Institute (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) in Philadelphia. I was at that time serving as the rabbi of the Orthodox synagogue in Sacramento, on an unusual commuter basis, flying back and forth from Israel. . I met with Dr. Sullender at SFTS. His response was, "Joel, I would like to help." It had been many years since I had heard such kind and gracious words!

Dr. Sullender promised and delivered. My experience at SFTS was exciting and transformative. I enjoyed getting to know "close up" fellow spiritual seekers, coming from other traditions. I never felt an outsider and received a well-rounded education in pastoral education. My dissertation project was on the use of Jewish sacred texts as a tool in counseling and I am currently in discussion with publishers on turning the dissertation into a more popular book.

Upon completion of the DMin, and building on that education, I pursued advanced training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy through the Feeling Good Institute (Dr. David Burns) in Mountain View. In addition to my continued teaching (my first and foremost love) I have a private practice in pastoral counseling. See <http://www.tailormade-torah.com/>. All this is directly due to the wonderful spirit of giving of the SFTS.

I am not privy to the inner-workings of the PC(USA) and the current challenge, but it seems to me that there must be many, like me, who have benefited profoundly from the SFTS. To use Jewish terms, the SFTS has been a powerful force for the "sanctification of God's name" in my life, and the life of so many others. . It is hard to believe that this is not consistent with the mission of the PC(USA).

From my vantage point, any move which weakens the SFTS would be a set-back for the forces of healing so badly needed in our fractured world. If I can be of any further assistance, please don't hesitate to be in touch.

With gratitude and concern,
Joel Zeff

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<http://www.tailormade-torah.com/>