

# “WORSHIP GOD WITH JOY”

The words of the Psalmist, found on the art gates in the synagogue sanctuary, reflect a congregational approach to worship. On the Sabbath, festivals and most holy days we come before God with a sense of appreciation and joy. Of course there are those times when sober reflection, mourning or soul searching is the appropriate ritual expression. Utilizing traditional Jewish prayer forms, along with contemporary styles, services at Gates of Prayer speak to Jews of the 21st Century.

Our primary prayer space is the sanctuary. The comfortable seating, serene colors, inspiring windows depicting the course of Jewish history and our Jerusalem stone ark are all designed to enhance the prayer experience.

Shabbat is the time when our people come together. Friday evening and Saturday morning worship present the core message of appreciation for the week past and renewal of our covenant with God as a people and community. Beyond that we encourage involvement by all congregants. Some Sabbaths include the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies of our teens, welcoming new life or new Jews, sharing wishes for brides and grooms to be, offering prayers for those who are ill and condolences for those who have died.

Special services are planned throughout the year for various segments of our community. Monthly Tot Shabbat services are for pre-school children and their families. Short in duration and age appropriate, children experience the joy of Shabbat. Other services will focus upon different grade levels and family Torah study, our auxiliaries, or interest groups within the congregation or community.

At Gates of Prayer we continually strive to make prayer meaningful for our congregants. We know that music is special, both when it is sung in an inspiring fashion by our soloist, Victoria May, as well as when the congregation sings together. Meditation is included as an aspect of worship. Rabbi Loewy's messages are both timely and timeless, as he applies the values of Jewish teachings to contemporary life and issues.

High Holy Days are of course a solemn time as we gain a sense of perspective on life. In addition to the regular morning and evening services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we offer an alternative morning youth service for pre-teens, a family service for younger children, and on Yom Kippur both a Contemporary Reflections Service and a Healing Service. For those children too young to attend services, we offer child care.

The full Jewish calendar offers opportunities to celebrate Jewish life. On Sukkot we enjoy a gala evening experience, followed by outdoor worship in the morning. At Simchat Torah, Consecration adds joy to the evening, along with marching and delight. Second night seder for Pesach is a highlight for many and Shavout includes Confirmation, plus blintzes.

Our clergy are available for all appropriate life cycle events. At Gates of Prayer we worship God with joy.