

Welcome to Kol Tzedek: An Inclusive Jewish Community

Welcome to Kol Tzedek. Kol Tzedek was founded in 2004 as a new Jewish community that is truly inclusive and accessible. We pride ourselves on our diversity, commitment to social justice, and strong sense of community. We are so glad you are here. For those who may be less familiar-whether Jewish or not- we have put together this packet so you can understand more about our traditions and feel comfortable at this service.

Welcome to Kol Tzedek!

Welcome to Kol Tzedek, an inclusive Jewish community. We pride ourselves on our commitment to tradition and our openness to innovation.

The Synagogue

The Synagogue is the central gathering place of the Jewish people. Jews also gather to celebrate Jewish life in the home, but the synagogue is a place where Jews can come together to pray, learn, support each other through life's transitions, and build meaningful ties to the past and future. Kol Tzedek Synagogue meets in the same space as other faith groups, including Mennonite and Methodist church communities. It is very meaningful to build relationships across our faiths and share sacred space.

Kippot

As you enter the sanctuary, you will see kippot, or skullcaps. It is traditional for Jews to cover their heads as a sign of being "under God" during prayer and while eating and learning torah. At Kol Tzedek, both men and women are invited to wear kippot. If you are a guest and are not familiar with Jewish tradition, you are more than welcome to wear a kippah as a show of respect for the sacred space and ritual, but you are not obligated to do so.

Tallitot (Tellisim)

The tallit, which means "gown" or "cloak", is the traditional prayer shawl that is worn by adult Jews during morning prayer services. As such, the bar or bat mitzvah marks the first time that a young person wears a tallit. Each tallit has four corners, with four fringes that are called *tzitzit*. The tzitzit, which are commanded to be worn in the torah, are said to represent the four corners of the universe. The tzitzit are tied with intricate knots and windings. All of the knots plus the four fringes add up to 613, which is the number of mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah.

Ark

The Torah, which is the most sacred Jewish object, is stored inside an ark ("aron" in Hebrew). In the Torah, the Israelites are commanded to create a portable ark that will carry the tablets of the covenant throughout our journey. Kol Tzedek's ark was created by Kol Tzedek members and features art by Philip Zuchman and Zoe Cohen, members of the community.

The Torah

The Torah, the holiest object for Jewish people, is a record of the stories, traditions, dreams and visions of the Jewish people. The Torah contains the five books of Moses - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. The Torah is divided into 54 parshiot, sections. Each week, the same parsha is read aloud and discussed in synagogues across the country. Public reading of the Torah dates from the times of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, approximately 444 BCE.

Torah scrolls are written by hand with a quill pen on parchment. They are written in a distinct script, without vowels, punctuation, or cantillation notations. Those reading the torah know special "trope" (musical notation) and prepare ahead of time to read the text.

The Shabbat Service

Shabbat, the Sabbath, is a special time-- a time for community, for God and meaning, and for prayer. Shabbat morning is especially important because it is the most people gather to hear the torah read. The Shacharit, or morning service, has many components.

The first section is called **Pezukei D'zimra** (Verses of Praise); in this section, we focus on awakening to a new day. We give thanks for our bodies and our souls and for the created world in which we live. Pezukei D'zimra helps us cultivate gratitude for being alive. In this section, we sing melodies that help us awaken our spirits and our hearts.

The next section, **Shema and her blessings**, is when we give praise, especially focusing on praising God for Creation, the giving of torah and wisdom, and the possibility of redemption. The Shema prayer itself, taken from Deuteronomy, which says, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One" is considered a central tenet of Judaism.

After, we reach **The Amidah**, a prayer which we typically begin together and then continue in silent devotion. Our ancestors imagined the Amidah as a conversation with the Divine.

The Torah service, with its drama, pageantry, and teaching is the heart of the Shabbat morning service. The Torah is taken from the ark and carried through the sanctuary before being the reading. While the Torah is being carried around the sanctuary, congregants may touch the scrolls with a prayer books or tallit and kiss them as a sign

of respect and awe. Individuals and groups are honored during the torah service with “aliyot,” which means “going up,” in which they draw near to the torah and offer blessings.

After torah reading, returning the torah to the ark, and the d’var torah (interpretation of the torah), we move to the **Concluding Prayers**. The most important of these is the Mourner’s Kaddish, which is said in memory of those who have died in this season in years past. The Mourner’s Kaddish is really an affirmation of life and an affirmation that those who are gone continue living through us. The Mourner’s Kaddish is traditionally only said in a minyan (quorum) of 10 or more Jews.

During Shabbat morning services, we have the opportunity to celebrate milestones and life cycle moments of individuals and families in the context of community. Some of the things we celebrate together:

Baby Namings & Welcoming

When Jewish children are born, it is traditional to have a ritual formally welcoming them into the Jewish people and into the community. As part of this ritual, babies are given their Hebrew names, the name that they will be called to the torah with and used for life cycle moments. These names are typically chosen as a remembrance to loved ones who have passed away and to honor those memories, the family will speak about the chosen names and the legacy of the relatives they are remembering. Some new babies may have already had a private *brit* (covenant) or ritual and choose to have an aliyah to as a way of welcoming the child into his or her community.

Bar or Bat Mitzvah: Coming to Jewish adulthood

A “Bar” or “Bat Mitzvah” translates to “child of the commandments of Jewish life.” “Bar” literally means “son” and “bat” is “daughter.” A young person celebrating this passage is now considered a responsible Jewish adult, with expectations for fuller participation in Jewish life and to abide by Jewish ethics and values. The bar or bat mitzvah can now be formally part of the Jewish community, as he/she can be called to the torah for blessings and be counted in a minyan (a quorum of 10 Jews that is needed for a formal prayer service to be conducted). A person becomes a bar or bat mitzvah when they turn thirteen years of age; the ritual is a marker and celebration of that transition.

At Kol Tzedek, b’nai mitzvah students learn traditional prayers, trope (the musical notation for torah reading), and prepare a d’var torah, reflections on the torah portion of the week. The b’nai mitzvah students have been engaged also in service-learning and personal reflection on Jewish identity leading up to the service. We are so proud of our students who work so hard in preparation for their day and hope that this is just a beginning of their feeling proud and excited about being Jewish and part of a Jewish community.

Celebration of Commitment

Couples who are celebrating love and commitment are often called for an aliyah and are given a special blessing to celebrate their love and commitment. An “auf-ruf” is a blessing that is traditionally said right before a wedding. There is also a tradition of blessing a couple soon after their ceremony in the tradition of “kabbalat panim,” greeting the faces of a couple after a wedding. This is an opportunity for the couple to celebrate with the entire community and for the community to wish blessings of success and support to them in turn.

Healing and Recovery from Illness

While the torah is out, we pray for healing for family, friends, colleagues and neighbors who are ill. We invite people to call out names of those they are thinking of for healing. We often chant the words: “Ana El Na R’fa Na La,” taken from the torah, when Moses asked God to heal his sister Miriam. We use these words of calling out to ask for a complete healing, a healing of body and a healing of spirit.

Sometimes, a person who has escaped an illness or danger will recite the “Gomel” prayer. The person who offers the the Gomel prayer says thanks to the Source of Life from being delivered from the danger. The community responds in affirmation, affirming the goodness and blessing that the person has been saved.

Other Markers of Time

In addition to these things, often a person will have an aliyah for a birthday, anniversary, new job, or other marker of a special moment in time.

Reconstructionist Liturgical Changes

Reconstructionist Judaism was born out of the Conservative Movement in the 1940s and 1950s and maintains much of the format and prayers of a traditional Saturday morning service. However, there are some key distinctions. One is we favor communal singing and collective prayer over covering the whole prayerbook. Instead of reading through all the psalms silently, we will choose a few psalms to focus our energies on and ones which might spark us spiritually or uplift us musically.

As well, there are some key changes to the liturgy itself. Reconstructionist Judaism rejects the idea of a literal chosenness, that the Jewish people were chosen among other nations to be in a unique relationships with God. We believe that all people of faith are in a special and unique relationship with their understanding of the Divine. Because of this belief, a few key prayers are changed to reflect this new self-understanding. For example, the torah blessings thank God who has “called us into Divine service” instead of thanking God for “choosing us among the nations.”

Another innovation is group aliyot. Typically per service we will have a few opportunities for people to come to the torah based on a theme. We invite you to come join us if the spirit moves and whatever words of the blessing you are familiar with or wish to say are very welcome.

Donations & Prayerbook Dedications

Kol Tzedek is a special place, a congregation that is both serious and joyous, that cares about individuals and the world. We invite members and friends to make donations to Kol Tzedek in honor of any of s'machot (joyous occasions) we mark. You can do so and the person/family you are honoring will be acknowledged. In addition, you can donate a prayerbook or dedicate a prayerbook in loving honor of a life cycle moment or in memorial. All information is on Kol Tzedek website, www.kol-tzedek.org.

Shabbat Shalom!

If you have any questions, please ask a greeter or the Rabbi after service.

Kol Tzedek's Shabbat Policies

Shabbat is a day unlike others and we strive to make our service feel like a sacred and special moment in time. In order to preserve the sanctity of the service, we ask that you:

- Refrain from taking pictures during the service. You are welcome to take pictures downstairs after services end.
- Silence or put your cell phone on vibrate.
- Refrain from using electrical devices (i.e. i-pads) in the sanctuary. If you feel this is needed to keep children quiet, you are more than welcome to use these devices downstairs.

Children in Services

Children are welcome at Kol Tzedek's services. We also recognize that our services can be long. It is perfectly fine for children and parents to come in and out of services as needed. We also are comfortable with some quiet noise, however we do ask that there be quiet during the Amidah and d'var torah. We love having babies in our service and want nursing moms to know that Kol Tzedek is a safe space for feeding children.

We typically have programming for children downstairs concurrent with our Shabbat service. We have a pre-school program, where a parent is welcome to stay with their child, and a drop-off program for school-aged children. Please sign your child in and out if you participate in these programs.