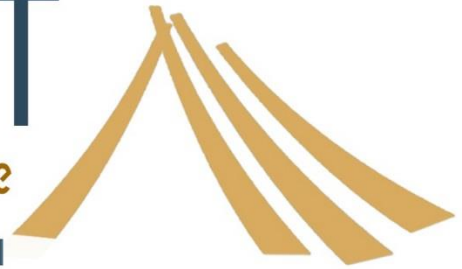


OUR TENT

Innovative Jewish Learning for Everyone

SUBURBAN TEMPLE–KOL AMI



Suburban Temple–Kol Ami’s Learners’ Handbook and FAQs

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"A tent cannot stand without pegs and cord, and Israel cannot stand without scholars."

~ Seder Eliyahu R.

Welcome to Our Tent: Innovative Jewish Learning for Everyone.

Why have we created Our Tent?

Our Tent is the culmination of more than two years of deep study of the best practices in education and the diverse needs of our 21st century learners. We have strived to produce an educational program in the most creative, thoughtful, and engaging ways possible, with each member of our Suburban Temple-Kol Ami community in mind.

Who are our learners?

Our program is for adults and children, young and the old and all those in between. It's for those who want to learn together with all age groups, and for those who want to learn with their peers. It's for those who prefer to learn through a book or lecture, and for those who want to learn through experience and expression of their creativity. It's for those who want to explore history and those who want to dream about the future.

What's Our Tent all about?

In this handbook, we will share the vision, mission, and goals of Our Tent. We will outline the logistics, including time, structure, and fees. We will also answer lots of questions about our program.

For our school-age students, we will describe our learning requirements and outcomes as well as the unique way Our Tent will create a feeling of community. We will also explain the many opportunities adults will have to meaningfully engage in our program.

Together we will learn and grow. Welcome to Our Tent!

Our Vision:

In 2005, the Temple Board of Trustees approved an Educational Vision. The 10 points of the plan provide a road map for the congregation, indicating priorities and aspirations in congregational learning. These continue to be valid and significant today.

Our Educational Vision

We affirm that our goal is to develop forms of education that will support and challenge all learners to become educated Reform Jews who:

Engage with Torah as the Jewish people's ongoing, creative and sacred search for meaning and purpose in life.

Develop a living and personal Judaism by integrating the moral and spiritual values of Judaism throughout the life cycle, during times of grief, discouragement and joy.

Develop a personal relationship with God that deepens their own spirituality through exploration of the full range of Jewish understandings of God.

Celebrate Shabbat, festivals and life cycle events as families and as members of Suburban Temple-Kol Ami.

Cherish and **Study** Hebrew, the language of the Jewish people.

Appreciate the values embedded in תפילה *t'filah* (prayer) and develop the skills to comfortably pray at Suburban Temple-Kol Ami.

Engage in תיקון עולם *tikkun olam* (repair of the world) by assuming moral responsibility for the Jewish people and the global community, and by transforming that responsibility into action.

Proudly Celebrate and positively express their Jewish identities as American Reform Jews and as committed members of Suburban Temple-Kol Ami.

Feel Personally and **Historically Connected** to the people, land and State of Israel as members of כלל ישראל *k'lal Yisrael* (the community of the Jewish people).

Respectfully Understand that all expressions of Judaism enrich Jewish peoplehood.



SUBURBAN TEMPLE-KOL AMI

Come, let us walk in the light of the Eternal

Our Mission:

Our program seeks to nurture learners on a lifelong journey anchored in Jewish tradition and values. Knowledgeable and committed teachers will facilitate learning for all ages, wherever they are on their personal journeys, towards meaningful Jewish lives and a deeper connection to our community.

Our Goals:

- To be **together** in community.
- For each learner to find **personal meaning**.
- For **Judaism** to be **relevant** to our daily life.
- To gain **proficiency** with chosen material.
- To grow a stronger **Jewish identity**.
- To **create Jewish memories** through engaging, innovative, and experiential learning.
- To foster **relationships** and connections that create lasting communities.
- That all of these experiences will create **lifelong learners**.

The Structure:

For 2020 Fall/Winter semester changes due to COVID-19, please read this [article](#) from Rabbi Shana.

When: Sunday 9:00 am-12:00 pm

Who: All of us: youngest to oldest

Schedule:

9:00-9:20 – The Café (Mandel-Gries Social Hall)

The Café is our community time. This unstructured time of the day is important—it's when we begin to meet our goals of gathering **together** and fostering **relationships**. Bagels, coffee and juice will be sold to benefit our youth group!

9:00-9:20 The Lounge (Room 206)

Our 6-12th graders have their own space for community time. Enjoying special activities with our youth advisors and Rabbi Vann, they, too, will begin to meet the goals of gathering **together** and fostering **relationships**.

9:25-10:20 – **Learning Session I**

Whether studying text, learning history, singing, cooking, engaging in social action, or more, during our **learning sessions** our learners will find **personal meaning**, make Judaism **relevant** to their daily lives, grow a stronger **Jewish identity**, create **lasting memories**, and become **lifelong learners**. With classes chosen by you, our learning sessions will build **community** and foster **relationships**. For more details see the FAQs.

10:25-11:00 – ***T'filah* (Services)**

Like the rest of our program, our *t'filah* experience will be **creative, innovative** and **experiential**. It will help not only connect us to our **STKA community**, but to the larger **Jewish community** through our **common prayers** and the **Hebrew** language.

11:05-12:00 – **Learning Session II**

This session, like Learning Session I, provides several different courses and experiences for all ages.

FAQs:

What is a “Learning Session”?

- Classes are offered in three 6-7 week trimesters.
- There will be up to *10 classes* offered per learning session (per trimester).
- Classes are offered in three demographics:
 - Kids only
 - Adults only
 - Kids and adults together
- Learners sign up each learning session for the class that they are most interested in that is offered to their age group.

How do I register?

- Registration will be available online.
- Registration for fall trimester will be distributed in the late spring and will be open through the end of August. Registration for winter trimester will take place during fall trimester. Registration for spring trimester will take place during winter trimester.
- Adults (all those who have graduated high school) have three options:
 - register for Learning Session I
 - register for Learning Session II
 - register for the entire morning
- We encourage adults to attend *T'filah* no matter which option they choose.
- Adults will register for each trimester as registration comes out.
- All students in kindergarten-12th grade must enroll for the **entire year when fall registration comes out, and attend the entire morning.*** They will choose their classes as each trimester's registration is released.

*Day school students must attend one learning session weekly and *T'filah*. They should speak with Rabbi Shana before registering.

Is there a cost to attend Our Tent?

All students in kindergarten-12th grade will be charged a learning fee which will offset the cost of our program. This fee will be set by the Board of Trustees on a yearly basis.

There is currently no charge for our adult learners. Many sponsorship opportunities will be available to offset the costs of Our Tent and learners are encouraged to participate. To find out more, please contact either Rabbi Shana Nyer or Brett Shankman.

How will adults and children learn together for a whole trimester?

Many topics lend themselves to intergenerational learning. Curricula for these classes are written with all learners in mind and teachers are specially trained to make these classes engaging for students of all ages.

What if an adult doesn't want to learn with children?

In both learning sessions, not only are there learning opportunities for adults and children together, but there are also choices available for adults to learn with other adults, and children to learn with their peers.

What if a parent wanted a "traditional Sunday School" for his or her child?

It is truly astonishing that little has changed in religious school or Sunday school programs since the early 1950's. The Lifelong Learning Committee studied best practices in both Jewish and secular education. The research shows that learners today want to be partners in their Jewish education, helping to decide what and how we learn.¹

Additionally, we discovered that we learn more when we focus on an area in greater depth, rather than trying to cover a huge topic. This leads to a greater feeling of mastery, which builds confidence and leads to a stronger sense of identity.²

Finally, we know that the Jewish journey never stops. It is a lifelong pursuit. However, with the traditional religious school model that is so common throughout our country, most young people end their Jewish education after Bar/Bat Mitzvah or at the very latest, when they're in high school. We want them to continue to be excited about their religious education after those milestones and throughout their lives.

It is with these goals in mind that we created Our Tent, a program that will engage our congregation at every level and meet the needs of every learner.

What about Hebrew?

We value Hebrew in our learning program and will continue to do so in Our Tent. We will continue to teach the cutting-edge *Hebrew through Movement* program, which began in Cleveland and is now taught throughout the country, to our youngest students. Additionally, prayer book Hebrew proficiency will be gained through *t'filah* (services). Also, as we have in the past, individual tutoring for B'nai Mitzvah will begin 14-16 months before the ceremony for our younger

¹ Woocher, J. (2013). Jewish Education: From Continuity to Meaning. In Jewish Megatrends: Charting the Course of Jewish Identity in America (pp. 202-216). Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing.

² Ibid.

students. We will continue to offer adult B'nai Mitzvah classes as well. If you are interested in a more formal class for modern Hebrew, please contact either Rabbi Shana Nyer or Rabbi Allison Vann.

There doesn't seem to be a grade level for my student. Is there still a first grade or a fifth grade?

While learners will achieve certain milestones based on their grade level in secular school, learning in Our Tent will not be by grade. Each class will have an age span for attendees, and learners can sign up for any class that interests them and is offered to their age group.

How will I know my child is learning?

There are five overarching outcomes we desire from our learning program:

- Learners will gain basic Jewish literacy.
- Learners will increase their understanding of the relevancy and meaning of Judaism in their everyday lives.
- Learners will have enough of a facility with prayer book Hebrew to participate in and eventually lead a Shabbat service.
- Learners will increasingly feel more connected to our community and to each other.
- Learners will grow in their sense of Jewish identity.

These five goals trace both academic and the less tangible experiential/emotional outcomes. Both are necessary components for lifelong Jewish engagement.

While these are our goals for all our learners, regardless of age, we know that parents are especially concerned about their children. So here is how together we will know your children are learning:

- **Learners will gain a basic Jewish literacy** – Our curriculum will be designed to meet students where they are and to help them grow and deepen their Jewish knowledge. While we do not give exams to test for learning, curricula will be designed to ensure students are able to demonstrate what they have learned, whether through class discussions or creative projects. Rabbi Shana will work closely with all teachers and learners to ensure it is a good learning environment for everyone.
- **Learners will increase their understanding of the relevancy and meaning of Judaism in their everyday lives** – We anticipate you will see your child incorporating Judaism – its values, lessons, and rituals – into their lives.

- **Learners will have enough of a facility with prayer book Hebrew to participate in and eventually lead a Shabbat service** – When your child is excited to begin studying for his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah and is able to lead the service with confidence, you will know we and they have had success in this area. It is why weekly *t'filah* (services) is such an important part of our program.
- **Learners will increasingly feel more connected to our community and to each other** – Temple will be the place they want to be. They will be excited to see their temple friends, and want to sign up for classes with them. When they are in 8th grade they will choose to be here not only as students, but as *madrachim* (classroom aides) because they want to give the younger students the amazing experience they had.
- **Learners will grow in their sense of Jewish identity** – Being Jewish will not just be one part of who they are, but it will be an important piece. It will play into decisions about how they spend their free time, where they go to college, what causes they fight for and much more.

What about *madrachim*?

Is there an opportunity for teens to be *madrachim* (classroom aides)?

YES! Learners in 8th-12th grade will have the opportunity to be learners themselves during one of the learning sessions and to be *madrachim* during the other. Regular attendance is expected for those wanting to be *madrachim*.

What about our youngest learners?

All children younger than kindergarten age whose parents are attending Our Tent will be invited to our Torah Tots program. This program will be available all morning and will include child care and age-appropriate Jewish learning.

Are there requirements for Our Tent?

For those in kindergarten - 7th grade: In addition to registering for the entire year, and attending the entire morning, learners must attend 80% of the yearly classes. A learner must be enrolled in Our Tent in order to have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

For those in 8th- 12th grade: In addition to registering for the entire year, and attending the entire morning, we ask that learners also commit to regular attendance to create a sense of community.

For adult learners: While there are no requirements, we ask that learners commit to attending the majority of classes as one of our goals is to create a sense of community, which is only possible with regular attendance.

What if my child has special learning needs?

We are very proud of our ability to work with families and to meet many diverse learning needs. If your child has special learning needs, please set up an appointment with Rabbi Shana so we can work with you to create the best learning environment possible. We ask that if your child has an IEP or 504 Plan you bring it with you to the meeting.

Is there a policy regarding the use of cell phones and electronic devices during Our Tent?

Our goal is to create a sense of community in the Our Tent classrooms and program in general. Therefore, we ask that our faculty, teachers, *madrichim*, and learners refrain from using their cell phones or electronic devices for the duration of the morning unless it is an emergency or part of a learning session.

What happens if Our Tent needs to close for the morning?

In the event of inclement weather or other conditions requiring the cancellation of classes:

- Every effort will be made to cancel classes on Saturday evening.
- Once the decision has been made you will receive a call from your teacher.
- We will also make every effort to update the temple website, social media, and voicemail.

Did you know about our other Learning Opportunities:

Friday Evenings:

- Four times this year, we will celebrate *Learning Shabbat*.
- Following services, enjoy dinner and then adult learning and parallel programming for kids and teens.

Weeknights:

Adult learning at STKA and offsite may include:

- Adult B'nai Mitzvah
- Speakers
- Lectures
- Workshops
- Three-part series