



Welcome to Temple Sinai

WELLINGTON'S PROGRESSIVE JEWISH CONGREGATION



היכל סיני
TEMPLE SINAI

Welcome to our congregation!

This year Temple Sinai begins celebrating its Jubilee year, leading to our 50th birthday in August 2009 – a significant milestone in the life of one of the world's southernmost Progressive Jewish congregations.

We started out as a small group of active individuals who held their first service in a rented hall in August 1959. We now have a building of our own, a membership of around 250 adults, a full-time rabbi, regular services,

children's and adult education classes, a wide range of social and community activities and much more.

We educate our children honestly and openly, to encourage them to feel pride in their Judaism, their place in the worldwide Jewish community

and their contributions to New Zealand and the world.

We often refer to our congregation as the 'Temple family'.



On behalf of Temple Sinai I welcome your interest in our Progressive Jewish congregation. Our members and leaders strive to create a warm and inclusive atmosphere where congregants and visitors can practise and explore Jewish customs and ritual.

Please feel free to visit us at Temple Sinai or to contact us for further information.

Susan Gordon, President



A message from our Rabbi



Whether it was God's call to Abraham in Ur, or the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai, or the determination of a group of small tribes in *Eretz Yisra'el* to join forces to protect themselves from empires to the north and south, we, the Jewish people, were born.

In the beginning we built altars and sacrificed animals. Later we centralised our service to the Divine and leadership of the community in Jerusalem. When we faced exile, we packed our religious practice and communal authority in suitcases called books, synagogues and rabbis, and we carried them with us to the four corners of the planet.

And so here we are, paradoxically scattered and yet a distinct people. Facing an entirely new set of challenges to our survival, we have

the choice to just plod along according to whatever we already know or to make a concerted and conscious effort to explore new areas, to direct our growth and to increase our potential for survival.

Jewish wisdom is not stuck in time or space. Our strength as a people lies in our ability to adapt to new political, intellectual and perceptual realities. Darwin's theory about the biological survival of the fittest is a profound demonstration of the universal truth

that the ability to change is essential in maintaining longevity.

Contemporary Jews conduct a richly Jewish life that exists as a thread in a tapestry of the diversity our world offers us today. We reside in communities where people rooted in many different cultural and faith traditions live as neighbours. We learn from our neighbours, and sometimes

we integrate those lessons into our practice of Judaism. And so our repertoire grows and we continue to identify as a distinct people scattered across the planet.

For me as a rabbi, Progressive Judaism is all about recognising and valuing the fact that, as a collective entity, we are in a constant state of transformation. Within the structured rhythm of the Jewish year, and as we journey through different milestones in the life-cycle, we find safety and comfort in tradition while simultaneously cultivating personal meaning and a sense of purpose for our existence.

Accordingly, we make the choice to engage with our heritage and pay it forward for our children and grandchildren.

Rabbi Johanna M. Hershenson



What is Progressive Judaism?



Progressive Judaism embraces tradition and works to make it meaningful in contemporary life.

Sometimes called Reform or Liberal Judaism, the Progressive movement began in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century. It represents a creative Jewish response to the challenges of the modern world.

Progressive Judaism understands the Torah and sacred Jewish texts to be an ongoing discourse, exploring the relationship between humanity and God and the purpose of our being. Each individual is encouraged to make informed choices about personal belief and practice.

In keeping with Jewish tradition, we stress that it is what one **does**, rather than what one **believes**, that is important. Progressive Judaism invites people to look carefully at Jewish tradition and to take on those

observances and actions they find personally meaningful.

This means that there is a wide diversity of ideas and practices among Progressive Jews, firmly based on a careful study of Jewish tradition and their own experience.

OUR BELIEFS AND VALUES

Our basic values are those that the Jewish people have held for thousands of years, expressed in a modern way.

Temple Sinai is committed to the principles and practices of Progressive Judaism in which we assert:

- the belief in one God
- the unity of the Jewish people, and
- the vital role of the State of Israel in modern Jewish life.



We are also committed to the principles of:

- inclusiveness
- egalitarian gender roles in worship and leadership
- Jewish education as a life-long process
- the use of ritual to infuse the seasons of the year and stages of our lives with meaning, dignity and respect
- Jewish pluralism which allows our shared language to articulate many different perspectives, and
- the value and dignity of other religions, ethnic groups, cultures and beliefs.

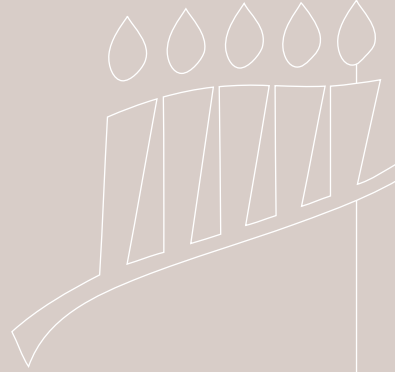
We believe the practice of Judaism to be both relevant and central to Jewish life. We believe that all Jews have a place within Judaism and should have an opportunity to study and carry out

its precepts in their own lives. Our common origin, history and faith bind us together, regardless of how many nations we live in, or the different approaches we may take to religion and politics.

OUR CONNECTIONS

International: Temple Sinai is affiliated to the Union for Progressive Judaism of Australia, Asia and New Zealand and to the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the international umbrella organisation for Progressive Jewish congregations.

Local: Temple Sinai works closely with the many organisations in Wellington's Jewish community, and we also have a close and cooperative relationship with the Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Baha'í communities and participate in a range of interfaith forums.



OUR RABBI

Our religious leader is Rabbi Johanna Hershenson, who joined us with her family in 2006.

Rabbi Johanna was born in Washington DC, USA, and received ordination in 1995. Before coming to New Zealand she served Union of Reform Judaism congregations in Los Angeles, Orange County, California, and Anchorage, Alaska. Rabbi Johanna completed her rabbinic studies at The Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion, in Jerusalem and Cincinnati, Ohio.

SERVICES

Services are held weekly, on Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings.

We also hold a Kabbalat Shabbat service on the last Friday evening of every month, followed by a pot-luck

dairy meal and a discussion or entertainment in which everyone can participate.

Visitors – Jewish and non-Jewish – are always welcome.

We are a Progressive congregation; men and women sit together and lead or take part in services equally.

Male worshippers are expected to wear a head covering (kippa). Some men and women wear prayer shawls (tallit), especially when leading a service or reading from the Torah. Kippot and tallitot are available for visitors to wear during services.

Most prayers are in Hebrew and English and many are transliterated.



WHO CAN BE A MEMBER?

Membership is open to all Jews who support the philosophy of our congregation.

Our criteria for Jewish status is that we recognise as Jewish those people who have one or more Jewish parent, or who have converted to Judaism, when those people profess to no other religion and support the aims and objectives of our congregation.

Our website has more information about Temple Sinai membership and activities, with contact details for enquiries.

HOW TO CONTACT US

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