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Cincinnati Rabbi Laura Baum Named to 50 Most Influential Female Rabbis List for Founding Online Congregation and Groundbreaking Use of Social Media

Baum is Youngest Rabbi on the List

CINCINNATI (July 22, 2010) – Rabbi Laura A. Baum of Cincinnati’s Congregation Beth Adam and OurJewishCommunity.org was named to the Jewish Daily Forward’s list of the 50 most influential female rabbis in America. The Forward is a legendary name in American journalism and a revered institution in American Jewish life.



Rabbi Baum was included on a list titled “The Sisterhood 50 – America’s Influential Rabbis” which was published on July 21 online and will be in the July 30 print edition. The list included 50 of the most influential women rabbis in America plus five from Israel. Baum’s work as the founder of OurJewishCommunity.org and her outreach via social media were cited as the reasons for her inclusion. Baum is the youngest rabbi included on the list which also includes Sally Priesand, the first woman ordained as a rabbi in America, and Jill Jacobs, a prominent author and champion of the importance of social justice within Judaism. The full list is available at <http://www.forward.com/articles/129451/>

Nominations came from Forward and Lilith editors, Sisterhood contributors, prominent rabbis and others. Forward readers also submitted nominations in response to its Sisterhood Blog entry and a related post on the Forward’s Facebook page.

According to The Forward, “These women span generations and the denominational spectrum; they are pulpit rabbis, teachers, academics, pastoral caregivers and organizational leaders. All of them have made it their life’s work to put Jewish values into action — and, as a result, are changing lives in and beyond their communities. This alphabetical list contains a lot of “firsts,” which is evidence of just how much ground there’s been to break in recent years.



“I am truly honored to be listed with such incredible rabbis. Included are many trailblazing women with outstanding accomplishments in their rabbinate,” said Baum. “I am especially thrilled with this honor because it speaks to the tremendous progress OurJewishCommunity.org and Congregation Beth Adam have made in using technology to reach tens of thousands of Jews who otherwise would not be reached.”

OurJewishCommunity.org is the world’s first online synagogue with a contemporary Jewish voice. Launched on September 1, 2008, OurJewishCommunity.org has reached more than 35,000 individuals in all 50 states in the U.S. and in more than 150 countries.

OurJewishCommunity.org is an initiative of Congregation Beth Adam, an independent congregation with a humanistic perspective. Baum serves both the online synagogue and the brick-and-mortar congregation along with Rabbi Robert B. Barr.

“Developing OurJewishCommunity.org has allowed me to see the potential to build an entirely new Jewish model for the 21st century. So many of the old models are no longer working, and more than 50% of American Jews are unaffiliated. There is a tremendous opportunity to provide a contemporary Jewish experience,” said Baum. Among OurJewishCommunity.org’s most visited features are streaming High Holiday services; last year over 3,600 computers logged in for Yom Kippur services.

Baum was ordained by Hebrew Union College (HUC) in 2008. While a student there, she received the Israel Bettan Memorial Prize for the most creative and imaginative pulpit presentation and the Rabbi Morris H. Youngerman Memorial Prize for the best sermon preached in the HUC chapel during the 2007 academic year. Baum is currently an adjunct instructor of Human Relations at HUC.

Baum’s career as a Jewish professional began during her college years when she was a teacher and then a Rabbinic Intern at Congregation Mishkan Israel in Hamden, CT. Baum has an undergraduate degree in psychology from Yale University. She is currently pursuing an MBA at Xavier University.

Baum has also recently been accepted as a Rabbinic Fellow of Rabbis Without Borders, an initiative of CLAL - The National Center for Learning and Leadership. The Fellowship Program brings together 22 rabbis from across the country and across the ideological spectrum to study with leading thinkers, authors, and influential people working in the fields of media, politics, public policy, American religion, and contemporary spirituality.

To join the free community and get more information, visit www.OurJewishCommunity.org or www.Facebook.com/OurJewishCommunity.

About OurJewishCommunity.org



OurJewishCommunity.org

OurJewishCommunity.org is an online congregation that reaches tens of thousands of Jews around the world. OurJewishCommunity.org features blogs, audio podcasts through iTunes, video podcasts through YouTube, streaming holiday and Sabbath services, discussion boards, holiday eCards, recipes, educational materials for all ages, and more. Rabbi Baum has more than 1,750 followers on Twitter (www.twitter.com/rabbibaum) and OurJewishCommunity.org has over 3,200 Facebook fans (www.facebook.com/ourjewishcommunity).

High-resolution images of Rabbi Baum are available at
<http://www.ourjewishcommunity.org/educational-materials/press-kit/>