

# WELCOME TO BETH EL!

Dear Friends and Family,

We are glad you will be joining us for Shabbat services. We have compiled some information we hope will be helpful in making you more comfortable at Congregation Beth El.

## ARRIVAL

Although the official start time of the main sanctuary service is 9:15 am, guests are encouraged to be in their seats by 9:45 am. The service lasts approximately 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  hours and will conclude at about noon.

## ATTIRE

Dress should reflect the honor and dignity of Shabbat. It is our practice to dress modestly and it would be inappropriate to enter our sanctuary wearing overly revealing clothing (for example, shorts or clothing that does not cover the shoulders or midriff).

- Jewish Women and Girls must wear a head covering if they will be on the bimah. It is customary (but not required) to put on a tallit before entering the sanctuary. It is required to wear a tallit for Torah reading.
- Non-Jewish Women and Girls must wear a head covering if they will be on the bimah, but are asked not to wear a tallit.
- Jewish Men and Boys must wear a head covering while they are in the synagogue. It is customary (but not required) to put on a tallit before entering the sanctuary. It is required to put on a tallit when on the bimah to receive an honor.
- Non-Jewish Men and Boys must wear a head covering while in the synagogue, but are asked not to wear a tallit.
- Nonbinary or Gender-nonconforming people may choose their individual practice given the guidelines above.

## RESPECTING SHABBAT

The Sabbath is a day of rest and worship and is distinguished from other days both by what we do and by what we refrain from doing.

- Cell phones and other electronic devices need to be turned off while in the building.
- Picture-taking and videotaping is not permitted on Shabbat. This includes both inside and outside of the building.
- Avoid handling money and refrain from writing or drawing while in the building.
- Applause during the service is considered inappropriate.
- Gifts should be saved for the party. If you must bring it into the service, a Greeter can help you find an appropriate place for it.
- Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the building or on the Beth El grounds.

## YOUNG CHILDREN

Children are welcome in our sanctuary. To make the experience enjoyable for them and the congregation, please be mindful of the following:

- Bring books or toys that do not make noise. Sticker books are also good.
- No crayons or writing implements please, as it is our practice not to write on Shabbat.
- Feel free to take your child into the quiet room at the back of the sanctuary, or the family room across the hall from the sanctuary, if they are noisy or crying. You will be able to hear the service from both rooms.

## **PARKING**

Our parking lot is not large enough to accommodate all the cars of those attending services. When our lot is full, guests may park on alternative sites surrounding our facility.

- Subject to church activity, the upper parking lot of the Bethesda United Methodist Church at Old Georgetown Road and Huntington Parkway is available.
- Parking is readily available on the residential streets opposite the synagogue across Old Georgetown Road. Limited parking spaces may also be found on the residential streets surrounding the synagogue building. Please do not park on someone's lawn or in a driveway and please do not block any driveways. Montgomery County law prohibits parking within five feet of a driveway as well as any area designated as *No Parking*. Be aware that Montgomery County Police may ticket and/or tow vehicles that are parked illegally, whether in our lot or on the neighborhood streets.

## **THE SERVICE**

The Shabbat service is divided into four segments: Preliminary Blessings and Psalms, The Morning Service, The Torah Service, and Concluding Prayers. Much of the service is in Hebrew as the maintenance of a fairly uniform Hebrew prayer service enables Jews to feel at home in any synagogue anywhere in the world. Music is an integral part of Jewish worship and the majority of the service is sung or chanted although no musical instruments are used.

- Beth El has two rabbis and a hazzan as full-time clergy. Typically, only one rabbi will be on the bimah, using the lectern to your left. The rabbi will, among other things, generally direct the service, lead certain readings, and deliver a sermon. The hazzan, on the right side of the bimah, is the congregation's prayer leader. They will initiate silent prayers, lead prayers chanted by the congregation as a whole, and lead hymns and songs. You will also see congregants, guests of the b-mitzvah family, and the b-mitzvah themselves, take on different roles in the service.
- Two books are used during the service and can be found in the bookrack in front of each seat. The smaller volume, titled *Siddur Lev Shalem*, is the prayer book used throughout the service. It contains ancient Hebrew liturgy as well as modern Hebrew and English prayers. The larger red volume, *Etz Hayim*, contains the entire text of the Torah (also referred to as the Five Books of Moses), as well as selections from other writings in the Hebrew Bible. The Torah is read from start to finish in sequence each year. A portion of the Torah is read each Shabbat.
- Your participation is welcome. Please feel free to join in any Hebrew or English reading or prayer.
- From time to time, the congregation will rise. Visitors are also asked to stand. Please be seated when you observe other congregants doing so. There are also occasions when only some congregants will stand. You may remain seated or join in standing if you feel it is appropriate to your personal situation.

*A Visitor's Guide to the Shabbat Morning Service at Congregation Beth El* is available at the entrance to the sanctuary. In addition, our Greeters are always happy to answer any questions that you may have.



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