


## WHAT IS OUTREACH? AND WHAT IS PROJECT WELCOME?

Outreach is a Jewish community effort to welcome those seeking a stronger connection to Judaism: Jews-by-Choice, interfaith couples and families, parents of interfaith married children, and everyone interested in knowing more about Judaism.

Outreach does not seek to convert non-Jewish individuals. Rather, it enables them to explore, study, and come to understand Judaism, thereby providing an atmosphere of support in which a comfortable relationship with Judaism can be fostered.

**Project Welcome** is an outreach program welcoming interfaith families, unaffiliated Jews and seekers into Independent, Renewal, Reconstructionist, Reform and Conservative synagogues.

Project Welcome offers a new “gift” like this one each month.  
 **CLICK ON THE GIFT** at [www.ProjectWelcome.org](http://www.ProjectWelcome.org)



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### PROJECT WELCOME

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# Customs and Traditions At our Synagogue



## A GUIDE TO WORSHIP FOR GUESTS AND NEW MEMBERS

## WHY IS SHABBAT ON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY?

Worship services on Friday evening and Saturday morning celebrate the Sabbath or (in Hebrew) *Shabbat*. The creation story in Genesis tells us God created the world in six days and God rested on the seventh. The Hebrew word for stopping work is *Shabbat*. Services are led by a *rabbi* (Hebrew for teacher) and a *hazzan* (cantor or music specialist).

## WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

In our congregation, people wear business clothes and causal clothes that one would wear to a party or dinner. We turn our cell phones off as a courtesy to others before entering the sanctuary.

## HOW WILL I BE GREETED AND HOW SHOULD I RESPOND?

People say “*Shabbat Shalom*” which is Hebrew for “a peaceful Sabbath” or “*Good Shabbes*” which is “Good Sabbath”. You may respond with either of these phrases and they are interchangeable.

## MAY I BRING MY CHILDREN TO SERVICES?

Children are always welcome in the sanctuary with their parents and often especially enjoy the beginning songs. Baby sitting is available on Saturday mornings for those who pre-register. Tot Shabbat services customized for 2-5 year olds are held on the first Friday of the month and family services for older children on the second Friday of the month.

## Saturday morning 10:30-12:30:

Saturday morning services also begin with songs and psalms before the Sabbath prayers. As morning is a more intellectual time, the weekly portion of the *Torah* (5 books of Moses) is read in Hebrew and English.

The last paragraphs of the portion are often read or chanted in Hebrew by boys and girls who are 13. This first reading of the *Torah* and the *Haftarah* (Prophets, Psalms and Writings) marks the beginning of their Jewish adulthood (*Bar/Bat Mitzvah*). They will also deliver an interpretation of that reading. The rabbi may add further interpretation. The service will end with more songs and prayers including those for healing and for mourners.

The workshop service is ended with the *Kiddush* prayer where wine serves to sanctify the Sabbath day. A light buffet lunch is offered for all who have been at Shabbat services. This gives us an informal time to talk with guests and new members and answer any questions.



## WHAT CAN I EXPECT AT A FRIDAY NIGHT AND SATURDAY MORNING SERVICE?

### Friday evening 6:30-7:30:

*Kabbalat Shabbat* (Welcoming the Sabbath) Friday evening services welcome in the Sabbath with songs and psalms before the Sabbath liturgy begins. In our synagogue we light two candles and sing a blessing over a cup of wine to mark the beginning of *Shabbat*. This is traditionally part of a dinner table service done at home. We add it to our worship service for travelers and those who have not been at home to recite the blessings.

The rabbi gives a sermon or an interpretation (*drash*) on the *Torah* reading for the week. There may be a baby naming and/or a blessing for a couple before their marriage or commitment ceremony. Near the end of the service, there is a special prayer for healing of those who are ill and a prayer for those in mourning (*kaddish*) and those who have an anniversary (*yahrtzeit*) of a loss. The service ends with a song.

An *oneg* Shabbat (literally Shabbat delight) of challah, cakes and coffee follows the service and gives everyone a chance to meet new friends and greet those we know.



## WHEN MAY I ENTER OR EXIT THE SANCTUARY?

As a mark of respect, we do not enter or exit when the *Torah* is being read or when someone is giving a sermon or speech. We stand whenever the *Torah* scroll is lifted or carried to avoid entering or exiting when people are standing.

## WHERE DO I GET A PRAYER BOOK?

The prayer books are given out by volunteers at the door before services. You may also pick up a *Chumash* (Five books of Moses) to follow along with the *Torah* reading. Since the Hebrew language reads from right to left, Hebrew books begin where an English book would end.

## DO I NEED TO WEAR A HEAD COVERING OR A PRAYER SHAWL?

Traditionally, men covered their heads with a small hat called a *kippah* as a symbol of their reverence both in and out of worship. In our congregation both men and women often choose to do this as a mark of respect during services.

Likewise, both men and women make their own decision about wearing a prayer shawl on Sabbath and holiday mornings. The prayer shawl or *tallit* is only worn during morning services and for *Kol Nidre* (early evening of *Yom Kippur*).

If you wish to wear a *kippah* or *tallit*, you will find them on the shelf at the rear of the sanctuary. You do not have to be Jewish to wear a *kippah* or a *tallit*. You may put on the *kippah* and *tallit* at any time during the service.

### **WHAT IS THE RAISED AREA IN THE SANCTUARY CALLED?**

This is the *bimah* or pulpit where the leaders of the services will stand. Behind the *bimah* is the *Aron hakodesh* or Holy Ark which contains the *Torah* scrolls (5 books of Moses). In front of the ark is the *ner tamid* or eternal light which burns constantly as a reminder of God's presence.

### **I DON'T KNOW HEBREW. HOW WILL I BE ABLE TO FOLLOW THE SERVICE?**

The service consists of both English and Hebrew readings. The Hebrew is transliterated into English letters to help those who do not read Hebrew to follow along. The rabbi will indicate which prayers to read aloud as a congregation and which to read silently and when to stand up and sit down. Page numbers will be announced so that you can easily follow.

### **WILL I BE EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SERVICE?**

You may read and sing along with the prayers when you are comfortable with them.

You will notice that congregants are called up to the *bimah* (pulpit) to light the candles and say blessings over the wine on Friday night and to open and close the ark or recite blessings on Saturday morning. All these honors are prearranged. Don't worry that you will suddenly be invited to do something.

During Saturday services before and after the reading of the *Torah*, the *Torah* is carried around the sanctuary in a procession with the rabbis and the *Bar Mitzvah* family. You will see congregants touch their prayer shawls or their prayer books to the *Torah* and then kiss the prayer shawl or book. It is a custom symbolizing love and respect for the *Torah*. No one is obligated to participate.

### **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICES AND SATURDAY MORNING SERVICES?**

The Sabbath begins at sundown and ends when there are three stars visible on Saturday evening. All Jewish "days" begin in the evening as did the first days of creation described in the book of Genesis. ("And there was evening and there was morning, a first day." Gen 1:5)