



ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav is a Reform Jewish congregation, but even more, we are a home for diverse expressions of Judaism and spirituality. *Sha'ar Zahav* is Hebrew for “Golden Gate” and refers to both the famous San Francisco Golden Gate and the Eastern Gate to the Old City of Jerusalem.

At Sha'ar Zahav, we find strength in our diversity and create new Jewish traditions that honor all of our modern lives, coming together with open hearts to learn and grow with each other, and lifting each other up to do what we never thought possible.

We provide learning, mentoring and opportunities for growth through inter-generational learning days, innovative education programming for children and adults, a Journey to Judaism conversion program, monthly family services and other programs. You can learn more about our programs, including our religious school, and membership, which we hope you'll consider, at our website: shaarzahav.org/

We welcome you today and urge you to participate in our service in whatever way is comfortable and meaningful for you. If you are familiar with Reform Jewish services, you will find much of what we do quite familiar, and a few things not: The section on **Services at Sha'ar Zahav** explains some of the things that we do differently.

OUR CLERGY AND SERVICE LEADERSHIP



At most Friday night services you will see and hear **Rabbi Mychal Copeland**, who joined Sha'ar Zahav in 2017, or **Cantor Sharon Bernstein**, who has been our cantor since 2007.

At Sha'ar Zahav we also have a strong tradition of lay leadership. One or both service leaders may be Sha'ar Zahav members; the *drash* – the teaching, or sermon – may also be given by a member of the congregation.

Congregation members serve many functions normally filled by clergy, or alongside clergy.

At Sha'ar Zahav, we affirm the sacred in each and every one of us.



SERVICES AT SHA'AR ZAHAV

An essential part of our tradition is to ensure that our spiritual home includes and is open to the diversity of our beautiful, multidimensional community. Our services are conducted primarily in English, but many prayers, hymns, blessings and readings are in Hebrew. If you don't know Hebrew but you are moved to express yourself, many of us hum along or sing the tune without the words – please join in!

Our prayer book is called *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*. Its pages are numbered from right to left because Hebrew is written and read that way (so it starts at what would be the back of a book in English). This siddur was a multi-year labor of love created by our community; every Hebrew prayer is transliterated and translated to make the book accessible to all. It is the first complete prayer book to address the lives and needs of LGBTQI, as well as heterosexual, Jews. You can read more about *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav* at <http://shaarzahav.org/our-siddur/>

SOME THINGS WE DO DIFFERENTLY

(words and phrases in **bold** are not in traditional liturgy):

Hinei Ma Tov:

Many congregations open with this song, meaning "How Good It Is To Be Together"; we celebrate being together by linking arms, a practice we began at our very first service to welcome everyone, to be unafraid of touching each other in friendship, and to share the kindness of a stranger's hand on one another's shoulders. We have changed the original lyrics from Psalm 133 to reflect our commitment to gender inclusiveness: *Hinei ma tov u'manayim, shevet achim gam yachad, Hinei ma tov u'manayim, shevet **achyot** gam yachad, Hinei ma tov shevet **kulanu** gam yachad* (See how good and pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity/for **sisters** to live together in unity/for **all of us** to live together in unity)

In *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*, we have altered the traditional words of Torah, or added words to be more gender inclusive, for example:

- *Ma Tovu* (*Siddur* p. 178): We remember Leah and Rachel, as well as Jacob.
- *V'ahavta* (*Siddur* p. 156): We include daughters, as well as sons.
- *Mi Chamocha* (*Siddur* p. 162): We remember Miriam, as well as Moses.
- *Mishebeirach*: (*Siddur* p. 467): We expand this prayer for healing to include masculine, feminine, personal and communal language.

Blessings before the Torah reading (p. 316):

The traditional blessing thanks God for choosing us "from among all peoples"; we have altered a word to say "**along with** all peoples" to reflect our understanding of chosenness: *Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher bachar banu **im-kol** ha-amim ...*

Communal Remembrance (p. 491):

We have lost many members of our community, and of the greater LGBTQI community, because of prejudice, hatred and ostracism. We offer this prayer for their souls, whether they were known to us or strangers, and we invite you to join us.