



*Welcoming Your
Interfaith Family*

Our Mission Statement.

Our commitment to inclusion is a central focus within our Mission Statement.

Congregation M'kor Shalom (Source of Peace) is a "Family of Families," embracing the varied needs and rich diversity of our congregants, our community and the Jewish people. We strive to be a warm and loving home, built on the traditional foundation of the synagogue as a **Beit Tefillah** (House of Prayer), a **Beit Midrash** (House of Study) and a **Beit Knesset** (House of Gathering). We seek to create an inviting and inclusive atmosphere that promotes spiritual fulfillment for our congregants and supports their search for God. Our emphasis on communal life is reflected in the strong partnership among our clergy, lay leaders and congregants, active volunteerism and informed democratic decision-making, guided by our Jewish values. We uphold the principles and ideals of the Reform movement and are a member of the Union for Reform Judaism.

Congregation M'kor Shalom, a family of families, strives to foster strong Jewish identity in all of our members. Interfaith families are a significant part of our congregation and we hope that everyone wishing to be part of our community can feel comfortable at M'kor Shalom. We invite you to take advantage of the many opportunities for participation and we welcome you to engage our clergy in an ongoing dialogue about your family's intersection with Jewish life.



Your Synagogue Home

Your congregation honors and recognizes every marriage, whether between two Jews or between a Jew and a non-Jew, whether between a man and a woman or between two people of the same gender. We consider every person within a member household a member of M'kor Shalom regardless of religious background and encourage all of our members to participate actively in Jewish life, through our committees, study opportunities and social events. Many non-Jewish members of M'kor Shalom are involved in a wide array of congregational activities.

The child of a Jewish parent and a non-Jewish parent, by birth or adoption, who is raised exclusively as a Jew, is considered Jewish here at M'kor Shalom and in Reform Judaism more broadly. Please ask the Rabbis if you have any questions about how your child's Jewish status is perceived among Conservative or Orthodox Jews, or in Israel.

Non-Jewish parents and grandparents may enjoy significant roles in raising a Jewish child, beginning with the Baby Naming or Brit Milah and moving on through the years with Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Weddings, and other family milestones.

Your Sanctuary and Ritual Observance

Our worship services are always open to the public, except on High Holy Days (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). During High Holy Days, all of our Jewish and non-Jewish synagogue members will receive tickets and we encourage your participation.

We invite you to participate in our worship services in any way that you feel comfortable, with the exception of a few ritual actions that are reserved for Jews.

We encourage your participation in:

- Lighting the Shabbat and/or Festival candles
- Joining us on the bimah for special blessings
- Observing shivah and reciting Kaddish (for Jewish and non-Jewish relatives).
- Joining in the hakafah
- Opening the ark.

The following actions are reserved for people of the Jewish faith:

- Reciting blessings over the Torah, wine and Shabbat candles.
- Holding and touching the Torah

Your Life Cycle Events

Weddings . . .

Congregation M'kor Shalom strives to welcome interfaith couples to the Jewish community. Interfaith couples seeking to be married through Congregation M'kor Shalom in a Jewish ceremony must meet the following criteria to be eligible for Clergy officiation:

- The Jewish spouse must be an existing member of M'kor Shalom or the child of a synagogue member.
- The couple commits to establish a Jewish home and raise the children exclusively as Jews, providing them with a Jewish education and identity, including life-cycle experiences such as Brit

Milah/Brit Bat and Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

- The couple completes an Introduction to Judaism class or an alternate program designed with a M'kor Shalom Rabbi.
- M'kor Shalom clergy may not perform the wedding of an inter-faith couple in the synagogue's sanctuary.
- No clergy of other faiths may participate in the ceremony.

Brit Milah and Brit Bat ...

A Brit Milah or Brit Bat ceremony marks a newborn's entrance into the Jewish community. Parents raising their children exclusively as Jews may request a Brit Milah or Brit Bat ceremony through Congregation M'kor Shalom. Both parents are invited onto the bimah for the ceremony.

B'nai Mitzvah...

Jewish children coming of age at age 13 read from Torah for the first time, offer a commentary and lead parts of the service as a Bar Mitzvah (for a boy) or a Bat Mitzvah (for a girl).

We want your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah to be a joyous occasion for the entire family. Non-Jewish parents and grandparents can play significant roles during the service.

While there are some differences between the roles of the Jewish and non-Jewish parent, your Rabbis and Cantors strive to make those distinctions invisible to the congregation and to include non-Jewish parents, grandparents and other relatives to the full extent that you and they are comfortable.

The immediate family is invited to participate in the Friday evening candle lighting. Both parents are invited to participate on the bimah with their child during B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies on Shabbat morning. We invite non-Jewish family members to bear witness as the scroll is passed by Jewish family members from generation to generation and when the Aliyah blessings are recited over the Torah. Non-Jewish family members may be assigned English readings or other significant roles.

Funerals and Mourning Practices...

Our congregation and clergy are here for you in your hour of loss. Whether your loved one is a synagogue member or a non-Jewish relative, we will seek to provide comfort at your time of need. We call the names of non-Jewish relatives of members at all occasions when we read the names of deceased loved ones at our worship services.

Rabbis and Cantors of Congregation M'kor Shalom may officiate at the funeral of any synagogue member as long as the rites of another faith are not observed. Our Rabbis can also assist with burial decisions.

Your Education Program

If you are a parent of a Religious School student, you should find that Jewish and non-Jewish parents are treated exactly the same. Parents are invited to participate in all aspects of their child's learning experience. This includes participating in family programs, meeting with the teachers, attending field trips and helping to complete at-home assignments.

Our faculty is sensitized to the fact that many of our Religious School students have a non-Jewish parent. If we need to be more sensitive on any occasion, please contact the Education Director.

Finally, all of our congregation's adult education opportunities are open to you. For a more comprehensive experience, look for our regular Introduction to Judaism courses.

Your Leadership

According to our bylaws, Officers, Directors and Committee Chairs shall be of the Jewish faith. Additionally, voting is reserved for members of the Jewish faith.

Considering Conversion?

Non-Jews who have completed an "Introduction to Judaism" class or the equivalent are eligible for conversion through M'kor Shalom. Members seeking conversion also meet regularly with a rabbi. Following the conversion, the Jew-by-Choice (or Convert) is considered Jewish in all regards. Children under the age of 13 may be considered to be converted on the condition that both custodial parents are in agreement and the child reaffirms their conversation at age 13.

Resources

Congregation M'kor Shalom offers an Outreach program to welcome interfaith families, address interfaith issues and provide educational opportunities. Additional resources include:

Commission on Outreach and Synagogue Community

Union for Reform Judaism

(212) 650-4230 or www.urj.org/outreach

Interfaithfamily.com

(617) 581-6860 or www.interfaithfamily.com

Jewish Outreach Institute

(212) 760-1440 or www.joi.org

Brochures

Intermarried? Reform Judaism Welcomes You (URJ Press)

Books (*Visit our library for a full selection on books related to interfaith issues.*)

- Kertzer / Hoffman, *What Is a Jew?*
- *If I'm Jewish and You're Christian, What Are the Kids?* (URJ Press)
- Stephanie Hubert Schneider, *Raising a Spiritual Child: A Jewish Perspective*

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