**B’nei Mitzvah Alternatives for Students with Special Needs**

We recognize that every student is unique, created *“B’Tzelem Elohim”,* and that each path toward becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah is individual and different. Some students with special needs may not be able to recite all the blessings or prepare full *Torah* and/or *Haftarah* readings as typical students do at a Saturday morning service in one of the sanctuaries. For some students, the service itself in either the Main or Martin Meyer Sanctuary is too overwhelming to consider. In the spirit of being inclusive and in order for families to experience the joy of watching their child become Bar or Bat Mitzvah in the Emanu El community, we offer a variety of alternative avenues to mark this important life cycle event.

If a family is starting the process of planning their child’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah through a meeting with the Director of Youth and Family Education, the alternatives below will be presented at that time. The Student Services Coordinator will attend this meeting if possible. The appropriate clergy member(s) will participate in further planning with the Student Services Coordinator who will monitor the student’s progress.

If a family is starting the process of planning their child’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah through a meeting with a rabbi, the alternatives below will be presented at that time. The Director of Youth and Family Education and the Student Services Coordinator will then be brought into the process, and they will pursue further conversations and planning with the family. The Student Services Coordinator will monitor the student’s progress.

Modification of participation in existing services:

* The student will learn and lead a limited number of blessings. We recommend that if possible, the student will learn the *Shma*, the *Tallit* blessing, and the blessings before and after the *Torah* reading. Additional blessings can be added based on the student’s ability.
* The student will, if possible, learn at least one verse of *Torah*. If Hebrew reading is too difficult to master, the student will learn the verse(s) auditorily, through the use of transliteration, large print materials, or other suitable teaching aids.
* Member(s) of the student’s family will chant the prayers and/or *Torah* portion with or instead of the student.
* The student will recite the blessings and/or *Torah* portion from an alternative spot if standing on the *bima* is not possible for the student.

Alternative service options:

* Private service for family and friends on a Saturday morning in the Rinder Chapel or other appropriate space.
* Private service for family and friends on a Saturday afternoon in one of the sanctuaries, the Rinder Chapel or other appropriate space.
* Private service for family and friends on a Monday or Thursday morning in one of the sanctuaries, Rinder Chapel or other appropriate space.