

The Reverend Rob Spach Oral History Interview One

Interview Conducted by  
Severine Stier  
Dahlia Krutkovich  
**April 1, 2019**

Collection: Davidson College Archives

Title: Rob Spach oral history interview one, 2019 April 1

Description: College Chaplain Rob Spach speaks about his time as a student at Davidson. He talks about the Religious Studies Department in the early 80's and the religious organizations on campus at the time including student-led groups and the college chaplain's office. He goes on to describe coming back to Davidson as the College Chaplain and his involvement in the college's move toward interfaith stances. He recounts the development of Jewish life on campus from small loosely-organized gatherings to formal college events, describing the formation of the Jewish Student Union, the establishment of Hillel, and the hiring of a campus rabbi.

Biography: Rob Spach graduated from Davidson in 1984 and returned as College Chaplain in 1993. He is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Interview Date: 2019-04-01

Interview History:

Interviewer: Severine Stier; Dahlia Krutkovich

Transcriber: Olivia Harper

Editors: Olivia Harper; Rob Spach

Reviewed by Rob Spach

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Setting Description: Interview with Rob Spach, Severine Stier, and Dahlia Krutkovich in Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina

Transcript Notes: The following transcript has been edited for brevity and clarity.

RS: Rob Spach

SS: Severine Stier

DK: Dahlia Krutkovich

SS: All right great so before we begin we'd love to do some formalities.

RS: Sure.

SS: So the name of the interviewers are Severine and Dahlia. The name of the narrator is Rob Spach, location of the interview in the Oasis. Date is April first, purpose of the interview is to record oral testimonies surrounding the Jewish experience at Davidson throughout the years. Just to go over some formalities, more formalities that you have signed off on before, but just so we have them on the record so the recording of your interview, of your interview will be made, and a transcription will be added to the Davidson College archives. These materials will be made available for research by scholars for scholarly publications and other related purposes consistent with Davidson College's mission. You will also have the opportunity to approve of your interview and watch it before we place it in the archives, and before it is made available to the public, so may I ask for your oral consent?

RS: Yes, I give my consent

SS: Thank you...so to kick things off we'd like to there are a lot of narratives here because we'd like to hear about your time as a student at Davidson—

RS: Sure.

SS: — and then your time as the chaplain at Davidson,

RS: Yeah.

SS: So I think to begin maybe if you could just tell us about your time as a student, the years you were here and some background information regarding how you found Davidson as a student.

RS: Sure, so I was a student here from 1981 to 1984, and that was my sophomore through senior years, so I transferred in. I had been a first-year student at Oberlin College in Ohio, and...I had gone to high school in Winston-Salem, so I had known about Davidson since high school given that it's so close by. And... for a whole variety of reasons I decided that I wanted to move on from Oberlin. Though I had had some real good experiences also had some difficult experiences and wanted to be at a small liberal arts college, and Davidson fit the bill, and it gave me just tremendous opportunities especially to do the kind of academic work that I was hoping to do.

DK: And you majored in religion, when it was called religion here?

RS: I actually didn't.

DK: Oh you didn't?

RS: I majored in the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies when it was called the Center for Special Studies, and so my coursework was a combination of English, religion, and philosophy courses all towards that major.

DK: What did you call your major?

RS: It was... literature and Christian thought, and it was essentially a religion and literature, so I was looking at religious and spiritual dimensions of literary texts.

DK: That's really, that's really cool.

SS: Yeah, that's really interesting.

DK: Can you tell us a little about the Religion Department while you were at Davidson?

RS: Sure, sure so all of the professors that I had, and I had Drs. ... let's see if I remember them all. I had Dr. Polley, I had...man... Dr. Kaylor and ... a variety. They were all ordained Presbyterian ministers who were also scholars with degrees from, you know terminal degrees from places like Duke, except for Dr. Plank. And he had, he came here from Vanderbilt and then my last year Dr. Mahoney came, but I never had him as a professor, but I had the others. And so one of the things that I personally really appreciated about my experience as a student in the courses in religion was that we were encouraged to look at the texts very critically and put them into historical context, literary context, cultural context. And for those of us like myself for whom faith was important—we also could make connections between these ways of looking at the texts, which I think were largely informed by kind of typical scholarship at the time, with our own faith concerns and journey. And so we weren't asked or obligated to do that by professors, but the course material lent itself to that, whether it was I had a—at the time it was called I think Old Testament course. I had a New Testament course. I took a course specifically on the Hebrew prophets. I took a course on the writings of Elie Wiesel. And then I had a bunch of courses in the English department that also had specifically religious dimensions as well. So in all of those contexts I was able to bring together both the academic study with my own personal development of faith, so it was really meaningful to me at that time holistically.

SS: More broadly, did Davidson's, did Davidson's religious affiliation play a role in your decision to come here, to leave Oberlin and come?

RS: No, it really didn't, and during my years here, other than the fact that...my professors were ordained clergy...I remember thinking while I was here that I really didn't consider the church relatedness of the college as something that I encountered very often or thought about very much.

DK: Do you feel like the fact that your professors were almost exclusively or exclusively came from the Presbyterian tradition and were so from the Presbyterian tradition that they were ordained, colored the Religion Department in any particular way? Taking Hebrew prophets, what was it like to study Jewish source material from, from someone like Max Polley—

RS: Yeah.

DK: —for instance?

RS: So Max was the most demanding professor that I have ever had at any level of my educational experience, including all the way through graduate school. And he was adamant that these were Jewish texts, and that we were to respect them for what they had meant to the people at the time they were written. And so for me it was an encouragement to take them seriously as texts that belonged to a tradition that had a prophetic vision that is, I think, even clearer than any... anything like that, that you get in the New Testament of my tradition. And I remember the time that he seemed to get most upset with a student, was with a Christian student who wanted to read into these texts things from the New Testament or from the Christian tradition. And he was adamant that that was an improper way of treating these texts in this particular class, given that it wasn't a New Testament class looking at how the Hebrew prophets were used by the New Testament writers. That would be a whole different matter. But this was a, you know, a course on the Hebrew prophets. And so for me it was, I think, a tremendous and positive and thought-provoking introduction to these texts as Jewish literature.

DK: Were there many Jewish students in your classes? Or was this everyone's introduction to kind of Jewish, Jewish thought, if you will?

RS: I think for a lot of us it was introduction to biblical material that we had had some vague introduction to, but that we really didn't know. And I don't recall who else was in my class, but I don't remember any student self-identifying as Jewish. I do remember other students were definitely Christian, especially because of that one episode when that student sort of got a piece of Dr. Polley's mind...I think for all of us the, the kind of depth and the challenge of these texts is something that we really had never encountered before...I mean...yeah it was nothing like Sunday school. You know—we should—for most of us that's what we've been exposed to.

DK: And that's what you would want from a collegiate, any sort of collegiate—

RS: Absolutely.

DK: —experience? Not Sunday school.

RS: Absolutely.

DK: So what was Jewish life like here while you were a student, if it existed at all?

RS: I would say I don't know, in that there probably were some Jewish students here, and so in that sense there was Jewish life, right? But what their experience was? I couldn't tell you because I have no idea.

SS: Who was the chaplain at the time?

RS: Charlie Summers—

SS: Okay.

RS: —was the chaplain at the time.

SS: And did you feel, was there a strong relationship there?

RS: Between me and him?

SS: Yeah.

RS: No. He was a nice guy and I got along fine with him. I tended to move at that point in my life in kind of two circles religiously at Davidson. In one circle was kind of what I was getting in the Religion Department with exposure to critical thinking about the texts. The other was what was then called the Davidson Christian Fellowship, which was the more conservative evangelical student group on campus. And I was actually in leadership in that group. Among the leaders in that group, I was probably one of the more progressive, but that was really the group that, that was my fellowship home. Charlie Summers, the chaplain, he interacted with all the groups, so I knew him, but there was a group called the Chapel Committee that I think he worked with much more closely. And it tended to be the more progressive Christians on campus at that time. As I recall they were a pretty small group, and religious life in general looked very different from how it looks today. There, there was the Davidson Christian Fellowship. There was a Catholic campus ministry. There was the Chapel Committee... I think there was a Fellowship of Christian Athletes going at that point. Beyond that, I don't think there were any other student religious organizations that I was aware of at least.

DK: I think students here, who are involved in religious life like to joke that, like, interfaith is like the buzz word that we use all the time or that there is a real emphasis, but it comes from a place of love, of course.

RS: Yeah.

DK: But we love that interfaith work is kind of like the priority of the Chaplain's Office these days.

RS: Right.

DK: So would you say that was even in the vocabulary of some of your predecessors or?

RS: Well the only predecessor I can speak to with any actual knowledge would be Charlie. You know, Charlie Summers, who was the chaplain when I was here. I don't remember that being an emphasis. It would probably be interesting to look back through the annual reports that he turned in to see if there was programming that he did in that area. My guess is that it's more likely that the emphasis was on things that had not fully been worked out at that point. For example, the whole question of women in ministry, right and, and the role of women. That was still something that I think a lot of people wondered about and debated. And, and certainly today there are still groups on campus that are part of denominations that don't ordain women. But it's just like it's not even a question for most of the denominations represented on campus these days, you know. I mean it's not something people are gonna debate. So I would say he was dealing with

progressive things that were there at the time, but I don't think consciousness of interfaith was one of them. That would be my guess.

DK: Moving into your time as chaplain, so what year did you start at Davidson?

RS: I started in the summer of 1993, and I had just finished seminary that May.

SS: Did you know you wanted to come back to Davidson?

RS: I didn't. I went to seminary with a sense of call to ministry within a college campus and wanting to work with diverse people. And my experience up to that point within communities of worship had primarily been with a very wide variety of Christian denominations: everything from very progressive to, and I say this as a statement not as a judgement, but to what we would call fundamentalist; everything from very high church Episcopalian to, again 'low church', what they call low church, literally a house church in Portugal where, you know, there was no pastor. We met in a living room; it was a house church...And I had been involved in African American Baptist churches. I had been involved in this charismatic, which that's a technical word for like they speak in tongues and cast out demons and all these kinds of things, I'd been involved in a church like that in Portugal. I'd been in very impoverished rural churches in Brazil growing up and very wealthy Presbyterian churches, So in all those contexts I felt like I encountered people whose love for God was genuine, and I didn't always agree with their theology, but that was much less important to me than getting to know them and coming to just sort of respect and love them as people. So I came here with that intention, and, and really went to seminary with the intention of going into a ministry that would involve me broadly like that. And I applied to all of the positions that I saw open my senior year of seminary. I really had no sort of intention of coming back to Davidson, but this was the position that worked out for me, and so I was glad to accept it and come back here... so...

DK: For...I heard an anecdote I'm not, feel free to correct me if not, it might be apocryphal. That when you were hired someone said to you, you will be the only chaplain at Davidson College until you retire.

RS: Mmmm...I, tell me what you mean, because I'm not sure whether you mean. The college is not gonna allow you to have other chaplains in the office, or you're gonna fit this place so well that you're gonna be here till you retire. I'm not sure.

DK: The first.

RS: The first, okay okay.

DK: Essentially the only chaplain hired by Davidson College. Of course there are associate chaplains, but that was that was a story I heard.

RS: So, when I came, there was already an assistant chaplain. Her name is Brenda Tapia, and she was probably about quarter time in the Chaplains Office and three-quarters time in Academic Affairs. She was the director of a program that she had actually conceived and, and led called

Love of Learning. Early on, Brenda and I worked as the chaplains, and I don't think we even, at least I didn't even, sort of think about the need or the possibility of hiring additional chaplains. This is all stuff we may want to talk about later on—

DK: You can elaborate, yeah.

RS: —but in the early 2000s part of what I began to recognize was that it would be very helpful to have additional chaplains. And I advocated at that time for reallocating some funds that were already at the college, so that we could have what we, at that time, called an adjunct Jewish chaplain and an adjunct Catholic chaplain. And those positions effectively were part-time. And I think what you're hearing is that, that I, at that point, received a sense from the administration that adding further chaplains as full-time employees was not something that I should be expecting to happen during my tenure here. And the reason for that is that to hire a full-time position means committing a lot of resources. And so in the scheme of what the college's priorities were, the fact that we had me as the chaplain, and we had these two adjunct chaplains, suggested that there were not going to be sufficient resources allocated as a priority by the college, in relation to all of its other needs, for us to get additional chaplains. And... so even though at times I felt like it would be helpful to have additional chaplains, I realized that you know I had been pretty clearly and fairly told the reasons that that wouldn't be happening...Of course when a donor approached the college about wanting to make a major gift to fund a chaplain who had focus on meditation and would be in the Buddhist tradition, the college was open to that because suddenly resources were being offered. And so it wasn't in principle the college's not wanting to have additional chaplains. It was really a question of institutional priorities in relation to available resources.

DK: Thank you, that clarifies a lot actually.

SS: Could you speak to what religious diversity was like when you started as chaplain?

RS: Sure. There was some, and I was very fortunate to get to have interactions with students of diverse traditions right from the beginning of my time here, which I can talk about more later. But, but the diversity was, I would say, minimal, and...it was largely not visible, as well. And, and yeah I'll just tell this, this small story because it, it's framed a lot for me, because it was an unexpected conclusion I came to after about a year, year and a half being here, which was that I arrived here, and I got to know some Jewish students and some Muslim students, and clearly they felt marginalized at Davidson. They were in such very small numbers that they were very aware that they were not in any kind of majority, in any kind of, like ... they were almost invisible, right. And that's, given their numbers, that's what I would have expected them to feel.

What I didn't expect was the fact that...other students, both who were not religious or who were of different types of Christian faith, also felt marginal, which was... that's not what I expected to encounter. But the reason is as follows: the students who were of no religious faith felt like Davidson seemed very religious because there were a lot of active Christian students on the campus. They didn't necessarily feel that the administration came across as religious, but their fellow students did, okay, and so that shaped their experience of the place. And then the students that came from more conservative evangelical backgrounds felt that they couldn't really speak up with their perspective because it wouldn't be very well accepted within the academic

environment of the college, and that it was often stereotyped and parodied. And I firsthand had an experience of sitting down with a group of students who didn't know me. This was like my first few weeks here. And these students started just making fun of one of the more conservative religious groups and students that were involved in it. And I was like, that's fascinating! they, like ... that it's just, you know, it's just fair game to make fun of them. Nobody was gonna bat an eye. And then the students turned to me and asked me who I was, and I said well I'm the chaplain, and you could just see all their faces kind of fall. They didn't know anything about me or what I believed, but they knew what they had been doing in terms of making fun of students who were, you know, very overtly Christian on campus. So that was fascinating. And then the thing that really surprised me was that the students that were from mainline traditions, so Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Methodist students, they didn't want to be out about their Christian faith because Christianity had such a bad reputation because of what we see in the media and because of the sort of discriminatory attitudes that exist in a lot of the Christian, like broadly, a lot of the Christian community, that ... these students didn't want to be tagged as being anti-intellectual or small-minded. And so I actually had conversations with some of them at the time, and, and they would say, 'No, I don't want anybody to know I'm a Christian because they're gonna make all kinds of assumptions about me, and they're gonna think much less of me.' So I stepped into this context where it was fascinating to me that everyone felt, in some way, sort of marginalized and, and didn't feel like their voice was respected or could be respected or heard. Sorry that was a really long answer to that question—

DK: No. Thank you.

RS: —but it was very interesting for me. I didn't expect it.

DK: Yeah of course. Something I wanted to ask about was the formation of Jewish Students' Union, how that came about? So you came in '93, which is well before any sort of formalized, organized anything—

RS: Right

DK: —came to be.

RS: Right.

DK: Do you remember the conversations you were having with Jewish students at the time of its formation?

RS: Can I, can I kind of go through—

DK: Please.

RS: —a range of things 'cause I, I gave some thought to sort of the flow of things over the years. Is that okay if I—

SS: Yeah.

RS: —if I go back—

DK: Please.

RS: —back to when I first got here? So as I reflected on, I think I would kind of divide my experience with Jewish life into, into sort of four rough periods over the 26 years that I've been here.

And the first one would be from when I first got here in the fall of '93 up until the spring of maybe 2001. And I would characterize that era as Jewish life being present in sort of fits and starts. And when I came in the fall, came in the summer one of the things I realized was that the High Holy days were gonna be coming up pretty soon after the fall semester started. So at the very end of August, I sent out, back in those days, a letter, an actual like typed letter to all of the students that I knew of who had identified as Jewish on campus to let them know that Temple Beth-El, which is one of the, which is the Reform synagogue in Charlotte, was welcoming them to come to High Holy Day services and would provide tickets free of charge for those services, and that the students could come to the Chaplain's Office and pick those up. And so, so I communicated with those students around that issue of getting the tickets.

And one of those students, a guy named De Vere Kutscher, he got in touch with me in October, I think, of that same year, so the fall of '93. And De Vere came in, and we had a conversation about the fact that he really hoped there would be a Shabbat service for Jewish students at Davidson. So he and I ... and I said, you know, I'm really happy to help you make that happen. I don't know exactly what needs to be done, but if you'll help me, we can work it out.

So, so he and I worked on that together, and in early November sometime, he and the other Jewish students who wanted to be there -- I think there were probably what maybe eight of them there out of the eleven that I knew of -- actually came over to our house. My wife and I hosted it at our home, and, and we had a little girl at that point. She was just over a year old, so I think it was kind of fun for them to be around a family and all so. Anyway we hosted it in our, in our, in our home, and they came over, and they cooked in our kitchen, and we ate at in our dining room together. And they led just a brief informal service. As far as I know, and maybe I don't know, I haven't found anything else in my research that was, I think, the first like Jewish service at Davidson. Now I think there had been entertainers and things before and speakers, but I don't know that there'd ever been a, a, an explicitly kind of religious event on campus. I don't know. I'd be interested to know actually.

DK: I don't know about on campus. We've heard stories about Seders before, and I think Seders in the—

SS: One of them was in the Union.

DK: In the Union, but I don't know if...

RS: This Union though?

DK: Yes.

SS: Yeah.

RS: This was, this was, this wasn't the Union until after 2000, so I know all about the Seders too.

SS: Yeah

RS: Because I was there with Joanna when she planned the first one. So um, so anyway that was that was that year that kind of stands out to me. The next year there was a, a professor named Rosemary Zumwalt. Have y'all heard about her? Yeah so she, she hosted a celebration for Rosh Hashanah in her home the following year. And in November of that year there was a, like a...a diversity group, I guess, it was called SERCH (S-E-R-C-H), and they hosted a Hanukkah party that fall, in 94.

SS: On campus?

RS: On campus yeah, yeah. And then in '95, I actually had a conversation with students about the fact that they wanted occasional things, but they didn't really want things on a regular basis. So I got in touch with Rabbi James Bennett at Temple Beth-El and just touched base to see whether he or others of the rab--, rabbinical staff would be willing to come up occasionally for, for things on campus. And then in 1997, so a couple years later, I was in contact with a statewide Hillel, and so Ed Elkin, who worked for statewide Hillel, came to campus. And so we gathered a group of students, and I gathered with Ed and, and sort of talked about what they were hoping for. And, again, you know I say it's fits and starts, so nothing concrete really came out of that. For the next couple of years, Temple Beth-El was helping, and Temple Israel, which is the Conservative synagogue, also occasionally members of that congregation would host things on campus actually like a Shabbat dinner for students. So it kind of that was the next couple of years, the late 90s, '98, '99.

And in '99 a group of us went to a conference called Education is Transformation. And it was really the first big national interfaith conference. And professor Zumwalt was on the committee that went to that, and president Vagt and a couple of trustees and students and...And so that, I think, really, for some of us, kick-started the realization that we were part of a broader national movement that was taking off at that point.

[A portion of Spach's remarks inadvertently were not recorded at this point]

Okay so I'll pick up where I was, and I was talking about so Joanna Parker had come into my office, and we had talked about having a Seder ...uh, in 2000. And then in 2001 she again worked to organize a Seder out at Irwin Lodge, and there were 30 people for that Seder, and Dining Services again provided the food. And I—it, one of the things I remember, that was really I think appreciated by everyone that was there, was how intimate it felt. The Irwin Lodge feels like a big, almost like a living room, like there's a at one end of it there's a fireplace, and we set out the tables, and there's a, I remember, there's a little tiny kitchen, and so we had to kind of navigate in there to get all the stuff, and Commons had provided the food and the silverware and all of that, and... So the space was kind of tight, and, and yet it was cozy, and it had a really, kind of almost like a family feel, because it was so small. And that's one of the like, one of the things I, as I think back, that's one of things I treasure about the beginnings of the Seder experience at Davidson, was the fact that, on the downside, it was few people, but the upside of that was it felt kind of like being a family, you know. It was kind of fun in that sense, there was not, not a whole lot of people. And yeah I remember we, we got all of the like the dishes after

they've been used and everything, and ... and we loaded them up, and, and the Commons folks took them all back and did all the cleaning and all that for us. It was, yeah, they were really great about that.

So then I would mark the like, that was kind of the end of the fits and starts, you know, a few things here and there. But in 2001-2002 some specific things began to fall into place that offered structure for Jewish life. The first one was that two students, Jess Heilweil and Kelly Kopeikin, they, both from the class of '05, they stepped up to organize the Jewish Student Union. And they really wanted something more ongoing and that would provide more opportunities for Jewish students. That same year was when I was feeling like it was important for us to have adjunct chaplains from other traditions. It was in the spring of that year that I approached Dean Shandley with this idea. And because there were funds already at the college, it, it made it possible for us to add these two positions. And I felt that it was important, as chaplain I felt that it was important, that we add both an adjunct Jewish chaplain, because I felt like the Jewish students were creating a structure and wanting something themselves, and so like they were active, and I thought okay it would be great to have someone who is in that tradition who can work with those students and nurture and encourage that. And we also had a large and growing Catholic student population, and I recognized that that population was going to continue to grow, and so it made a lot of sense to have someone who would be able to dedicate time, more time than the priests who were coming down to say mass on Sundays could dedicate. I'm really grateful for the priests and for the time and effort they put in for all the years they did that from I think from the 70s up until this point, but they simply didn't, you know, have the time to spend with the students, and so, so we created those two positions at the same time. And her senior year Joanna Parker once again organized the, the third annual Seder, and we did it at Irwin Lodge. There were ten more people so a total of forty that year, and again Dining Services was really helpful with all that. So all of that happened in 2001- 2002, and in the fall of 2002 Rabbi Jeremy Barras became our first adjunct Jewish chaplain. And he was an associate rabbi, or I'm not exactly sure of the terminology, but not the senior rabbi at Temple Beth-El. And so we had a— Dean Shandley and I had had conversations with Rabbi Bennett about working out the details so that we could have Rabbi Barras on campus around eight hours a week, is kind of what we had agreed on.

And the Jewish Student Union began to thrive and you can see that by, like, in addition to things we'd had before, we had our first Break the Fast on Yom Kippur on campus, and the students also organized a Hanukkah celebration in the Carolina Inn that year, and we had our fourth annual Seder, for the first time without Joanna Parker's wonderful leadership. So you know Jess and Kelly stepped up, and Rabbi Jeremy was the, was sort of officiating, and we had fifty students at that, so you can see year by year kind of the number of attendees at the Seder had gone up. And it was also, at least in my memory, the first time that we had a Yom Hashoah commemoration on campus.

So you can see that the fact that we had a Jewish Student Union meant that we began to have a lot more, kind of, commemorations or celebrations on campus. And the following year, I guess it would have been the spring of 2004, at Yom Hashoah, we brought a Holocaust survivor to be the speaker. And so that was an important, I think, step, and it started moving us in a direction, I think, in terms of reflecting on the meaning of Yom Hashoah that, as we'll see in a minute, like, really came together and became much stronger in ensuing years. But I think that was a very important first step, was to have a Holocaust survivor. Her name was Susan I think it's pronounced (Cernyak Spats). So, so you know, things kept getting added. So we would have

all those things that I've just talked about. But so the following year, so this is fall of 2004, they came up with the idea of having a bagel brunch for all the new students, so that all the new Jewish students could meet one another, and they could also meet Jewish students who are in the upper classes. So that was the first year we had that.,

And then it was the next year in 2006 that they decided to change the name to Hillel specifically. There had been some, I think, hesitancy about that because it felt like being the Jewish Student Union gave our organization independence from any national organization, and they didn't ... they felt like their chapter was so small and everything that they weren't sure that it made sense to be a Hillel, but at this point it had developed enough that they felt it was the right move. So they became Hillel. I remember one thing from that fall as new students were arriving, we had worked in the spring and then over the summer to create a fridge magnet, and it was about, was about this big, and it listed all 17 Jewish life events that were going to be happening over the course of the coming academic year. And, and I remember we were all very proud of that, you know, we thought this is great we're gonna give them something so they'll know what's coming up, and of course the moms wanted it too you know. So a lot of moms take it home and put it on their fridges and that kind of thing. And that was also, that the fall of 2006, was the first year that we had a, an actual family weekend Shabbat gathering. So it, it was getting at this point integrated into the rhythm of college events. Does that make sense? So that it wasn't just sort of Jewish students kind of doing their own thing, but this was something that was seen as, you know, part of a bigger college weekend, that this was important to have this as part of it, you know. I think that the Catholic students had probably been having Mass over family weekend for some years, I don't know how many years, so this really made sense given where we were with sort of the growth of Jewish life...

I mean there were some other events that year. I don't know how much detail you want me to go in, but I remember one that I found particularly moving was that in March Hillel sponsored the showing of a film called Encounter Point. Are you familiar with it? And it, it was the stories and interviews with Jewish families and Muslim families who had lost loved ones in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. And I remember finding it very moving myself, and I think for a lot of us that were there, yeah. It was just powerful to listen to these first-hand testimonies that were coming from a place of grief and coming from a place of longing for peace...you know? Yeah. So I remember that in particular. So Rabbi Barras left us at the end of that year. He went on to be rabbi at another synagogue elsewhere as a senior rabbi, and I remember we had a going-away gathering for him over in the Sprinkle Room. And Jewish students, and myself, and a number of other colleagues came and gathered with him and expressed our thanks for, for all that he had done for this community while he was here. And so for one year we had Rabbi Micah Streiffer as our campus rabbi, and he had filled the position that that Rabbi Barras had been in at Temple Beth-El. He was an incredibly vibrant person, and he brought tremendous energy to his work as campus rabbi. I remember in particular that the Family Weekend Shabbat was held over in Tomlinson, in the basement of Tomlinson, and there were probably about 40 people there, Jewish students and their parents. He came in with his guitar, and he just led this joyful service, you know, for everybody there, and it was just like he had a set of gifts that just brought everything alive, and everybody had a great time. So you know I remember that in particular as one of the most fun events of that year. It was also the year that a student named Charles Horowitz was the president for Hillel, and his father came and performed a one-man show. His father was an actor and came and performed a one-man show of the stories of Sholem Aleichem. And so that was in the 900 Room, and that was a delightful evening. I remember I sat up in the

balcony with Dr. Plank, and, and we watched that together. And Charles, of course, as you can imagine, was just thrilled to have his father share with this, this with the community. One other thing that Rabbi Streiffer did that year was he offered, open to the campus at David--, Judaism 101 session. So folks just gathered, I think we were down, I can't remember, I think we were down in room 313, and folks just gathered and he gave this sort of very thoughtful and obviously basic, had to be, overview of the Jewish – dimensions of the Jewish tradition, a little bit about texts, a little bit about practices like the names of some of the paraphernalia that would be used in different services and things like that. And that was also the year that I think students approached the Dining Services and asked for some sort of special consideration around, around Passover, and so there were eight consecutive days where there were Jewish menus available through the Dining Services in the Commons each night of Passover. So I remember thinking that was terrific. So I would say those were years of kind of the beginnings of a structure and, and sort of a sense that, like, there are things that we can expect to happen every year that are Jewish on campus, and some of those are woven into the larger kind of college fabric and some of them are really still specifically for Jewish students and their friends. But there's more of an integration and there's more of a structure.

And then so I would say the next phase begins in 2008, and that's when...the Jewish Community of Lake Norman, which was, it was an interesting community in that it included both Reform and Conservative Jews; they were right at the place where they were ready to call a rabbi for their community. Up until that point, they just hadn't had the numbers, but they did, that... that year they called Rabbi Shields to come be their rabbi. And so when the folks down at Temple Beth-El saw this all happening, they said you know it's been a strain on us to be sending a rabbi up there, so why don't you just work with the community there and have their rabbi work with your students? And so that was the shift that we made in 2008, and Rabbi Shields became our campus rabbi. And eventually what happened of course is that the Lake Norman Jewish congregation it split, and part of it became a Conservative congregation that I don't think lasted too long, and the other part became what is now Temple Kol Tikvah, which is Reform. And so all that happened I think within maybe the first two years or three years that Rabbi Shields was here. So that was part of what he was, was kind of interacting with...

Let's see. We, yeah, just a few other highlights from those years, I think. So you know there was the regular stuff happening, but then a few highlights were that in 2009 and 10 Hillel and the MSA started working together more than they ever had before, and one of the first events that they co-sponsored was, it was called Stand up for Peace, and it was a Palestinian comedian and a Jewish comedian coming together to, like, be comedians together. And weaving into it, like, questions of how to find peace in the Middle East, so it was an unusual event, to focus it around comedy. But that was one of the first kind of joint efforts of Hillel and the MSA. In 2010 a Jewish student named Kayla Frank, have you all been in touch with Kayla? Okay. She was class of '11. She had been involved in interfaith activities at Davidson during her time here, and she applied for and was selected to be an intern for the Interfaith Youth Core, which is a national organization. And so throughout her senior year she was very active in promoting a variety of interfaith events. And she worked really hard to create a team that, it had like Hindu student, a Muslim student, herself as a Jewish student, a more evangelical Christian student, a more mainline Christian student, a student who considered themselves secular. So she really tried to create a team that then organized a variety of events. And it was a way in which I saw a Jewish student being involved in religious life in a way that was not only about Hillel but was really, had a really broad impact, if that makes sense. And we also brought that year another Holocaust

survivor named Manfred Katz. And yeah, he was, it was very powerful. And with his talk there was also a photo exhibit that was called Faces of Resistance: Women in the Holocaust, and I remember it was down in the atrium right you know how they set up photo exhibits down there. Excuse me I just need to check my watch quickly. And, and it was faces primarily obviously of Jewish women, but it was also faces of a number of women of other faiths who had, I guess, who are righteous Gentiles, and who had acted at peril of their own lives on behalf of, of Jews who were going to be either sent off to the death camps or in some other way were being mistreated in their homes. So yeah, I remember that was a very powerful exhibit. That was also the year that a student named Ari Hefter, you know about Ari? So Ari was class of '11, and he was the first Jewish student to apply for the Davidson Ministry Fellowship. And so he, he was a Davidson Ministry Fellow in the the summer I guess of 2010 yeah, and then like participated in the program through his graduation in '11. And I had the hardest time getting Ari his placement. I contacted so many rabbis all over the East Coast. There was one contact we had in Israel. I got in touch with her, and she really wanted to have him come and be her intern, but the timing wasn't gonna work. We were hitting dead ends, and I was like what am I gonna do? And on a lark I just came across this congregation in Hawaii, and so I just wrote an email out of the blue to the rabbi. Low and behold he writes back and says yeah I'd love to have an intern, so Ari spent his summer internship in Hawaii. And he of course needed some transportation, so he bought like a third hand car that he put back together with duct tape and drove that big around all summer and spent a lot of time surfing and having a great time but also had some really powerful and at times difficult experiences of seeing what it's like to be a rabbi and care for people who are going through hard things. One of which was that a young member of the congregation about Ari's own age committed suicide, and that young man's mother, for whatever reason, turned to Ari for comfort. And so he spent a lot of time with her that summer and was trying to help her deal with the death of her son, so it was a, I think it was a pretty intense experience and certainly gave him a window into one aspect of rabbinical work, and that was in addition to helping with services and things. I apologize I'm gonna have to go quickly here because I'm gonna run out of time. I don't know if we can continue at some point.

SS: We might want...

DK: I actually really would love to, I think. I think it's important that we do.

SS: Because I don't want to rush through any of it.

RS: Okay.

DK: Yes and this is really valuable.