

## **Havurah Shalom**

Portland's Reconstructionist Community

[www.havurahshalom.org](http://www.havurahshalom.org)

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## **Havurah Membership Information**

Havurah Shalom's mission is to provide a vibrant, diverse, inclusive, participatory, and sustainable Jewish community, steeped in Jewish values, promoting spirituality, learning, and acts of social responsibility.

### **Diversity in Jewish Religious Expression**

Havurahniks enjoy gathering as a community in shared religious and educational experiences, but we know that each individual must find his or her own personal connection to Judaism, and to God. To encourage this search, we foster a creative, innovative, and non-dogmatic religious atmosphere, in keeping with Jewish tradition and ethics.

### **Spirituality and Prayer**

At Havurah, our spiritual practices are shaped to call forth the kavanah (holiness) that dwells deep within each of us. We encourage each other to express the kavanah in music, prayer, and ritual. Our Rabbi, Joey Wolf, is our spiritual leader and teacher. Melodic prayer flows out of our Beit Knesset in Northwest Portland during Shabbat and weekly minyanim, and from the other places we gather to celebrate holidays.

### **Affiliation**

We are affiliated with Reconstructionist Judaism, a progressive, contemporary approach to Jewish life that integrates a deep respect for traditional Judaism with the insights and ideas of contemporary social, intellectual, and spiritual life.

### **Inclusiveness in our Membership and Leadership**

From its inception in 1978, Havurah has been open to all who want to maintain a connection with Judaism, including inter-faith couples, blended families, gay men and lesbians, and more traditional Jewish families. Women and men participate equally. Every aspect of Havurah's leadership, religious practice and cycle of life events is open to all members.

### **Participatory Community**

For a congregation of its size, Havurah has minimal staffing. People join Havurah because they want to be actively involved in building Jewish community. Members lead services, sing and play the music, write and deliver drashot (interpretations of Torah), develop adult education programs, stage events, take social action, teach Shabbat School, cater the Oneg Shabbat, and provide leadership through committees at every level. The importance we place on participation distinguishes Havurah from

most other congregations and allows members to become truly engaged in Jewish community and Judaism.

### **Friendly to Families**

Children like Havurah. Children are welcome to attend all services, holiday celebrations, and events. We offer special Tot Shabbat and family services specifically geared to their interests and abilities. We have created some new traditions for families with very young children, like Blackberry Shabbat on Sauvie Island and the Tot Sukkot brunch. We provide childcare during Saturday morning services (10:00 a.m. start), and many holiday services.

We also offer a strong youth education program where children build a foundation for lifelong Jewish learning and engagement. Supported by the expertise of Deborah Eisenbach-Budner, our Educator, parents actively participate in their children's Jewish education and are drawn into a caring Jewish community.

Our Shabbat School gives children (K-6) a positive Jewish educational experience. Parents run the school with guidance from our Educator, Deborah Eisenbach-Budner. Adults teach and learn alongside the children, sharing a deepening connection with Judaism, and participating in the evolution of their Jewish identity.

### **Repairing the World through Acts of Loving Kindness**

Jewish ethics require us to perform acts of loving-kindness to make life better for others. Members are involved - - individually and in small groups - - in a wide range of progressive political activities. In our social action programs, we seek to integrate Jewish values and personal spiritual growth with activities of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world).

Recent Havurah projects directed to the broader community include collections for the Oregon Food Bank; ivy removal with the Friends of Washington Park; tree planting with Friends of Trees; participation in the SMART reading program in low-income neighborhood schools; and engagement with the Northwest Portland Ministries and the Metropolitan Alliance for the Common Good.

Rabbi Joey has lead delegations of Havurahniks to Israel to learn more about efforts to promote peace and social justice, and, as a result, our congregation has developed close ties with several Israeli organizations. Locally, we are involved in building relationships with the region's Muslim community.

We also have a Mitzvah Circle that provides crisis assistance to our members.

### **Lifelong Learning**

Havurah has a rich and varied Adult Education Program. There are classes and workshops at every level, from the absolute beginner to the person steeped in Jewish learning. We have classes to learn how to read Hebrew, figure out Jewish prayer, interpret Torah and other classical texts, and create meaningful holiday

experiences. We have workshops on everything from Jewish perspectives on current political and ethical dilemmas to Jewish approaches to parenting, meditation, or life-cycle transitions as well as on-going film and book groups. Our teachers include our Educator and our Rabbi, various local and national scholars as well as members who decide to share their expertise or energy.

Adults may learn to read Hebrew, study Torah, Talmud and other Jewish classical texts, or understand the origins and observance of Jewish holidays. All these learning opportunities manifest Havurah's philosophy that Judaism is relevant and vital. Each class encourages participants to discover what meaning Judaism has for them. We have Adult Education weekends with visiting scholars, workshops on everything from Jewish perspectives on current events to Jewish approaches to parenting, and on-going film and book groups.

### **Celebrating Holidays, Festivals, and Life-Cycle Events**

Havurah invites the entire Jewish community to celebrate the High Holidays with us. We offer a complete schedule of services, including cantorial and contemporary music. Other holidays and festivals are celebrated with services, study groups, picnics, plays, music, and parties.

We also gather as a community to celebrate life-cycle events, from brit milah and baby namings to b'nai and b'not mitzvah, weddings and commitment ceremonies. Of course, we sustain each other in times of difficulty and loss.

Liberal guidelines for our cemetery ensure that it can be a burial place for our extended Jewish community, including non-Jewish spouses of Havurah members.