

CONGREGATION KEHILATH JESHURUN

MISSION STATEMENT

Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun is a modern Orthodox synagogue, founded in 1872, and situated on Manhattan's Upper East Side. It has always sought to foster among its membership an abiding commitment to *halacha* and *mitzvot*, which represent the essential foundation of any Orthodox institution. But the synagogue also stands firmly for the proposition that KJ is a part of a larger community: a community of the Jewish People and the State of Israel, to be sure, but also of our fellow New Yorkers, Americans and, indeed, of humankind. These principles are not merely theoretical elements of a philosophical creed; instead, they represent the impetus for social action, embodied in a wide-ranging series of activities serving KJ members, the State of Israel, unaffiliated Jews and greater society.

In referring to itself as a modern Orthodox institution, KJ seeks to emphasize, in all respects, both the "modern" and the "Orthodox." Our members see themselves as integral participants in a modern, 21st Century, secular society, with social and civic responsibilities. At the same time, we are deeply committed to our religious traditions, to the study of Torah, the observance of Shabbat and *kashrut*, the love of, and support for, our fellow Jews and an unbreakable bond with the State of Israel and its citizens. We also seek to bring those latter values to our fellow Jews who, for one reason or another, are unaffiliated with religious institutions. We do this by providing an ambitious and extensive outreach program. Our Beginners' Program includes beginners' prayer services, Hebrew courses, Shabbat/Yom Tov meal hospitality and workshops, many and varied.

Of course, KJ also provides the basics: daily *minyanim*, Shabbat and Yom Tov services, a comprehensive youth program designed for all ages from toddlers to teens, including Shabbaton programs, and an adult-education program with content and levels suitable for everyone from the beginner to advanced students of Talmud. Adult-education at KJ also includes Scholar-in-Residence Programs, Shabbat and Yom Tov *shiurim*, *Seudah Sh'lishit* speakers, and Shabbaton programs for the membership. Our commitment to childhood education is, of course, most obviously (though, by no means exclusively) exemplified by KJ's sponsorship of the Ramaz School, which was founded in 1937 by Rabbi Joseph Lookstein, of blessed memory, and which now has a student population of over 1,100 students, into each of whom we strive to instill these same values of Torah and *menschlichkeit*. The Congregation also provides a Jewish educational program specifically geared to children of unaffiliated families.

KJ is also deeply committed to promoting a meaningful religious environment for its female members, consistent with the strictures of *halacha*. It does so, in part, by having a monthly Women's Tefillah Service and offering women's classes in Talmud and Torah as well as in subjects specifically addressing women's issues and feminist topics in Judaism.

Our identification with the State of Israel and our fellow Jews extends well beyond the more conventional UJA/Federation, Israel Bonds and tree-planting campaigns (although KJ is an active promoter and participant in all of the foregoing important programs). KJ participates in and sponsors political action groups supporting Israel and oppressed Jews around the world, and runs several well-attended missions each year to Israel for the primary purpose of demonstrating solidarity and support to our brethren, especially in these incredibly difficult times for the State and its citizens.

The synagogue believes in fostering the well-being of our larger society as well, by hosting community organization meetings, participating in civic organizations, and providing a venue for support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and others.

KJ sponsors and supports an array of other programs, fellowship groups and activities, the particulars of which may be found in the synagogue's various brochures and on the KJ website, www.ckj.org. A partial list of these includes:

1. Adult Education courses in Hebrew, Bible, Jewish History, Talmud, Mysticism, Philosophy, Tanach, Torah Reading, Basic Judaism, Feminism, Responsa Literature, etc.
2. An Ulpan Center offering courses in Modern Hebrew, hosted by KJ
3. Extensive Beginners Program.
4. The Chesed Committee, devoted to helping Jews in need, by providing a men's and women's Chevra Kadisha (Burial Society) as well as blood drives, outreach programs to homebound seniors, and clothing and food collections.
5. KJ's Bikur Cholim Society promotes weekly visits to Jews in local hospitals, seeks to arrange Shabbat and Yom Tov Hospitality for their family members who do not live locally, and offers ritual assistance to patients with Shabbat Candles, Siddurim, shofar blowing and *benching* lulav and etrog.
6. KJ actively engages in encouraging members' contributions to various Jewish philanthropic organizations, on local, national and international levels, including UJA Federation, Yeshiva University and a myriad of Israel-based charities. The Congregation's Benevolent Fund targets specific needs as they are identified, on a discretionary basis.
7. The Congregation offers activities and education programs specifically tailored for seniors in order to enhance their active participation in the Jewish Community.
8. KJ maintains a couples' club (known as Keshet), a Sisterhood and a Men's Club, which serve to welcome and integrate new members into the life of the

Congregation, provide outreach to students on college campuses and sponsor other activities of Jewish content to our membership.

9. The KJ Youth Department serves the needs of literally hundreds of children from pre-school through high school by providing a fun, interactive and exciting Jewish learning experience, and through its programming and activities, infuses each child with a love for the ancient traditions and pride in the Jewish people.
10. The Israel Action Committee is the vanguard of the growing grassroots movement among American Jewish communities to incubate local, regional and even national initiatives designed to support the beleaguered State of Israel.

The foregoing represents an extremely ambitious and dynamic program, which demands commitment from KJ members, as well as from the Synagogue's professional staff. It is precisely that type of communal dedication and involvement, which defines the Congregation's understanding of its role in the lives of its members and the community at large.