



## Monmouth Reform Temple

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### PRESS RELEASE

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The first female rabbi in the United States, Sally Priesand, is picture above presently (left) and when she began her career, 50 years ago (right). She was recently given the Community YMCA of Greater Monmouth County Humanitarian Award in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday.

**January 14, 2022**

## First Woman Rabbi, Sally Priesand, Honored with YMCA Humanitarian Award In celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday

During their annual celebration for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, the Community YMCA of Greater Monmouth County honored Rabbi Sally Priesand, Ocean Township, for her life accomplishments. Sally Priesand was ordained as the United States first female rabbi in the United States in 1972. She served as the Rabbi for Monmouth Reform Temple (MRT) of Tinton Falls for 25 years. This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her historic ordination.

MRT's current Rabbi, Marc Kline, a director on the YMCA of Greater Monmouth County, stated of his temple's Rabbi Emerita, "Her career is trailblazing, opening the door and clearing a path for all the women who serve as clergy in the American Jewish world. Having served our Monmouth Reform Temple and working to establish and support organizations like Interfaith Neighbors, Rabbi Sally most deserves this tribute."

The award was presented by her good friend and colleague, Gwendolyn Love, the Executive Director of Lunchbreak. Ms. Love introduced Rabbi Priesand during the YMCA's MLK celebration's virtual presentation describing her historic career.

Regarding her seminal ordination she stated, "She faced skepticism from her administrative official, teachers and her fellow classmates but she didn't let that stop her from carving a place for herself and for all women within Jewish history. In 1981, she became rabbi at Monmouth Reform Temple; the congregation responded warmly to her leadership. She infused their worship services with more Hebrew and congregational thinking and shared her deep commitment to the needs for the survival of Israel and cause of justice and peace propelling the congregation to social action."

The award, according to the YMCA board, is given to those individuals who most reflect Martin Luther King, Jr.'s principals, ideas, philosophy and action. This is evidenced in the organizations Rabbi Priesand continues to champion since her retirement from MRT.

She is the president of Interfaith Neighbors, which provides rental assistance and support services for the working poor. She is the former chair of the membership committee for of the center of Holocaust and Genocide education at Brookdale Community College. Rabbi Priesand remains an active member of the Jewish Heritage Museum of Monmouth County and works with Planned Parenthood on both a local and national level. She is also a member of many major women organizations including Hadassah, National Council of Jewish Women and The National Organization of Woman.

Rabbi Priesand is the author of *Judaism and the New Woman*, and a contributor to many other noteworthy publications on Judaism. Her list of accolades dates back to 1973 including an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. A visiting Professorship in Jewish Women's Studies was established in her honor at that same university. In 2010, she was named among the 125 "women who changed our world" by the *Good Housekeeping* magazine.

Rabbi Priesand accepted her honor referencing the work and lives of two great leaders --Dr. Martin Luther King and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel.

She stated, "MLK and Heschel were friends, each regarding the other as a modern day prophet each believing that God calls us to be partners in completing the world. And each convinced that when humanity does not live up to its highest ideals the only thing to do is to be more human and show others how to be more human."

Monmouth Reform Temple looks forward to celebrating Rabbi Priesand's 50 years in the rabbinate at a special Shabbat service on June 3, 2022.

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