

A Brief History of Judea Reform

In 1961, a handful of local Jewish families dreamt of a Reform congregation for the Durham and Chapel Hill, NC area. They combed the telephone directories, university faculty lists and community rosters to spread the news. They held services in their basements. When the group outgrew their homes, they borrowed the Quaker Friends Meeting House. When they outgrew the Friends Meeting House, they used the Temple Baptist Church.

To accommodate the many Chapel Hill congregants, the High Holiday services for the New Year, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, were held in the Community Church of Chapel Hill. By the end of the decade, this experiment in Reform Judaism had become a going concern. Every time our founders took a step forward, they found solid ground. The congregation grew. With nearly 100 families, Judea Reform Congregation dedicated its own synagogue on Durham's Cornwallis Road in 1971.

Judea Reform Congregation now exceeds 600 families. We have been in our current building since 2004; our education wing was added in 2005; and Rabbi Larry Bach has been with us since 2015. In each of our congregational homes, our goal has been the same: to be a sacred community where relationships with God and with each other define everything we do; where ritual and learning are engaging; where Torah guides our thoughts and acts; where social justice is a moral imperative; and where membership is about welcoming and engaging everyone.

Judea Reform is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism.



A Visitor's Guide to Services

Judea Reform Congregation

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Welcome to Judea Reform Congregation!

Our sanctuary is a place of peace, joy, and reflection. We are pleased that you are here to share this worship experience with us. Welcome.

Judea Reform Congregation is affiliated with the Reform Judaism movement, and we use the *Siddur* (prayer book) Mishkan T'filah for most of our services. The name suggests that the prayer book is a dwelling place for prayer, a portable sanctuary. The Rabbi or leader of the service will announce page numbers and when to stand as a sign of respect for various prayers and readings. If it is difficult for you to stand, you may stay seated.

When we read responsively or sing, we invite you to read or sing aloud with us. Many parts of our services are in Hebrew, but you can find transliterations of the Hebrew and various English translations on the same page or across the page. The choices reflect many themes of Reform Judaism: social justice, spirituality, feminism, Zionism, respect for nature, diversity, distinct Jewish obligations, human challenges.

We say prayers for those who are ill during most services and for those who are observing *yahrzeit* (anniversary of a passing). If you would like to share the name of a loved one, please say it out loud when the Rabbi indicates your seating area, or say it in your heart.

We would like to get to know you!

We hope that you will stay after the service to join in the *Oneg Shabbat*, or refreshments we share to celebrate Shabbat and to welcome you. Please take a blue cup so we know you are new. Often visitors have questions, and we hope you will ask us.

What is Reform Judaism?

Throughout history, Jews have remained firmly rooted in Jewish tradition, even as we learned much from our encounters with other cultures. Nevertheless, since its earliest days, Reform Judaism has asserted that a Judaism frozen in time cannot coexist effectively with those who live in modern times. The great contribution of Reform Judaism is that it has enabled the Jewish people to introduce innovation while preserving tradition, to embrace diversity while asserting commonality, to affirm beliefs without rejecting those who doubt, and to bring faith to sacred texts without sacrificing critical scholarship.

Reform Jews accept the Torah as the foundation of Jewish life containing God's ongoing revelation to our people and the record of our people's ongoing relationship with God. We see the Torah as God-inspired, a living document that enables us to confront the timeless and timely challenges of our everyday lives.

Order of the Service, continued



In Shabbat services, we usually have a Torah service. It is an honor for congregants to be asked to participate in this part of the service. In it, the Torah is taken from the Ark. **When the Torah is removed from the Ark, carried or held, the congregation stands.**

Participants parade the Torah around the congregation so that all may feel a connection to the scroll, and some congregants do this by touching the Torah with their prayer books. A reader recites a blessing before and after the Torah reading. The passage is read in Hebrew and translated into English. The Torah is lifted (*Hagbahah*) so that all may see the text. The prayer for healing follows.

At some Shabbat morning services, a *Haftarah* portion may be read. This is a section from the Bible in Prophets or Writings that coordinates to the Torah portion read in the service.

The *Dvar Torah*, or sermon, has topics chosen to enhance the teachings of the Torah reading, or in relation to the season, world or community events, and Jewish values.

Toward the end of the service we recite the *Mourner's Kaddish* as a community to remember our loved ones who are deceased.

Individuals observe *Kaddish* annually on the anniversary of a death. Our service finishes with song and blessings.

Symbols in the Synagogue

Bimah: The *bimah* is the pulpit area. The service is conducted from the *bimah*. During some parts of the service, the Rabbi, the Cantor, and other participants in the service may sit on the *bimah*, or they may sit in the congregation.

Ark: The *Aron haKodesh*, or Holy Ark, houses the Torahs. As is customary, the Ark is in the eastern part of the sanctuary so that prayers are directed toward Jerusalem.

Ner Tamid: The Eternal Light, or *Ner Tamid*, hangs before the Ark as a symbol of God's presence and blessings everywhere. It stays lit at all times.



Kippah: A *kippah*, the head covering also known as a yarmulke, may be worn by men and women inside or outside of the synagogue, as a sign of respect for God.

In Reform Judaism, wearing a *kippah* is a matter of personal choice.

Tallit: The *tallit* (prayer shawl) is first alluded to in the Torah (Numbers 15:37-41), where we are taught to wear fringes on our garments as a reminder of our connection to God. A blessing is recited when putting on the *tallit*, thanking God for the commandment to "wrap ourselves in the fringed garment."

Symbols in the Synagogue, continued

Historically, communities have placed various restrictions on the wearing of *tallit*. At Judea, our tradition is for the service leaders to wear a *tallit* for all services, while those attending the service (of any gender) can opt to wear a *tallit*, most often at morning services. The Talmud, the historical commentary on the Torah by Rabbinic scholars, describes the benefits of seeing the fringes this way: “Seeing leads to remembering; remembering leads to doing” (Menachot 43b).

Torah: A Torah is a handwritten parchment scroll of the first five books of the Bible, transcribed exactly with a quill pen by a special scribe called a *sofer*. The scroll is wound around wooden spools, fastened by a Torah binder, and kept in a decorated mantle (cover). A silver breastplate may hang on the front of the mantle; it serves as a reminder of the dress of high priests in the days of the Temple in Jerusalem. A silver *yad*, or pointer, hangs from a spool. The Torah reader uses the *yad* so that hands or fingers do not touch the parchment.

Judea Reform has four different Torah scrolls for ritual use, and one on display in the Rosenzweig Gallery outside of the sanctuary. The English translation of the Torah can be found in the red book, Etz Chaim, that is in the book racks on the backs of the pews. You may use the Etz Chaim to follow the Torah reading during the service.

The Order of the Service

The order and prayers included in our services vary according to evening, morning, weekday, Shabbat (Sabbath), or holiday services. Several versions of these services are in the prayer book, so you will be given page numbers. As the services proceed, the traditional translations are on the right hand pages, and other creative interpretations of the Hebrew text are on the left hand pages.

All the services begin with praise and gratitude to God through blessings and songs. For Shabbat evening services (Friday night), lighting candles and giving thanks with wine begin our service.



The next section relates to the *Sh'ma* and its blessings. The *Sh'ma* is sometimes called the watchword of the Jewish faith; we recite it to bear witness to the Oneness of God. The unique calligraphy in the text reflects its importance. It marks the diverse voices of all who pray, reminding us of the creation of the world, the giving of Torah, and redemption of the Jewish people from slavery.

The *T'filah*, which are the prayers that follow the *Sh'ma*, praise and sanctify God, celebrate Shabbat as God's gift, and thank God for the myriad gifts God gives us every day.