

Sample Guidelines for Ritual and Lifecycle Events

Overview

All communities have the opportunity and the obligation to treat everyone *b'tzelem Elohim*, in God's image. We want to welcome all people who want to learn Torah and participate in our Jewish traditions. USCJ and the RA have partnered to develop this tool to help congregations navigate inclusion of people of other religious backgrounds in our communities.

This resource outlines many opportunities—not mandates—for inclusion, while also delineating what are Jewish roles and/or responsibilities.

Each rabbi* and their congregation makes their own decisions about communal practice. The goals of this document are to:

- Provide a **model framework** for naming those practices in a positive way: “Everyone in our community can...” and “Jewish individuals can...”
- To provide a **list of possible ways** to include both Jews and loved ones of different faith backgrounds in communal and spiritual life. While not universal, the suggestions in the document are examples that are currently practiced by various USCJ congregations with approval from their rabbi, who serves as *mara d'atra*.

**Ultimately, the specific guidelines for each congregation should be determined based on what is considered best for the particular community according to the rabbi as *mara d'atra* (religious decider).*

Ritual & Life Cycle Participation Guidelines for [FILL IN SYNAGOGUE]

The [FILL IN SYNAGOGUE NAME] pursues the value: “And My House shall be a house of prayer for all people” (Isaiah 56:7). To this end, we invite people of all faiths and backgrounds to attend and participate in our prayer services and play active roles in family and Jewish communal life.

Notes:

1) We suggest you review the activities below, select from them what’s appropriate for your community, and omit those that are not.

*2) Those who serve as gabbai should only ask **Jews** to fill Jewish roles/responsibilities; they should not make assumptions about the religious status of attendees.*

In our Sabbath, Weekday, and Holiday services, **everyone** is invited to:

1. Join the congregation as they stand and sit during services;
2. Sing together with the congregation during communal prayers or songs;
3. Wear a kippah or other head covering;
4. Join the congregation in reciting responsive prayers that are read aloud;
5. Participate in the “kissing of the Torah” during the Torah procession;
6. Participate in or add a name to the Prayer for Healing list and/or saying a name out loud during the service;
7. Receive a blessing for an occasion or milestone, as appropriate;
8. Have a loved one’s name, of any faith and background, read among the names of the departed who are being remembered;
9. Join in the congregational recitation of the Mourner’s Kaddish;
10. Lead congregational readings that are universal in nature, such as the Prayer for our Country, Prayer for Israel, Prayer for Peace, Prayer for All Life;
11. Open and close the Ark; and walk in the Torah procession;
12. Accompany a Jewish spouse, partner, or child who is having an Aliyah to the bimah. Both individuals may be called up for the honor in English; only the Jewish person is called up in Hebrew and may recite the Torah blessings;

This interfaith resource was created by Dr. Keren McGinity in consultation with Rabbi Pamela Barmash, Chair of the Rabbinical Assembly’s Committee on Jewish Law and Standards.

It is provided to strengthen diversity and inclusion in our communities.

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13. Join with family members or other honorees on the bimah leading hymns, such as Ein Keloheinu and Adon Olam;
14. Participate in dancing and singing, including during ritual settings where the Torah is present (e.g. Simchat Torah);
15. Dedicate a Memorial Plaque to a loved one;
16. Participate in all adult learning and family education programs/classes;
17. Participate in rituals at home that may be celebrated with a member of the clergy, such as affixing a mezuzah during a [Hanukat HaBayit](#) or kashering a home;
18. Be visited when ill by a member of the clergy or congregation.

In our Sabbath, Weekday, and Holiday services, **Jews** are invited to:

1. Wear a Tallit and/or Tefillin;
2. Recite the blessings for an aliyah to the Torah;
3. Read from the Torah or chant the haftarah;
4. Lead a prayer service;
5. Carry, lift, and dress the Torah;
6. Carry and hold the Torah during processions and/or dancing;
7. Count in the minyan.

Life Cycle Events

Everyone Can:

1. Participate in pastoral counseling with clergy;
2. Participate in the life cycle events of their children, following these guidelines;
3. Share life cycle events in community announcements;
4. Join in the b'nai mitzvah experience for their children;
5. May request clergy participation at a funeral or unveiling with Jewish and/or non-sectarian elements.

Jews May:

1. Be named at a [Simchat Bat](#) (baby naming celebration) or Brit Milah (ritual circumcision) in the synagogue;
2. Be married in the synagogue;
3. Have a funeral, memorial service or condolence meal in the synagogue.