



CONGREGATION
SHOMREI TORAH
שומרי תורה

Shabbat Shalom. We welcome you, our family and friends, to Congregation Shomrei Torah and our Shabbat morning service. Our service today is a special *simcha* (celebration), however, every Jewish community throughout the world observes Shabbat in a similar fashion each week.

There are coming-of-age ceremonies in many cultures, but a *B'Mitzvah* celebrates an important ritual demonstrating Jewish learning and commitment. Today's *B'Mitzvah* student has reached the age when a young person is considered an adult in ritual life, now eligible to take on a full role in the Jewish community. Today, they will lead the Shabbat morning worship service and chant from the Torah for the first time.

Traditionally, *Bat Mitzvah* means "daughter of the commandment" and *Bar Mitzvah* means "son of the commandment." At Congregation Shomrei Torah, *B'Mitzvah* celebrates this rite of passage for boys, girls and non-binary individuals.

The prayer book we are using today opens from right to left, as Hebrew is written. In it you will find the traditional Hebrew, as well as transliterations and English translations for most of the songs we will sing. Many prayers are recited responsively, with the congregation reading the lines in italics. Please feel free to participate as you like.

As you face the front of the Sanctuary, you will see the **Aron HaKodesh**, the ark that houses the Torah scrolls. Torah means instruction, and more broadly, all Jewish learning. The Torah scroll contains the first five books of the Bible. It is written by hand on parchment with a quill pen, special ink and **kavanah** (spiritual intention). There are no vowels or punctuation marks in the scroll.

We use a silver **Yad** (hand) to point to, and honor the words of the Torah, and to protect the calligraphy. Above the **Aron HaKodesh** is the **Ner Tamid**, the eternal light symbolizing God's eternal presence.

During the service, you are welcome to wear a **kippah** (also known as a *yarmulke*), which is a head covering worn to show reverence for God. The *kippot* (plural) are in a basket at the entrance to our sanctuary. Please return them after the service. There are also **tallitot** (prayer shawls) by the sanctuary entrance, which Jews are welcome to wear. The *tallit* is the fulfillment of the biblical instruction for the children of Israel, in each generation, to make fringes on the corners of their garments, to remember all the **mitzvot** (commandments) when looking at the fringes.

Our congregation was named **Shomrei Torah** (Guardians of the Torah) when we received the permanent loan of a 150 year old Torah scroll rescued from the Nazis, who had taken it from Strachonitz, Czechoslovakia, a community Nazis destroyed.

The Torah is read in the context of the Shabbat morning's worship service. In Jewish communities worldwide, the same Torah portion (3-4 chapters) is the subject of weekly study and is read aloud during Shabbat worship. The entire Torah is thus read in a yearly cycle.

This morning's service leader will chant a selection from this week's Torah portion in four **Aliyot** (plural of *Aliyah*, which means "going up"). Each *Aliyah* honors the Torah, as well as those who are called up to recite the blessings, and the reader. This morning's service leader may also read or chant from the weekly *Haftarah* portion, which is a selection from the Prophets often with a tie-in to the weekly Torah portion.

After the service, please join us for **Motzi** and **Kiddush**. The *Kiddush* is the blessing over wine, sanctifying the Sabbath. The *Motzi* is the blessing over bread, recited over a special loaf called **Challah**. These blessings begin the sharing of food and the continuing celebration, which follows the service.