



Congregation
ETZ CHAIM

creating meaningful Jewish experiences



Welcome to Congregation Etz Chaim!

Thank you for your interest in Congregation Etz Chaim. At Etz Chaim, *creating meaningful Jewish experiences* is where it all starts. Every generation and every individual discover the gift of what it means to be Jewish. Each person and every family make their own path by engaging in the many programs — educational, religious, and social — to create their own Jewish identity. There is something for everyone. Whether you are a young adult, just married, a young family, recently moved here or looking for a new spiritual home, our genuine, warm and inclusive community has a place for you.

This guide has been assembled for those searching for a synagogue to call home. It introduces you to our vibrant congregation and answers some of the questions you may have about our programs and our active role in the community. Founded in 1975, we invite you in to our community, located in East Cobb, Marietta.

Get to Know Us We invite you to visit Etz Chaim to participate in one of our special events for prospective members and join us for Shabbat services and other programs. Our Rabbi, Dan Dorsch, our Executive Director, Marty Gilbert, our Director of Education, Debbie Deutsch, our Director of Engagement, Heather Blake and our Youth Director, Steven Resnick, are available to meet with you. We hope you will attend one or more of our programs, be it religious, educational or social so you can get to know us.

Be a Part of our Community Congregation Etz Chaim is an affiliate of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. If you have any questions, please call us at 770-973-0137 or send us an e-mail at mgilbert@etzchaim.net.

Our Mission Statement:

Congregation Etz Chaim is a progressive, egalitarian, Conservative synagogue that provides meaningful Jewish experiences in a welcoming, engaging environment. We provide:

- ◆ Inspiring religious services
- ◆ Educational, social, and cultural activities, serving multi-generational needs
- ◆ A caring community that supports each other through both joyful and challenging life cycle events
- ◆ Connections with the broader community and opportunities for Tikun Olam

At Etz Chaim, we believe in *Creating Meaningful Jewish Experiences*. Our synagogue is our family; rich in faith, culture, commitment and tradition. Our programming appeals to our diverse community. From small gatherings, to events that bring us all together, our dynamic community is a welcoming environment for all. While most activities take place within Etz Chaim's spiritual center, some are held throughout the city, as well as in the homes of our congregants. We invite you to get engaged in our community. These next few pages will give you an birds-eye view of how you can play a role in our family.

Visit us online at www.etzchaim.net



Our Etz Chaim Community

Sisterhood and Men's Club

The Etz Chaim Sisterhood, a member of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism, is a supportive and caring community of women of all ages providing countless benefits to the synagogue, Religious School, Preschool, Youth Department, the community at large and our valued members. They also operate the Judaica and Gifts Shop in our synagogue. Some of our most popular activities are sponsored by Sisterhood. Events have included:

- Chanukah Shuk for our Religious School students
- Book Club
- Vino & Vendors
- Rebecca's Tent
- Rosh Chodesh Morning Minyan
- Sisterhood Shabbat
- Intergenerational Cooking

The Etz Chaim Men's Club is an active, award winning chapter with a strong and growing membership participating in a wide range of activities throughout the year which provide valuable services and functions for the congregation. The quality and relevance of programs develop and enhance our knowledge and understanding of Judaism, provide needed service and help with fundraising for the synagogue. The Men's Club is an affiliate of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs and fulfills the mission of "Involving Jewish Men in Jewish Life." Events have included:

- Best Breakfast in Town
- World Wide Wrap
- Atlanta Sporting Events
- Anshei Darom Retreat
- Men's Club Shabbat
- Atlanta Kosher BBQ Festival Participants
- Seasonal Steak Dinners
- Greater Atlanta Synagogue Softball League
- Joint Programs with Sisterhood

3 Score More or Less

3 Score More or Less are a group of congregants who no longer have children living at home and are in the prime of their lives. Coming together for monthly programs, they build new friendships and enjoy social and cultural events. Some of their activities have included:

- Atlanta Jewish Film Festival
- Meals at Area Restaurants
- Trivia Night
- Vodka & Latkes
- Historic and Museum Tours
- Dance Parties with Live Music

Youth Groups

Jewish communal life is as significant for our youth as it is for our adults. In our world today, with increasing pressures and competitiveness, our youth need a safe space to call home, to ask questions, seek thoughtful answers, explore their spirituality and growth, and socialize in meaningful ways.

We are committed to the United Synagogue Youth, the Conservative movement's national youth organization, and its Regional and Sub-regional activities, our award winning local USY chapter, Camp Ramah Darom, and more. We offer youth groups for all ages, under the supervision of a Youth Director and Five Youth Advisors.

Chalutzim is our program for K-2nd grades.

Atid is our program for 3rd-5th grades.

Kadima is our program for 6th-8th grades.

Sababa USY is our award-winning youth group for 9th-12th grades.

College Connection

The College Connection sends out holiday "care packages" to those students away at school, keeping our college and graduate students connected to the synagogue. We want them to know we are thinking about them while they are away from their spiritual home.

Young Adults

Etz Chaim's Young Adult Group is open to Jews in their 20's and 30's. Synagogue membership is not necessary, however, a reduced membership is offered and includes a High Holiday ticket. Programs vary from social events, holiday programs and social action opportunities. Events take place at Etz Chaim, as well as locations around the city of Atlanta.



Our Commitment to Judaism and Lifelong Learning

Religious life is at the heart of Etz Chaim. Founded on the principles of the Conservative movement, with an egalitarian vision, *Creating Meaningful Jewish Experiences* starts in the shul. We offer twice daily minyanim, Shabbat evening and morning services, as well as Junior Congregation. For our younger children, Shabbat morning, we have Camp Shabbat and offer babysitting. Our Preschool hosts a Tot Shabbat once a month on Friday early evening for our young families, as well as Tot Shabbat once a month on Saturday morning. We also provide opportunities for our interfaith families to come together and learn about Judaism.

Lifelong learning at Etz Chaim begins with our youngest members. Rabbi Dorsch provides meaningful services, creative programs, adult and family learning experiences and outreach to our youth, college, and young adults.

Our educational programs include:

Preschool - Ages 14 months to Pre-K

At Etz Chaim's Preschool, we believe that learning should be meaningful and relevant while taking place in the natural environment. The incorporation of nature into our classrooms and the understanding of *Tikun Olam*, taking care of our world, while being a *kehilla*, community, is an important component in our curriculum. Research shows that play is a key component in creating self-confident and competent individuals and we nurture the social, emotional, spiritual and academic development of our students while allowing physical activity and play to help drive the delivery of our curriculum. As part of our conservative synagogue, we incorporate Shabbat and holiday celebrations, as well as lessons reflecting the Torah, mitzvot and tzedakah into our daily routine. Understanding the needs of the whole child enables us to facilitate their readiness for school and for life.

Religious School - Grades Pre-K through 7th Grades

The goal of the our Religious School is to instill a love of Judaism and a working knowledge of Jewish practice. Developing a sense of being a part of a community, a *kehilla*, is incorporated into all we do. We hope that by completing our Religious School program, our students will feel comfortable within any synagogue setting throughout their lives.

Etz Chaim's Religious School utilizes a curriculum that teaches Hebrew decoding, *tefillah* (prayer), having a relationship with God, Israel, holiday rituals and practices. Our spiraling curriculum allows for each year to build upon what was learned in previous years. Families are encouraged to be active participants as well, through volunteer opportunities and parallel learning.

After the Bar or Bat Mitzvah year, our students in **8th - 12th grades** have the opportunity to continue their Jewish learning experiences through our **Chai Five** program which includes 10th grade Confirmation.

Lilmode

Our Jewish Learning program specifically for adults, offers wonderful programming throughout the year. There are classes, lectures, and experiential events. Some of our ongoing Lilmode programs have included:

- Scholar-in-Residence
- Rabbi Led Seminars
- Movies @ the Etz
- Conversational Hebrew Classes
- Monthly Lunch & Learns
- Weekly Torah Study
- Tikkun Leil Shavuot
- Inter-faith Programming

Social Action

Congregation Etz Chaim supports Jewish Family & Career Services through its ongoing Food of the Month program, as well as volunteering and collecting food during Operation Isaiah for the Atlanta Community Food Bank. Here are a few of the many activities our congregants of all ages participate in:

- Hunger Walk
- Annual Blood Drive
- Knitting caps and gloves for MUST Ministries
- Collecting food & toiletries for JF&CS
- Chanukah Gift Card Drive
- Tzedakah projects

Service

As a service to our community, we have a Chesed (caring) Committee and Chevra Kadisha - Jewish burial society.



Our Spiritual and Professional Team



Rabbi Daniel Dorsch is honored to serve as Etz Chaim's senior rabbi. After earning his B.A. degrees from Columbia University and the Albert A. List College at the Jewish Theological Seminary, he received his rabbinical ordination and M.A. in Education from JTS. After being awarded the Reverend Zvi Hirsch Masliansky Prize for Homiletics, he served as an associate rabbi for six years in Livingston, New Jersey.

Beyond his role as rabbi at Etz Chaim, Rabbi Dorsch is proud to serve as Vice President of MERCAZ-USA, the Zionist arm of the Conservative Movement, and as a member of the Board of Directors for Jewish Family and Career Services of Atlanta. He also serves as a fellow for CLAL's Clergy Leadership Incubator program, generating new initiatives to involve Jews of all backgrounds, ages, and stages in synagogue community life.

Rabbi Dorsch can't wait to meet you for coffee (although he will have the iced tea) and tell you about the new and exciting things taking place at Etz Chaim. Rabbi Dorsch and his wife Amy, an educator at the Epstein School, are the proud parents of Zev and Haley.



Marty Gilbert, our Executive Director, grew up in Brooklyn, New York and has spent the majority of his adult life in East Brunswick, New Jersey. He is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in English. Marty enjoyed a successful professional career as a general manager for various retail companies including Borders, Barnes & Noble and Target before becoming the Temple Administrator of Temple Emanu-El West Essex in Livingston, NJ, in 2014.

Since 1971, the Gilbert family have been members of Temple B'nai Shalom in East Brunswick, a congregation that Marty's parents were founding members. For the past 35 years, he had served on a variety of committees and was a member of the Board of Trustees. In 2014, Marty combined his lifelong passion as a Jewish lay leader with a new vocation as a synagogue professional.

Marty and his wife, Lori, have already become part of our Etz Chaim family. They have three grown children living in the New York metropolitan area.

Our Spiritual and Professional Team



Debbie Deutsch, our Director of Education, received her B.S. in Special Education from Florida State University and her M.Ed. in Education Administration and Supervision from George Mason University. After enjoying a fourteen-year career as an Educator, Debbie became our Director of Early Childhood Education in 1995. Beginning in July 2011, Debbie became our Director of Education with responsibility for all youth education.

Here at Etz Chaim she has created a warm and caring environment in which children progress at their own pace in a hands-on developmental program.

Debbie hails from Bowie, Maryland, and has the unique distinction of being a member of one of our three-generational families at Etz Chaim. She is the ideal person to initiate our children into Judaism and supervise their education through high school.



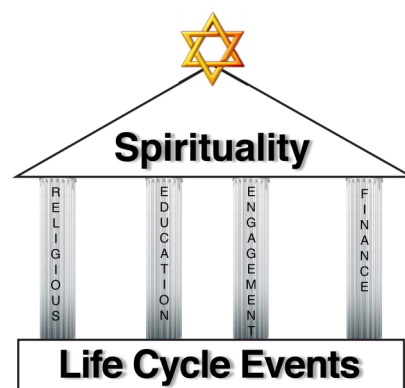
Heather Blake, our Director of Engagement, grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina, where she began shaping her Jewish identity through the lens of the Union for Reform Judaism youth movement and camping system. At Florida State University (FSU), she studied elementary education, while becoming deeply involved with FSU Hillel. Inspired to work in the Jewish community, Heather spent five years as the Program Director at Temple Israel in Tallahassee, Florida, where she created and developed innovative programs for all ages and frequently led services as Cantorial Soloist her last two years.

In May 2015, Heather received dual master degrees in Jewish Professional Leadership and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University. After graduating, she worked as the Director of Jewish Innovation and Engagement at the Memphis Jewish Community Center. Heather loves being a part of this warm and caring community.



Steven Resnick, our Youth Director, grew up in Longwood, Florida where he was involved in Kadima, USY and BBYO. Following high school graduation, he started staffing Kadima and USY programs for local chapters, as well as for the HaNegev region. Steven was a Chapter Youth Director at the Sunrise Jewish Center (Sunrise, Florida) for 5 years, Jacksonville Jewish Center (Jacksonville, FL) for 2 years and one year based out of Newton, Massachusetts as the Assistant Director of Youth Activities for the New England and Hanefesh regions of Kadima and USY. Steven also served as Secretary on the Jewish Youth Director's International Board for the 2014-2016 term. Steven's grandparents, parents and siblings all participated and worked with Kadima and USY in some capacity, so he definitely has this work in his blood!

In his free time, Steven is an avid Orlando Magic and New York Yankees fan. He also loves travelling and is an amateur photographer!



Congregation Etz Chaim is a “family” living under one spiritual roof. Supporting this roof are four equally important pillars, all of which rest on a common foundation of Life Cycle Events.



1190 Indian Hills Parkway, Marietta, GA 30068
 Office: 770-973-0137 ✪ Fax: 770-977-0829
www.etzchaim.net
 Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CongEtzChaim