

## **Religious Practices Committee Annual Report – May 2019**

### **Committee Members:**

Bob Bender, Jackie Berman, Sandra Kassin Deardorff, Rhoda Feldman, Stuart Mandell, Kevin Miller, Susan Shwom, Carole Taut

**Advisors:** Rav Mona Strick, Cantor Vera Broekhuysen

### **Summary:**

During the year, the following topics were discussed, and recommendations made:

- Shabbat services with Mishkan Tefilla and Sim Shalom
  - There was consensus to continue a “reform-style” service using Mishkan Tefilla on the first Saturday of each month and a “Conservative-style” service for the other Saturdays using Sim Shalom.
- Expand Friday evening services
  - Many more Friday evening services have been held including special ones featuring dinners before services as well as Musical Shabbatot. Attendance has been sporadic.
- Conducting Marriage Ceremonies of mixed faith couples in the Temple
  - The Committee was informed that the Executive Committee now permits those ceremonies to be conducted in the Temple at the discretion of the religious head.
- Kashrut at the Temple and Temple functions
  - The current policy is maintained that non-kosher food (pork products, shellfish) not be brought into the Temple or used at Temple functions.
  - The Committee discussed whether the Temple should adopt a “kosher-light” policy instead and voted to continue the current practice at the Temple and for Temple special events.
- Kippot Policy
  - The Committee recommended a “gender neutral” policy for children attending Temple events; i.e. that both boys and girls be asked to wear head coverings.
  - The Committee recommended that attendees at Temple events be requested to don a kippah when attending a service.
- Torah Evaluation/Restorations
  - The major project for the year has been to evaluate the conditions/kashrut of the Temples Torahs.
  - This was completed through several meetings where the Torahs were examined (and weighed) by the Committee and priorities set for evaluation.
  - Specialists were consulted (sopherim) and brought in for evaluation and repair such that the Temple current has three Torahs that have been put in good kosher condition. Several of our Torahs are deemed not kosher and opportunities for repair (if deemed desirable) established for the others. A detailed report was issued.
  - It should be noted that repair has been and could continue to be expensive. While some funding was obtained, further work would require additional funds. Quantities for that has been included in reports.
  - It should also be noted that most of the Torahs are either heavy or large and difficult to lift with few individuals available during routine services to carry out that responsibility. Choices for improvement are under evaluation.

- Participation of non-Jewish members in religious services
  - This was the topic of several extensive discussions, especially in relation to participation during a B'nai Mitzvah.
  - While recognizing the importance to our community of non-Jewish spouses of members, it was maintained that the current policy should continue, with essential areas such as:
    - Only the Jewish spouse is to be called for an Aliyah
    - Only the Jewish spouse participates in the transfer of Torah from “generation to generation.”
    - The non-Jewish spouse is invited to participate in giving a speech on the Bimah on their child’s progression to B’nai Mitzvah and Jewish learning.
    - Non-Jews are invited to participate during services in reading portions in English that are unrelated to Torah observance.
    - The Committee recognizes that more needs to be done to involve non-Jewish spouses who are interested to participate in the community life of the Temple and to know that they are appreciated.

**Respectfully submitted: Fred Feldman, Chair**