



עץ חיים

Etz Hayim

Congregation

Congregation Etz Hayim

Welcome



Welcome to Congregation Etz Hayim!

Our Conservative Jewish community of approximately 180 families welcomes your interest in learning about us. Please accept our open invitation to visit our services, community activities, and explore the opportunity to make new friends and spiritual neighbors.

We have a special warmth in our intimate spiritual community. Our services are egalitarian and open to participation for our longtime and newest members, as well as guests. Every generation of our Jewish community is well-represented—from our Kabbalat Shabbat services on Friday nights, Saturday morning Torah services, bar and bat mitzvot, Family Shabbaton, and weekday morning minyans to Tot Shabbats, Preschool, Religious School, Sisterhood, monthly potluck dinners, and holiday celebrations.

Our commitment to lifelong learning about our shared Jewish heritage and traditions begins with our Preschool, continues with our Religious School, and transitions into a vibrant adult education program. From chanting Torah and Haftarah to learning Israeli dances to staging puppet shows while reading

the Megillah, every member of our congregation has a chance to share in the spiritual growth of our community.

In pursuit of *Tikkun Olam*, repair of the world, we are pleased to be active partners in the Arlington and greater Washington metropolitan communities while performing mitzvot. Our ongoing commitments include delivering food for Meals on Wheels, volunteering for Doorways, Sukkot in April (repairing a home for someone who cannot do so), food collection for distribution to local soup kitchens, staging an annual blood drive, and cleaning up local parks and walking paths in preparation for our Shabbat Under the Stars. Additionally, we host interfaith services with a variety of Arlington congregations of other faiths.

Please join us at our next Shabbat or holiday celebration. We look forward to meeting you. If you'd like more information, please contact us by e-mail at office@etzhayim.net or telephone at 703.979.4466.

Spiritual Leader



Dear Friend,

I'll tell you a little bit about our Congregation. Etz Hayim is a wonderful sacred community, *a Kehillah Kedoshah*. There is a palpable, wonderful energy as you walk into the building. There is a freshness and an intoxicating feeling of joy.

We call the Torah, the Hebrew Bible, *Etz Hayim*. It is a great metaphor, for we stand proud, with our roots firmly planted in the ground, with our solid foundation in Jewish traditional texts and law. However, just like in a tree, the leaves change with the season. We grow in our learning, our understanding of texts. We are coming up with more interpretations, creating new activities, always changing, always moving. We are truly a *Tree of Life*!

One has only to come to our services to feel uplifted. The whole congregation creates beautiful music together. Congregants actively participate in the service, sometimes leading parts of the service, or reading from the Torah and the Haftarah, and participating in study sessions. Etz Hayim is truly present in

the community. We are involved in social action, and also in caring for each other, in learning, and in worship. Our hope is to have everyone here share their talents and their passions. By doing what each person does best, this congregation is a model for wonderful interpersonal relationships and of commitment to the community-at-large.

I am extremely pleased that our congregation has coalesced around our vision for a Jewish community. The greatest joy for me is to imagine that when we celebrate our 100th anniversary in 2040, we will be fully involved in the community-at-large—a transformative, sacred community. We will continue to grow and change, like a *Tree of Life*, shedding our old leaves and getting new, green, fresh ones to continue our work in this world.

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Lia Bass

Preschool

The Preschool at Congregation Etz Hayim is a thriving part of our congregational family. By way of our skilled teachers, excellent student-teacher ratio, and rich curricula, our youngest members are immersed in Judaism and make new friends. Your child will learn the traditions of Shabbat and other Jewish holidays, *visit* Israel as they learn about its culture with the guidance of well-traveled teachers, and take educational field trips—recently the zoo and the supermarket. The children express themselves through art, music, drama, crafts, storytelling, and role-playing with a Jewish twist.

The Preschool was created to offer the youngest members of our community the opportunity to engage in early learning experiences within a Jewish setting. We offer a traditional preschool curriculum in addition to teaching about Jewish heritage and customs. We enroll students in two-, three-, four-, and five-day classes, including an option for early drop off.

We are committed to helping each child develop emotionally, physically, socially, intellectually, and spiritually. Each child is

appreciated for her or his uniqueness.

Every action-packed weekday at our Preschool includes both structured learning and unstructured social time and play with other children—both inside and outside. Every family is connected to the curriculum and progress their child is making toward developmental goals with parent-teacher conferences, backpack mail, and e-mail as needed.

The Preschool experience does not end in the classroom. Join our community at Tot Shabbats, Preschool Family Shabbat Services and dinners, puppet shows, Purim Carnival, and picnics. After-school enrichment programs in art, sports, and Jewish literacy make Congregation Etz Hayim's Preschool the place to be.

The sturdy foundation of Judaism constructed in our Preschool seamlessly supports our Religious School program—watch your children apply what they have learned en route to bar or bat mitzvah. For more information, please contact our Preschool Director at preschool@etzhayim.net.



Religious School



The Religious School at Congregation Etz Hayim is a thriving part of our congregational family whose mission is to fortify the Jewish identity of our young members. Our students are immersed in a curriculum that educates our students in the way of not just *being* Jewish, but *doing* Jewish.

In our classes, students learn the foundations of Jewish living including holiday observance and traditions, life cycle events, prayer-based Hebrew and Torah study, history, and ethics. Israeli culture also is an important element of the curriculum. These foundations are further developed through hands-on opportunities to fulfill mitzvot by performing community service, leading services for our students and congregation, and participating in national and international social action efforts.

The effectiveness of the Religious School begins with the skilled and creative teachers on our staff and the active contributions of Rabbi Lia Bass. Our program limits the class sizes to ensure a low student-teacher ratio and facilitate active student participation. Tutoring is

available for students who need extra assistance.

In addition to the classroom, our students' active learning includes Israeli dancing, art, music, and special programs throughout the year. Our students explore news events and cultural developments through the prism of Jewish ethics and morality. For more information, please contact our Religious Education Director at school@etzhayim.net.

Adult Education



Congregation Etz Hayim offers ongoing Adult Education programs and events to its members and friends in the community supporting the Conservative movement's motto, *Tradition and Change*. We see our Congregation as a living Jewish tree of life, *Etz Hayim*, where learning never ends.

Participation in Adult Education activities is not limited to the classroom—although if you want to learn or sharpen your Hebrew or Yiddish, you'll find our Congregation is the right place to be. Book club discussions, seminar-packed weekends with scholars-in-residence, and Torah study sessions offer opportunities for healthy debate and engagement with like-minded—or at least well-informed—community members. We often meet on Sunday mornings with newspapers, coffee, and pastries to catch up with one another.

Recent classroom topics include: Introduction to Judaism, Kabbalah, and Sex and Judaism. Classes geared towards fulfilling adult bar and bat mitzvah are also available by request.

Lectures on special interest topics further sustain our learning, and we

have sponsored forums for United States Congressional candidates and on Israel. Expert presentations on United States immigration reform, political and peace developments in the Middle East, schools and political reform in Liberia, Jewish literature, and the environment and ecology have prompted us to become involved beyond our Arlington community. We are able to provide childcare arrangements for many of our Adult Education events.

Rabbi Lia Bass supports Adult Education with an open door and an open mind and heart. In addition to the *Ask-the-Rabbi* mailbox on her office door, she is easily approached for one-on-one discussions regarding our Jewish practices and traditions. She also concludes each Kabbalat Shabbat service with a reading rooted in Jewish values and ethics that often spawns freewheeling discussions among those in attendance. For a list of upcoming Adult Education activities, please visit our web site at www.etzhayim.net.

Tikkun Olam



Congregation Etz Hayim, under the leadership of Rabbi Lia Bass, pursues the ideals of Tikkun Olam—*repair of the world*. To this end we strive, both as individuals and as an organization, to be an asset to the Arlington community and beyond. Students in our religious school volunteer throughout the community and contribute financially to their chosen recipients as part of the curriculum.

Our congregation's ongoing commitments include a partnership with Doorways for Women, collecting food for distribution to the Arlington Community Food Bank, joining in and hosting interfaith services, visiting senior housing residents and hospital patients, and participation in an annual Sukkot in April along with other Jewish congregations in the area. Most recently, we have become active participants in the ongoing effort to establish a Northern Virginia presence of the Industrial Areas Foundation, an organization for social justice. We have held blood drives, hosted debates on local issues, cleaned up parks, responded to the need for funds to build schools in Liberia, and much more. Many of our congregants are active volunteers and

we welcome the opportunity to join their efforts. For a small community, we manage to have a significant impact!

Our services and holiday celebrations are open to all, regardless of one's financial means. Our community Passover seders, Shabbat Under the Stars, Purim Carnival, Simchat Torah Klezmer celebration, and High Holiday services are highlights of the year for our congregation. We welcome you to join in our observance and celebration.



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