

Celebration Slated Sunday At Golf Manor Synagogue

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For Rabbi David I. Indich, being "modern" does not require abandoning his life as an observant Jew, nor does being observant force him to imitate European ghetto life styles.

His success at blending the two pressures is being celebrated Sunday by his congregation, Golf Manor (Agudas Israel), after 18 years as their leader.

"I will stop when my modernity comes into conflict with my orthodoxy," he said in an interview.

He prefers to talk about the "observant" rather than the "orthodox" Jew, since the latter must be the former to merit the title orthodox.

Rabbi Indich sees himself and his congregation as part of a "vibrant" middle group in American Jewry, neither sectarian and archaic nor assimilating into the broad Christian culture.

HE FINDS within Judaism an ability to survive through accommodation, drawing the line when the Law, as handed down through tradition, is challenged.

For instance: He said he wears a beard because he wants to, and cuts his hair in the style of his choice, although some traditions require something else.

Or, at points in the liturgy where silence is required, he has flash-cards at the pulpit to remind worshippers of the page and whether they should sit or stand.

Or, contrary to some feelings, he put a protective curtain inside the Ark where the Torah scrolls are kept, rather than outside. This was done after consulting traditional sources as to the purpose of the curtain.

OR, FOR AN orthodox-trained rabbi, he may have veered slightly when he went back to school at Jesuit-run Xavier University for a graduate degree in psychology.

But he finds his years



Rabbi David I. Indich
... modern, observant

with the congregation successful by many measures: It has moved and grown from a faltering synagogue of elderly persons to one steadily expanding toward 400 families and another 150 that worship with the congregation although they don't pay regular dues.

He finds young people maintain their observant way of life at college to the degree it was kept at home. And some children of nonobservant parents have come to him and his synagogue for reasons that range from his personal warmth to the impact of the youth group.

"No longer is it assumed that a Jew who goes into the sciences will drop his observances, Rabbi Indich said. "It is just the opposite today," with traditional Jews in the professions maintaining not only their beliefs and practices, but organizing to promote them.

Rabbi Indich said the image of the traditional, or observant or orthodox Jew as a dying group is wrong. He said many of the millions of unaffiliated American Jews choose synagogues such as his when they feel the need to pray, rather than Conservative, Reform or Reconstructionist congregations.

TO REINFORCE the religious training of youth, Rabbi Indich's synagogue gives the children of members a free first year membership when the young-

sters marry, and reduced second year dues.

This is in line with Rabbi Indich's experience that married Jews are affiliating younger than before.

Rabbi Indich is active in the "Dialogue" television program of the National Conference of Christians and Jews here, but on the condition that they don't talk about "religion."

The show's goal is to have clergymen talk about issues of the day, and that is fine with him. But ecumenism and interfaith activities hold little attraction for him.

Christianity, Judaism and other faiths are to Rabbi Indich distinct and viable roads toward the same goal; he feels no compulsion to help blend them into a single super highway.

Rabbi Indich said there are important issues on which he and other rabbis in this area do not agree. His public appearances with other clergymen are motivated in part by a desire to give a "balanced picture" of what contemporary American Judaism is.

HE ALSO KEEPS a low profile in social issues, hoping rather to teach his congregation through Jewish education how to cope with community problems.

"I'm not aloof nor insensitive," he said. But he fears picking a side, marching, picketing or otherwise taking public stances might cause the congregation to discount him in his primary role of "rabbi," as he understands it.

He believes that other Jewish institutions should be supported in their efforts to meet specific social problems. He does not feel that as a rabbi he can or must be an expert on interfaith, interracial, urban, etc., affairs.

And when asked by a congregant about the fitness of an activity, he said his view is roughly this: "If the rabbi is not allowed to be there, you shouldn't be there either."