

PRIVATE SPACE RENTALS AT CONGREGATION BETH EL

We invite you to take advantage of our beautiful building and the various spaces we offer for private events surrounding your B-Mitzvah celebration. Events can be scheduled on Friday nights, Saturday afternoons, Saturday nights, Sunday afternoons, and Sunday nights. All food and beverages served must be strictly kosher. Contact Director of Operations Pam Kocher at pkocher@bethelmc.org or 301-652-8569 x103 for information on available spaces and approved Kosher caterers, as well as all applicable policies and fees.

There are three beautiful spaces available for B-Mitzvah celebrations:

- **Bender Social Hall:** This lovely, carpeted area includes a large, built-in dance floor, and allows for seating up to 200 people. Our main kitchen is adjacent to this social hall.
- **Zahler Social Hall:** This space is fully carpeted and seats up to 100 people with no dance floor. You may choose to rent a dance floor and have it installed. The size of the dance floor will determine the seating capacity. Our fully equipped, smaller kitchen is adjacent to this social hall.
- The Rudolph Gallery is available for cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, etc.

SHABBAT DINNERS

This is a lovely way to welcome Shabbat on the evening before the B-Mitzvah ceremony and also accommodate out-of-town guests for dinner.

In addition to several kosher caterers who are authorized to use our facilities, Beth El's chef, Kevin Trainor, is available on a limited basis to prepare a traditional Shabbat meal. Financial arrangements for such services are, of course, private.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON RECEPTIONS

The custom of having the congregation and guests come together for kiddush after Shabbat services in honor of a family life cycle event is a valued tradition at Beth El. We also recognize the diverse needs of our congregants and that some families may wish to have a private gathering as well. Private Shabbat luncheons may take place at Beth El beginning one hour after services are over (approx. 1:00 pm). B-Mitzvah families are still expected to sponsor and participate in the congregational kiddush.

Because it is Shabbat, photography, DJs, live music, etc., are not permitted. Any decorations at the event should be in keeping with the spirit and sanctity of the Sabbath.

Catering options for a private Shabbat luncheon are either Beth El kitchen staff or an outside kosher caterer.

SATURDAY EVENING RECEPTIONS

We calculate the end of Shabbat as 45 minutes after candle-lighting the previous evening. When Shabbat concludes before 7:30 pm, functions may begin only after Shabbat ends. Family members and guests may enter the building at that time.

When Shabbat concludes after 7:30 pm, functions may begin one hour prior to the end of Shabbat. Food that requires no cooking can be served, and kid games that are Shabbat-appropriate and require no electronic support are permitted. No photography or music (either live or recorded) is permitted until Shabbat ends. We encourage families to have a Havdalah ceremony to mark the end of Shabbat.

Caterers, musicians, entertainers, and other vendors who need to set up for the party may enter the building at 4:00 pm. Vendor trucks and vendors should use the loading dock and side entrances to the building.

Cooking is not permitted on Shabbat, meaning that no ovens can be turned on until the end of Shabbat as defined above. Note that some caterers may define the end of Shabbat as later than the Beth El guidelines state so be sure to check with them before scheduling the timeline of your event.

Apart from pre-scheduled, synagogue events, families of the B-Mitzvah have priority in scheduling their Saturday night celebrations until May 1 of the calendar year preceding the event (for example, May 1, 2024, for an event occurring in 2025). If there is more than one B-Mitzvah that day, and more than one family requests use of the building prior to May 1 of the preceding calendar year, a coin toss will decide which family will have the use of the synagogue building. After May 1, other events may be scheduled on the Saturday evening of your B-Mitzvah date. A signed contract and deposit must be received in order to reserve space at the synagogue.

KASHRUT GUIDELINES

As a Conservative congregation, Beth El adheres to the standards of kashrut as understood by our Movement and as interpreted by the rabbi as the religious authority of the congregation. Whatever the private practices of individual members may be, we adhere publicly to these standards and require that they be observed strictly at Beth El.

The following guidelines regulate our overall kashrut requirements:

- Only approved caterers using a mashgiach are allowed to use the Beth El kitchen. Beth El members may use the kitchen when properly supervised.
- All meat, dairy and parve products brought into the kitchen must come from an approved kosher establishment.
- Food that is inherently kosher, whether or not it has a hechsher, may be brought into the kitchen if the ingredients are checked and approved by the rabbi.
- No prepared or cooked items, whether dairy or meat, and including baked goods, from individual homes may be brought into the synagogue.
- Only wines with kosher certification may be served in the synagogue.

Should there be any uncertainties, ambiguities, or questions relating to kashrut, please contact the rabbi for a specific ruling.