

DENISE EGER

b. March 14, 1960

RABBI

"I believe God made me just as I am. That is all I need to know, that I am exactly who God created me to be!"

One of the first openly gay rabbis, Denise Eger served as rabbi for the world's first gay and lesbian synagogue. She is the first female and the first openly gay president of the Board of Rabbis of Southern California.

Eger was raised in Memphis, Tennessee. Active in her synagogue, she taught religious school from the time she was 12. She studied opera as a teen, intending to be a voice major in college.

Eger received a bachelor's degree in religion from the University of Southern California and a master's degree from Hebrew Union College (HUC) - Jewish Institute of Religion. In 1988, she was ordained a Reform rabbi.

Following ordination, she served as the first full-time rabbi at Congregation Beth Chayim Chadashim, the first gay and lesbian synagogue. In 1991, Rabbi Eger cofounded West Hollywood's LGBT-welcoming Congregation Kol Ami, which means "all my people."

Rabbi Eger was the founding president of the Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Interfaith Clergy Association. She worked with the Central Conference of American Rabbis to pass the resolution that allowed Reform rabbis to officiate at same-sex commitment ceremonies.

A noted speaker on Judaism, spirituality and LGBT and family issues, Rabbi Eger is a frequent commentator on radio and television. She has written extensively for periodicals, including the Los Angeles Times, The Advocate, the Huffington Post and The Jewish Journal. She has also contributed to a number of books, among them "Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay and Jewish," "Positively Gay," and "Lesbian Rabbis: THE FIRST GENERATION."

In 2008, Rabbi Eger officiated at the first legal wedding of a lesbian couple in California. The National Women's Political Caucus named her one of its 12 Remarkable Women in 2010. The Human Rights Campaign presented her with the Community Equality Award in 2011.

Rabbi Eger lives with her son in Los Angeles.

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