

TEMPLE  
SINAI  
**GREETER'S  
HANDBOOK**  
2017 ~ 5778



**innovation  
inspiration  
inclusion**

## Welcome: An Overview

Jewish tradition places a premium on the importance of hachnasat orchim, welcoming guests. In fact, it is considered a mitzvah (a commandment) to welcome guests into your home. In the following biblical passage, the patriarch Abraham sets a standard for welcoming guests:

*“Looking up, [Abraham] saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground, he said, ‘My lords, if it please you, do not go on past your servant.’”* (Genesis 18:2-3) With a great sense of urgency, he ran to the three men to offer them food, drink, and a place to rest.

When we welcome guests into Temple Sinai, we expect that our values will be apparent in what our guests see (the environment), what they hear (our language), and what we do (our actions).

When we invite people into our congregations, the hope is that we do so with the intention of building lifelong, meaningful, and sacred relationships.

## Welcome: Fulfilling the Mizvah of Hachnasat Orchim —

Thank you for taking the time to help us welcome members and guests to Temple Sinai. Please remember, we are counting on you when you have committed to Greet. If, for some reason, you cannot fulfill your Greeter duties, please call *Judy Mahan, (412) 421-9715, x110*, as soon as possible to let us know.

### The Role of Greeters

Greeters are an essential part of Temple Sinai's culture. For some you will be the first impression when they arrive at Temple Sinai, your friendly, gracious, genuine manner and smiling face will tell them a lot about our spiritual community.

### Greeting and Visibility

- Rule #1 — Smile!
- Welcome all who enter our building and offer assistance if necessary.
- “L'Shana Tova” — A Good Year/Happy New Year is the traditional greeting for the High Holidays.
- “Shabbat Shalom” is the appropriate greeting on Shabbat.
- “Chag Sameach” (Happy Holiday) is the appropriate greeting on other holidays.
- If unsure, “Welcome!” works just fine!
- Wear a name tag.



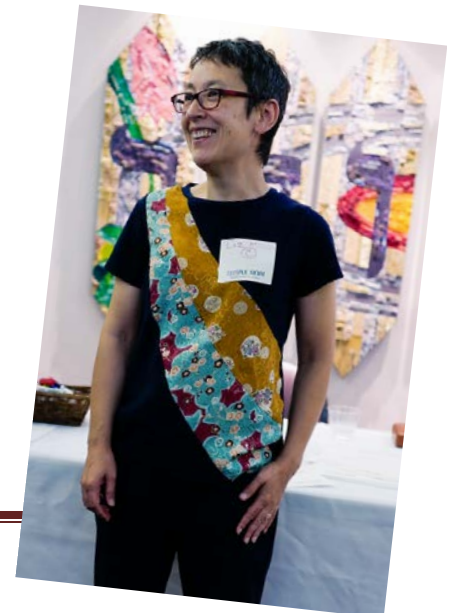
## **Friday Night Duties**

- Arrive 30 minutes before the start of the service.
- At least one greeter should be at the door in the Krieger Lobby. If there are more greeters, then one should be at the sanctuary door and another at the door leading to the alley.
- Welcome people
- Ask people to please wear a name tag.
- Point out for them where Kippot are located.
- Hand out song sheets or other materials, as needed.
- Please stay at the Krieger Lobby until at least 20 minutes after the services starts, but if people are still coming, please stay until the rush is over. Do not leave the lobby if there is not a staff person there to continue to welcome people in.
- If there is a problem during services, please find a staff member. He/she may be found either in the kitchen, Kreiger Lobby, the sound booth, or by the sanctuary doors.
- After the service, assist people and invite them to the Oneg Shabbat, if there is one.
- If there is an Oneg Shabbat, please continue greeting people there. Checking to make sure that no one is standing alone.

## **Saturday Morning Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service Duties**

There often will be people who are guests and family of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child who have never been to Temple Sinai before; also, there may be a large contingent of 12- and 13-year-olds.

- Arrive 30 minutes before the start of the service.
- One greeter to stand by the door in the Krieger Lobby, the other towards the sanctuary.
- Welcome people as they come in as described above, be sure to point out where the rest rooms are, the coat room, and even the sanctuary as they have never been here before.
- Point out for them where Kippot and Tallit are located.
- Hand out program or other materials, as needed.
- Please stay at the Krieger Lobby until at least 20 minutes after the services starts to greet potential stragglers.
- After the service, assist people out, invite and direct them to the Kiddush or Luncheon, if there is one, help them find the rest rooms.



### **High Holy Days Duties**

- Arrive 30 minutes before the start of the service.
- Check in at the front desk with Judy Mahan and she will give you your assignment.
- If you would like to reserve a seat for yourself, put a “Greeter” sticker on your seat. Greeter stickers will be at the Krieger desk.
- Please stay at your station until at least 30 minutes after the services has started.
- If there is a problem, please find a staff member.
- At the closing prayer, please move back to your station to assist congregants as they leave.

### **Door Greeters**

- Check Cards of Admission at the doors.
  - If anyone comes in without a card of admission, please ask them to sign in on the clip boards.
  - If anyone asks if they can make a donation, say “yes!”.
  - Children up to age 25 do not need cards of admission.
  - College students with a current ID are admitted without a card of admission.
  - Anyone with a High Holiday ticket from any other congregation is admitted without a card of admission.
- Show people where Children’s High Holy Day experience is in the school.

### **Sanctuary Door Greeter**

- Help distribute Kipot and/or Tallitot (for morning services).
- Please encourage people to fill the first rows.

### **Curb-Side Greeters**

- Greeters are assigned to the front curb on to welcome people and open the front doors for them. This is done as a courtesy and to make people feel special and valued.
- Open car doors and assist people out that are being dropped off at the front of the synagogue. Open the car door and extend a hand to the person that is getting out. Some people will be comfortable grabbing your hand for support and some will not, so don’t be offended. After they are clear of the vehicle, close the car door.
- When necessary assistance the person into the building and ask an indoor greeter to assist the person to a sit.
- This position is very important in inclement weather conditions. We need to be out there so that no one falls or gets hurt.

### **At the end of all services:**

- Please move to back your station to assist congregants as they leave.
- Smile! and wish them a good year, happy holiday, or Shabbat shalom.

## **NEED HELP!**

- AED machines are located by Forbes Ave entrance and in the school.
- First aid kits are located: on top of the AED machine, the Malakoff Conference Room, the kitchen, the school, and the Lockhart Lounge.
- Juice and cookies for someone whose blood sugar drops is in the kitchen.

**Need anything else? Call Judy Mahan (412) 977-0465 or Drew Barkley (847)-651-6613. One of them will be in the building at all times.**

## **Welcome: People with Disabilities and Special Needs**

- Always speak directly to the person with a disability. Look directly at the person with the disability, not at companion(s) or support staff.
- Ask if help is needed, but always wait until your offer is accepted. Listen to any instructions the person may have.
- If the disability isn't relevant to the story or conversation, don't mention it.
- Offer assistance, but do not impose. It may take the person a little longer to manage alone, but let it remain his/her choice. Ask the person for the best way for you to assist. If it is a small child with a parent, ask the parent.
- Do not pretend to understand if someone's speech is unclear. Politely ask the person to repeat or clarify. Have pencil and paper with you in case written communication is necessary.
- Treat adults with disabilities as adults.
- If you encounter unusual behavior, remain calm and non-judgmental. Listen carefully and offer support. Be sensitive to the fact that people react to touch differently. Some may be appreciative, others feel threatened.
- Keep information simple. Different people process at different rates.



## **For people using mobility devices (wheelchairs, walkers, canes, etc.)**

- There are reserved aisle seats for people using mobility devices and their companion.
- When talking to a person in a wheelchair, place yourself at eye level with that person. This will spare both of you a sore neck.
- Learning on a person's wheelchair is similar to learning or hanging on a person. It is considered annoying and rude. The chair is part of a person's personal body space.

## **For people who find it difficult to walk from the entrance to the sanctuary**

- There are wheelchairs located by each entrance.
- Offer your arm to escort a person to the sanctuary.



### **For people who are hearing impaired**

- We have a hearing loop system in the Leebov Sanctuary and Falk Auditorium. If they do not know how that works, please tell them to switch on the T-coil on their hearing aid. You may also refer to the sign by the Forbes entrance.
- In order to hear best, please show people seats in perimeter of the auditorium and sanctuary. People should avoid sitting in the “slate area” and the middle of the other two rooms as the system doesn’t work as well.
- To get the attention of a person who has a hearing loss, tap them on the shoulder or wave. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly and expressively to establish if they read lips. Not all people with hearing loss can read lips. Stay in the light and keep food, hands and other objects away from your mouth. Shouting won’t help; written notes will. Use an interpreter, if necessary.
- If the person has an interpreter, continue to talk and look at the person, not the interpreter.

### **For people who are visually impaired**

- We have a large print prayer books or handouts.
- We have magnifying glasses  
These are located on the table near the sanctuary on Friday evenings and at the receptionist desk during the High Holidays.
- Do not pet assistance dogs without permission. They are working and must focus on the person they are assisting.
- When offering assistance to a person with visual impairment, allow that person to take your arm. This will enable you to guide, rather than propel or lead the person. Use specific directions, such as “left in 100 feet” or “right in two yards”.
- When greeting a person with severe loss of vision, always identify yourself and others. For example, say, “on my right is John Smith”. Remember to identify persons to whom you are speaking. Speak in a normal tone of voice and indicate when the conversation is over let them know when you move from one place to another.

### **For people who have trouble sitting still**

- If a child or adult can’t sit still, offer the Malakoff Conference Room as a quiet place. A parent **MUST** be present with their child(ren). There are books and toys in there. The services are streamed in the Conference Room.
- There are fidget toys available on Friday nights for those for whom it may be helpful.

## Creating a Welcoming Culture

Leaders at almost every congregation would say their congregation strives to be a “welcoming community.” The challenge, of course, is how to put that into practice.

Member-to-member relationships ultimately determine the welcoming culture of a community. Ideally, welcoming guests is a sacred obligation that should be embraced by every member of the community. The reality is that, for any number of reasons, it takes real effort and intention to reach out to people whom we don’t know, are new to our community, or appear different than us.



***Have you ever been traveling and gone to a synagogue with which you were not familiar?***

It can be confusing! Starting times for services are usually posted or listed in an advertisement somewhere, but simply finding your way around the building can be difficult. Many synagogue buildings including Temple Sinai are built in stages. Many have had one or more additions so that hallways twist and turn. Even though synagogue buildings sometimes look like a maze, very few have adequate signs posted. Something as necessary as finding a rest room can be difficult for the first-time visitor.

Be the person who recognizes that someone “is lost” and make sure they know where things are located.

***Is Temple Sinai a Welcoming Congregation?***

A non-welcoming synagogue expects you to make your own acquaintances. Some may say they could not possibly be non-welcoming because people regularly stand around and visit before and after services.

The lobby or foyer is usually filled with laughter and conversation. Hugs, greetings and smiles flow freely. Can that kind of congregation still be non-welcoming? It can be the worst kind. Fellowship is wonderful if you are included. However, seeing others enjoying fellowship and being left out is worse than an absence of fellowship.

*It hurts to be alone in a crowd.* Non-welcoming synagogues often expect visitors to take the first step. Most congregants are sweet and kind once they meet a visitor, but how many are good at seeking them out? When you visit other congregations, how big a difference does it make if you meet several friendly people before services? If after the worship service you find someone who

As a Greeter, spend your time talking to people who are new or who you do not know. Give a quick hug to your friends, but move on so that you are making everyone feel special.

knows one of your relatives through a game of Jewish geography, how do you feel? A bond is created. Many congregations think they are warm and friendly. They think everyone is welcome and happy. In reality, they are non-welcoming from a visitor's perspective

There are steps each of us can take as we continue our work to ensure that Temple Sinai is a welcoming place.

## Ten Practices to Try at Next Time You are at Temple

1. **Smile.** A friendly face can go a long way to helping everyone feel that they can participate fully in congregational life. As Shammai, the Talmudic Rabbi taught, “greet every person with a cheerful face” (Pirkei Avot 1:15).
2. **Widen your circle.** Greet everyone you pass or everyone who comes within a few feet of you. A simple “hello” or “Shabbat Shalom” will do the trick.
3. **Take five.** Spend the first five minutes after the conclusion of a program or service talking to people you don't already know, whether newcomers or long-time members with whom you've yet to connect. At times, informal schmoozing can be awkward for anyone who doesn't have a friend by their side. This is especially true for newcomers to your community. The transition time between the end of a program or service and an informal coffee hour or oneg is when people are likely to dash for the door. Encourage people to stay and help them feel more comfortable by spending time talking with them.
4. **Naming names.** Not sure where to begin? Try a straightforward, “Hi, I'm... What's your name?” Repeat their name back to them to be sure you heard it right, and to help it stick with you. Maybe you're sure you've met this person before but you're not sure of their name. Honesty is the best policy. Preface your introduction with, “I'm sorry, I've forgotten your name...,” or “Tell me your name again...” If their name is difficult for you pronounce, admit it, apologize, and practice until you get it right.
5. **New-ish?** Not sure if they are new to the community or just new to you? Begin your introduction with, “I'm not sure if we've met before...,” or ask, “Have we met before?” When you are introduced to someone, try, “Nice to see you” rather than “nice to meet you,” just in case you've actually met each other once (or several times!) before.





6. **Just listen!** Don't assume you know or can tell someone's gender identity; family make-up; religious, racial, or cultural background; or Jewish identity. Rather, take a curious stance, and allow time and space for people to share more about themselves on their own terms: when they want to, what they want to, and in the way they want to.
7. **What's next?** Not sure what to say next? Consider offering a small piece of relevant information about yourself and the congregation. For example, "I've been a member here for a long time. I love our rabbi," or, "I moved here about a year ago." You can also try an innocuous statement like, "I love when the choir participates." Share something positive or neutral. Please don't bond over a shared complaint.
8. **Introduce.** Introduce them to someone else you know, or offer to introduce them to lay leaders or your rabbi or cantor. You can ask, "Have you met our rabbi? Would you like me to introduce you?" And, yes, it's okay if they decline your offer.
9. **A little goes a long way.** After you've had an initial conversation, give them space by saying "nice to talk with you," or something similar, as you leave.
10. **Follow up.** Next time you see the person, go over to them and say hello. Refer back to one or two details of your initial conversation to remind them who you are. You can ask a warm and friendly question such as, "How is your child liking her new school?" or "How did you find Shabbat services last week?" Being remembered and seen goes a long way to building a culture of connection and belonging.

## Welcome at Onegs: How to Make Small Talk



Small talk, may seem just that — small. However, small talk is a big deal and an important skill in creating a culture of welcome and inclusion in our congregations and communities! San Francisco based rabbi and educator, Rabbi Ruth Adar, shares with us her small but mighty tips for making meaningful and beneficial small talk.

*“After watching people at many synagogue gatherings over the years, I am convinced that one reason some members don’t talk to newcomers is that they never learned how to “small talk.” Small talk is an important skill when I am interested in building my community. Small talk is also a way to fulfill the mitzvot of hospitality and kindness, by making someone comfortable at my synagogue or gathering.”*

The next time you see someone standing alone at the Oneg Shabbat (cookies, etc. after services), here are some tips.

**1. Begin with common ground.** You are looking to connect with another person. Go for the things you have in common, rather than the differences. “Wow, long line for the coffee! By the way, I’m Ruth.” is not great literature, but the long coffee line is something you have in common. The room, the weather, the service you both attended, the speaker – all are potential opening moves. Avoid divisive topics (politics, for instance) and don’t focus on ways the newcomer is different. An alternative, if you can’t think of a common ground, is simply to say, “Hi, I’m Ruth—have we met?”

**2. Volunteer one piece of info.** “I teach Intro to Judaism classes in Berkeley,” is a simple beginning, but it gives them a comforting advantage: they know my name and something about me. It also gives them an easy comeback, “Hi, Ruth, I’m Joe and I am visiting from Cleveland.” This is not the time for major autobiography, though – offer one or two conversational “hooks” and then settle in to listen and find out who they are.

**3. Go slow.** Repeat the person’s name and ask for more about the thing they told you: “Nice to meet you, Joe! What brings you to my town?” Or you can share more about yourself if you see common ground: “Joe, my grandfather grew up in Cleveland! The family name was Levi, and they were members at the Temple in Cleveland.” Chat a bit, pay attention.

Listening is more important than talking. How long you chat depends on the two of you: if it's interesting and comfortable, you might chat a while. If you can't seem to connect with this person, then move on to Step 4.

**4. Make sure they meet other people.** Introduce them to someone else, providing one piece of information about them if possible. This gives you another opportunity to use the newcomer's name, which increases the chance you'll remember it: "Joe, I'd like you to meet Adam. Adam sings in the choir. Adam, Joe is visiting from Cleveland." It also assures that the newcomer will meet more than one person there. If they let you know they are looking for a synagogue, you may want to introduce them to the rabbi, the membership chair, or someone on the temple board.

**5. Make your exit.** One graceful way to move away from another person is by saying, "It was nice to meet you, Joe. I need to..." and then fill the blank with anything from "Get some water" to "leave early this evening" or "talk with someone." The idea is to let them know that you enjoyed meeting them, and that something is now drawing you regretfully away. If you can leave them with someone new to talk to, that's the best scenario.

For the newcomer, all the same rules apply: Start with the setting, introduce yourself ("coming out" as a visitor or newbie), pay attention and repeat names, and look for common conversational ground. If there's something you want to know, ask.

**To be truly welcoming, though, a congregation needs to acknowledge and engage the people who come in the door. That takes small talk, the social skill that is not really so small.**

## **Five Qualities of Effective Greeters**

Meeting someone panim el panim (face-to-face) and yad b'yad (hand-to-hand) fosters a genuine and authentic connection with that person, and greeters can help. Greeters have an opportunity to make a first impression on visitors to your community, showing that someone is present and open to their needs.

Effective greeters contribute to a welcoming congregational culture and lay a foundation for the rest of the congregation to connect and create meaning with one another. The following attributes of effective greeters are identified as foundational qualities for creating cultures of authentic welcome.

**1. Accepting the other:** The unconditional acceptance of whomever walks into the synagogue is the hallmark of a culture of community. Everyone is made in the image of God. Everyone deserves to be accepted into the community. By offering a handshake and a smile, the gestures say, "You are welcome here." Even if the

congregant or visitor responds coldly, it is the task of the greeter “to receive” the person, whatever their state of mind is at the time.

**2. Recognizing the other:** It takes little effort to say a kind word to people as they enter the sanctuary. In addition to the appropriate greeting of the day (“Shabbat Shalom,” “Happy Holidays,” et al.), add a word or two of a personal nature — “How are the kids?” “How’s your mom doing?” — to recognize the other.

**3. Uplifting the other:** Sometimes people come to the synagogue in search of encouragement, comfort, and peace. Perhaps they have had a frustrating week. They may be coming to say Kaddish for a loved one. Show tenderness and kindness to those who come to shul.

**4. Teaching the other:** By greeting everyone warmly, you will establish a climate of welcome in the assembled group. Your model of greeting may well be picked up by others, and can be encouraged from the pulpit. For example, the rabbi can invite everyone to “turn and greet” one another at some point during the service.

**5. Attending to the needs of the other:**

**The physically lost** — Someone who is new to your congregation might be embarrassed to ask where certain things (like the restrooms, the junior congregation, or the babysitter) are, or they might be nervous about asking for or putting on a yarmulke or tallit. Be on the lookout for those newcomers who don’t know where anything is in the building.

**People with disabilities** — People who are disabled may need special help getting into the sanctuary, settled in their seat, or something else.

**Children** — Some synagogues provide quiet toys and books children can use during services. Others (or, sometimes, the same congregations) have an on-site babysitter or “crying room.” Be ready to assist children and parents in getting and remaining comfortable throughout the service.

**The elderly** — The frail and/or elderly might need a helping hand or guidance