

How We Became Gishrei Shalom

By Laura Minor

Greater Southington Jewish Congregation's members had considered a name change to something Hebrew several times over the years but nothing seemed to stick.

During my presidency, 2005-2007, there was another round of interest, with the condition that we keep our initials. Everyone knew us as GSJC and we wanted it to stay that way. We searched for Hebrew words that began with "G" and tried to pair them with an "S" word. It was a real struggle. Nothing seemed to work.

One Thursday night, Rabbi Elliot Stevens called me, as was his habit one day before Shabbat, to give me his requests for music for the service. I played the piano and I had gotten used to scrambling to assemble the sheet music for his selections. I organized that week's choices and when I arrived at temple, it occurred to me that the rabbi had asked for Gesher Tsar M'Od, a song he didn't usually request. I had an epiphany when I saw "Gesher", a "G" word.

I went to Rabbi Stevens and asked if we could pair Gesher with Shalom or another "S" word. He had to consider it and said if we used Gishrei, it would include "to" and we could be Bridges to Peace. This isn't quite correct. I know that Rabbi Stevens said that this was a creative use of the phrase to avoid adding another word.

We brought the suggestion to the Board who approved it and then to the congregation who also approved it and thus, we maintained our "GSJC" and chose a Hebrew name. We are the only congregation in the world, as far as we know, with this name.