

Guide to the Kol Ami Worship Service

Welcome to Kol Ami! We are so glad you are here with us for this Shabbat service. We have included a few helpful hints and bits of information to guide you through our service today. If you are new to our service or have never been in a synagogue before, please remember you can't do anything wrong. Our prayers may be a little different or our melodies may be ones you are not used to, but we are all in this sacred space to share this time together, to celebrate, to sing, to pray. So relax, take a deep breath, look around, allow your body to move, your voice to soar, and your soul to open to the possibilities of this day.

Synagogue Etiquette



Kippah and Tallit

As a sign of respect, a *kippah* (yarmulke, skullcap) is worn by those who choose to do so. A *tallit* (prayer shawl) might also be worn at daytime worship. While traditionally worn by men, in recent times many women in Reform Judaism have embraced these customs as well. You may borrow a *kippah* or a *tallit* from the holders in the lobby.

Children

We love to hear the voices of children in our service. However, young children often cannot sit through an entire service. If children become restless and need more space, feel free to adjourn to the lobby or take a walk outside. Also, while children are in the sanctuary, please do not allow them to stand or bounce on the chairs. Children may stand or sit in the aisle or at the back of the sanctuary to get a better view of the service.

Picture Taking

Use of cameras is not allowed during the service. Pictures in the sanctuary may be taken before or after the service with advance permission. Life cycle events such as Bar or Bat Mitzvah services or Weddings may be recorded or videoed.

Please turn off cell phones and beepers.

Please, no applause during the service, no matter how great you think things are!

SHHHHH! A last note to all: please remember that we are here to pray together. Some prayers are loud and some are silent. In between, quiet attention to the service helps all of us pray and be open to the words of our hearts. If you find you need to speak with others during the service, please step out into the lobby to continue your discussion and return to the sanctuary when you are ready to rejoin the service.

Body Language

During the service, we not only pray with our words, songs, and minds, we also include our bodies. The standard times for standing (for people who are able) or sitting are often indicated by the rabbis/cantor with a hand up (stand) or hand down (sit) sign. If you miss the sign, just follow the crowd!

The following are additional times to pray with your body if you so choose:

On Friday nights at the Kabbalat Shabbat service:

- ❖ during the last verse of *L'Cha Dodi*, we turn to the back of the sanctuary to welcome the legendary presence of the Shabbat bride.
- ❖ dancing during *Mi Chamocha* is a reminder to celebrate our deliverance from slavery into freedom. Everyone, young and old, is encouraged to join us. No prior dance experience necessary!

At all services:

- ❖ At the beginning of the *Amidah* (*Tefillah*), some people take three steps back and forward as if entering the presence of royalty.
- ❖ During the *Kedusha*, some rise three times (lifting their heels off the ground) as we sing the response *kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*—holy, holy, holy.
- ❖ Following the Holocaust, it has become the custom in our synagogue for everyone to stand for *Kaddish* in memory of those who perished along with those who might have remembered them. If it is your practice to sit during this prayer, please feel free to do so.

Who's Who and What's What

The Rabbi(s)

A rabbi is a spiritual leader, scholar, and teacher. We are blessed with two rabbis at Kol Ami. They love to answer questions, from the simple to the complicated. Just ask!

The Cantor

The cantor is a leader of prayer and music. The cantor loves to sing and have the congregation join in as we raise our voices together in prayer.

The Bima

This is the area in front of the Ark where the Cantor, Rabbis, readers or the Bar/Bat Mitzvah stand for their part of the service.

Others on the Bima

During a service, you may see other members of the congregation join the Rabbis and Cantor on the Bima. The President of the congregation often greets the community during services or makes announcements. A member of the Board of Trustees may read a passage or a prayer.

The Ark

The Ark is the cabinet that holds the Torah scroll(s). The Ark is closed until we take out a Torah for the day's service.

The Torah

The Torah, also called the Five Books of Moses, consists of the Biblical books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These writings are our people's record of our encounters with the Divine. A set portion is read each Shabbat so that the entire Torah is read once each year.



Ner Tamid

The Ner Tamid is the eternal light that hangs in front of the Ark above the Bima. It remains lit at all times to remind us of the light that burned in the Temple in Jerusalem.



Candle lighting

The blessing for lighting of the Shabbat candles is recited at the beginning of the Friday evening service. Although the lighting of the candles is typically done at home, it is also traditionally done in the synagogue in case there are worshipers who are traveling or are unable to be at home for the candle lighting.

Kabbalat Shabbat

Literally, "welcoming the Shabbat." The evening service opens with readings and songs from various Psalms, culminating in *L'cha Dodi*. Composed by Kabbalist mystics, it pictures Israel as the bride of God.

Heart of the Service

The service begins with the *barchu*, the call to worship. (Everything before the *barchu* is warm-up, preparation for prayer). The first prayer following the *barchu* is about the world of creation, the cycles of day and night, light and darkness, while focusing on the God who creates morning and evening. The next part of the service focuses on the relationship between God and the Jewish people. This relationship is framed by God's love and is followed by *Sh'ma Yisrael!* — Listen, Israel! The liturgy continues with *v'ahavta*: "And you shall love the Eternal your God with all your heart." The following section includes the *Amidah* (also called the *Tefillah*). The *Shabbat Amidah* praises God and the gift of Shabbat, and petitions God for peace. After a short time of quiet prayer, the *Amidah* concludes with a private prayer between each person and God.

Torah Service

The Torah service opens with prayer, and the Torah scroll is taken out of the ark and marched around the synagogue (*Hakafah*). As a sign of respect and love, many congregants touch the Torah covering with their *tallit* as it passes and then kiss the *tallit*. Congregants who are not wearing *tallitot* may instead touch the Torah covering with their prayer book and then kiss the book. After the *hakafah*,

the covering is taken off the Torah and the scroll is placed on the Bima to be read. The Torah reading is frequently separated into a number of parts. Before and after each section is read, a member of the congregation (or the congregation as a whole) chants a blessing. It is considered an honor to be asked to chant the blessings and the honor is called an *aliyah* (called up). The Torah may be read by the rabbi, the cantor, a congregant, or the person who is becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Prayer for Healing (Mi Shebeirach)

During each service we include a prayer for healing. The congregation is given the opportunity to recite out loud or name in their hearts those in need of healing.

Reading the Haftarah

The origins of the *Haftarah*, (conclusion), are obscure. It is generally believed that under Roman oppression around two thousand years ago, Jews were forbidden to read from the Torah. However, they were not forbidden to read from the Prophets. A prophetic reading for each Shabbat was chosen that reminded them in some way of the Torah portion that would have been read. When Jews were finally allowed to read from the Torah again, they had become so used to reading from the Prophets that they retained the custom. As with the Torah, blessings are chanted before and after the *Haftarah* portion is read.

Returning the Torah to the Ark

After the reading of the *Haftarah*, the Torah is raised (*Hagbaha*) in front of the Ark so that the congregation can see the portion that was read. The Torah is then rolled up, the covering is put back on, and the scroll is returned to the Ark while the congregation sings *Eitz Chayim* (a tree of life).

Aleinu

This is a prayer praising God and is chanted while standing (for those who are able). With the words *va'anachnu korim* (we bend our knees), we bend our knees, and on the next word, *umishtachavim*, bow. The bow is maintained until the words *lifnei melech* are sung.

Mourners' Kaddish

Before reciting the *Kaddish* (a prayer in praise of God's holiness), the rabbi reads a list of those being remembered. The rabbi reads the names of congregants or congregants' relatives who have died either recently or whose anniversary (*Yahrtzeit*) occurred during the week. Sometimes, the congregation is asked to name others whom they may be remembering. The *Kaddish* prayer is recited standing. (After the Holocaust, Kol Ami and many other Reform synagogues follow the practice of asking the whole congregation to stand in remembrance of those who died along with those who would have mourned them).

Closing Hymn

The service closes with the singing of a hymn. *Shalom Aleichem* (Peace be to you) or *Adon Olam* (The Lord is Eternal) is frequently sung.

For more information about Congregation Kol Ami,
contact us at (914) 949-4717 or www.NYKolAmi.org.