

# Interfaith Families Warmly Welcomed



*My house shall be called a house of  
prayer for all peoples . . .*  
— Isaiah 56:7

Congregation Anshei Israel is an egalitarian Conservative synagogue that reaches out to all who wish to affiliate, and to all who seek the spiritual comfort found within our sacred community. We warmly welcome interfaith families and support your decision to be involved in the Jewish religion and/or raise your children in the Jewish faith. At all times, we respect and appreciate non-Jewish partners, and encourage them to participate in as much synagogue life as they choose within the framework of Conservative Judaism.

Congregation Anshei Israel has enjoyed a long and successful history with interfaith families, and through this brochure, we wish to confirm our commitment to such families as yours as you strive to participate in Jewish traditions and synagogue life.

## **Come Worship with Us**

Congregation Anshei Israel welcomes both Jewish and non-Jewish family members to worship with us at all services. Weekday, Shabbat, and holi-day services are open to

members of all faiths, regardless of background or faith tradition.

While much of our service is in Hebrew, all of our prayer books provide English translation; in fact many prayers that we sing together are transliterated as well. Saturday morning Shabbat services include a Torah dialogue or sermon in English, and all directions, discussions, and announcements are conducted in English. Of course, all worshippers are encouraged to offer silent prayers and thoughts of their own during any part of the service. Many of our congregants who were raised without a strong familiarity with our traditional services tell us that, with regular attendance, they quickly become comfortable with the services. Here at Congregation Anshei Israel, we often offer a wide range of services, from more traditional to less traditional, to appeal to the various needs of all our congregants.

## **Brit Milah and Naming Ceremonies**

Congregation Anshei Israel embraces the commitment of non-Jewish parents to raise their children in the Jewish faith beginning at any time.

According to the Conservative Movement, all children born of a Jewish mother are automatically Jewish. Children of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother who wish to raise their children exclusively in the Jewish faith can arrange with the Rabbi for a conversion of the children.

Brit Milah (ritual circumcision) is the ceremony through which a Jewish baby boy is welcomed into the Jewish community and receives his Hebrew name. Rabbi Robert Eisen is most happy to assist in the planning of, and participate in the celebration of, this most meaningful ceremony, inclusive of both parents.

Upon the birth of a Jewish daughter, a number of options are available for a naming ceremony in the synagogue or in the home, inclusive of both parents, which Rabbi Eisen would be delighted to discuss with you.

Again, we respect and appreciate the commitment of the non-Jewish partners to raise their children as Jews, and are honored to work with each family individually.

## **Bar and Bat Mitzvah**

The celebration of a Jewish child becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah is an important rite of passage, as the child becomes an adult in the eyes of the synagogue. Although the Conservative Movement dictates that only Jews may approach the Torah, we at Congregation Anshei Israel welcome the participation of the child's entire family in this meaningful service whenever possible. For example, on the day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service, non-Jewish parents or relatives may take part in the presentation of the tallit (prayer shawl) to the child. During the service, both parents may ascend the bimah (dais) to share a blessing with their child.

## **Weddings**

The union of a loving couple is always an event to celebrate. Though Rabbis of the Conservative movement are permitted to officiate only at the marriage of two members of the Jewish faith, Rabbi Eisen welcomes the opportunity to meet with all couples contemplating marriage to discuss their upcoming ceremony and life as a married couple, as well as opportunities for involvement in the synagogue.

Whatever type of ceremony, whether secular or religious, which an interfaith couple may eventually choose, Rabbi Eisen is always available to talk with them about any personal or family concerns.

## **Funerals**

In the event that a non-Jewish spouse affiliated with our congregation loses a loved one, Rabbi Eisen will be available for comfort and support, and, if desired, to assist in the burial. Judaism offers much in the way of mourning practices. Many Jewish traditions are universal in their ability to provide comfort at a time of loss. The Rabbi is available to discuss rituals and observances that may be helpful at the time of mourning. It is important to note that Congregation Anshei Israel has dedicated a special section of its cemetery at Evergreen Cemetery to accommodate intermarried couples. Please contact the office for more information.

## **Jewish Education**

Whether you are Jewish or non-Jewish, Congregation Anshei Israel welcomes you to take advantage of the many educational opportunities offered by the synagogue. A child need not be Jewish to attend the Esther B. Feldman Preschool/Kindergarten. Children of interfaith couples may attend our Religious School, provided that the child is Jewish or that there is intent to have the child converted to Judaism. We believe that learning is a life-long privilege; therefore, everyone is welcome to attend our many adult education programs and classes, including weekly Torah discussions, current events, adult B'Nai Mitzvah classes, beginning Hebrew, choreography of the worship services, and shofar-blowing classes. Come learn with us!



*If you would like further information about any of the topics which appear here, Rabbi Robert Eisen welcomes the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your individual questions. Call the synagogue office at 745-5550 or email [rabbi@caiaz.org](mailto:rabbi@caiaz.org) for an appointment with the Rabbi.*



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*Affiliated with The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism*