



The Marion & Henry Bloch Religious School Parent Handbook

**The New Reform Temple
7100 Main Street
Kansas City, MO 64114
816-523-7809
info@thenewreformtemple.com**

Mission Statement

The New Reform Temple is a Reform Congregation affiliated with the Union of Reform Judaism. Our congregation has from its inception placed a high priority on Jewish education. The purpose of The Marion & Henry Bloch Religious School is to build a positive Jewish identity, self-image, and commitment. Our goal is to provide the highest quality Jewish education in a warm and enriching environment. We strive to promote the growth and development of each child and to form a strong identification with the Jewish people and the Jewish community. Through the study of the Torah, Jewish practices, Jewish Holy Days, ethics, and Israel, our children learn to appreciate our people, to develop a sense of personal and communal responsibility, and to realize the relevance of Jewish teaching into their daily lives.

When should a child be enrolled in our school?

Our approach to Jewish education is very simple. The more education children obtain, the more it will be internalized and mold and develop their Jewish identities and commitment as well. We strongly urge our families to enroll their children in our Torah Tot program and to keep them enrolled through Confirmation in the 10th grade.

Getting To and From School

School Hours

Religious School meets on Sunday mornings from 9:30 am to 11:30 am. We start every Sunday with a bagel breakfast from 9:00 am - 9:30 am.

Drop-off

Parents must park and bring their child(ren) into the synagogue building.

Pick-up

Students will be waiting in the sanctuary at the end of school. Parents must park and come into the building to pick up the students. We understand that from time to time, students must be picked up early. We ask that you make every effort to minimize these early pickups. If your child needs to leave Religious School before 11:30 a.m., a teacher or student will wait with your child by the door. We will not release your child to wait in the parking lot. This procedure will help staff and faculty with security.

General School Policies

Attendance

Each student brings their own uniqueness to the dynamics of the classroom experience. Consistent attendance is important for educational success. Learning is cumulative in any setting. Our curriculum builds from week to week, and every time a student misses class, this causes a break in the learning experience; therefore, weekly attendance is critical to the student's Religious School education. The most valuable progress a student can achieve relates directly to consistent attendance. Please let the teacher know as soon as possible if there are specific dates when your child will not be able to attend. Each teacher documents attendance so that we can track and become aware of gaps in attendance. Your child's teacher will contact you when the absences become excessive.

Attitude

We have the following expectations for the Religious School setting:

- We show respect and honor to The New Reform Temple - our home.

- We show respect and honor to our people, traditions, and history, and toward a life-long commitment to Jewish learning.
- We show respect to our teachers, our friends and to ourselves by our conduct, demeanor and our actions. Cell phone and electronic device usage during classes and services is not allowed.

Emergency Procedures

The Religious School conducts at least one drill during the course of the school year. Each class is accounted for and then given instructions. The teachers are carefully trained as to the proper evacuation procedure. If the need to evacuate the building and not return to it as in the case with a fire drill, we continue to our "safe place" in the neighborhood.

Enrollment

We request that you enroll your child(ren) as soon as possible. The registration form needs to be accompanied by a \$400 per child registration fee for NRT members and \$500 per child for non- members. No charge for Torah Tots. This payment can be made by cash, check or credit card.

Family Service

We would love for you to join your child(ren) for the weekly worship service at the end of the day, from 11:10 - 11:30 am.

Guests

Guests are welcome with prior approval of the Religious School Director. Please make sure there is sufficient advance notice to inform director and/or teacher to make appropriate accommodations for the day.

Inclement Weather

If school is going to be closed for inclement weather, an email will be sent out to all parents from the Temple. There will also be closure postings listed on local television stations.

Special Needs

Many of our teachers have training in teaching students with special needs. If your child has a unique educational style or need, please inform the school director so we are aware of these issues. Everything that is shared will be held in confidence.

Tzedakah

Our school encourages the act of Tzedakah and doing good deeds. Each class collects Tzedakah weekly. At the end of the school year, we will choose an organization to be the recipient of the Tzedakah collected. There will be a Mitzvah Day (date to be announced), and we invite all families and members of the congregation to participate.

Religious School Curriculum

Curriculum

Our Religious School's goals are based on the guidelines of the Union for Reform Judaism. Lesson plans are rich in Jewish content where experiential learning and an energetic classroom community help create a deeper understanding of Jewish holidays, rituals, history, God, and Torah. Our creative and knowledgeable faculty have several resources they use. One is the CHAI Curriculum which is constructed around the values of Torah (sacred literature), Avodah (synagogue and personal religious practices), and Gemilut Hasadim (application of ethical commitments to everyday life).

Confirmation

The New Reform Temple philosophy of Jewish education has been built on the premise that we seek 100% participation in our Confirmation program.

The Confirmation students will discuss current events and social and ethical boundaries based on Jewish ethics and values. The special emphasis of the program is to teach our students how to see the world through Jewish eyes. In addition, students in Confirmation will be involved in Social Justice activities in the food pantry sponsored by Jewish Family Services and will participate in our yearly trip to New York City. Confirmation class is co-lead by Tom Barnett, and Rabbi David Levinsky.

The New Reform Temple Confirmation Program is a two-year program. Students enter the Confirmation program in the 9th grade and participate in the Confirmation class through 10th grade. At the end of the 10th grade, the students are confirmed at a special worship service.

If you have any questions, please contact either Rabbi Levinsky or Tom Barnett. Rabbi Levinsky can be reached at rabbilevinsky@gmail.com or by calling the Temple. Tom Barnett can be reached at tbarnett1950@outlook.com.

Confirmation Class New York Trip

The date of the class trip to New York is yet to be decided. Students leave on a Thursday evening and return Sunday evening. We highly encourage all the students to go on this fun and educational trip together.

Foundation of Our Religious School Program

1. Weekly Tefillah (Prayer) and music with our Music Specialist.
2. Chai Curriculum.
3. Weekly Tzedakah (charity) which enables our students to connect with the needs of our world and our responsibilities to Jews throughout the world
4. Israel and the importance of Zionism in Jewish life
5. School wide programs, which enable our students to experience rituals and learn about our Jewish holidays
6. Special events including guest speakers, movies, and trips
7. Parent/child educational opportunities

8. Confirmation

Homework

Homework is not assigned. We encourage discussing topics which have been covered in school with your child during the week. Interest in your child's Jewish education shows that you care, gives them insight as to your feelings and opinions and will provide you with Jewish enrichment as well.

B'nai Mitzvah

A Bar or Bat Mitzvah is not about parties and presents. No—it is leading a congregation in prayer and sharing Torah with the congregation. For it to be meaningful, the child needs to know that it is about Judaism and the Jewish people. Parents must emphasize this and keep the entire experience within perspective.

Within the Kansas City Jewish community, our congregation is well-known for creating meaningful and engaging b'nai mitzvah ceremonies. Our program is individualized. Every child is guided in the process to reflect the special needs and aspirations of the children and their families. Currently, our b'nai mitzvah candidates study with a private Hebrew tutor beginning two years before the ceremony. The child also works individually with Rabbi Levinsky.

There was no such thing as 'bar mitzvah' in the Hebrew Bible. It was a post-biblical, rabbinic idea (first centuries of the Common Era) that says that a child is responsible for performing the mitzvot at the age of thirteen. It took several centuries for a formal bar mitzvah "ritual" to emerge, and those rituals and customs varied from place to place.

How do we use the term 'bar/bat mitzvah' in a sentence? Here is an example: "My son will become a bar mitzvah next Shabbat morning." By bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah, we mean someone who is old enough to be responsible for doing mitzvot and leading a mature Jewish life. But, to parents and a grandparent, bar/bat mitzvah means something larger. The experience says to a Jewish parent; "I am not the last Jew in the world, and this child proves it."

B'nai mitzvah ceremonies are celebrated on Shabbat morning. This morning service is the ideal setting for this life-cycle event. We also offer Shabbat afternoon ceremonies. They must take place no later than one hour before the end of Shabbat on Saturday evening.

The New Reform Temple welcomes interfaith families into our community. We make sure that non-Jewish family members have appropriate and meaningful roles in the ceremony.

Certain prerequisites exist:

First, the family must be members in good standing in our congregation. Non-members are not allowed to celebrate this milestone at The New Reform Temple.

Second, the child must be a student in good standing in our congregation or attend the Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy. They must continue to attend religious school during their training period. Tutoring is conducted in addition to religious school learning.

Third, the candidate must commit to continue in religious school through Confirmation in the 10th grade.

Fourth, every student is different. Rabbi Levinsky will determine how the child will participate in the service. These decisions will be made according to the child's ability and commitment.

Fifth, the student must meet weekly with a tutor and show commitment to this process.

Sixth, the student and his family must attend Friday night worship at least once a month during the training process. A candidate must feel comfortable with the worship life of the community.

If you are interested in b'nai mitzvah for your child, contact Rabbi Levinsky first. Don't hire a tutor on your own. Every family must work out all the details with Rabbi Levinsky so that the training and the celebration reflects the approach of the rabbi and the traditions of The New Reform Temple.

Hebrew Program

The Marion & Henry Bloch Religious School of The New Reform Temple offers an optional Hebrew program to our students in grades 3-6. Our Hebrew Coordinator is Brendan Howard. Brendan brings a wealth of knowledge in teaching Hebrew, prayers, music and loves our NRT students and parents!

Learning Hebrew prepares students to fully participate in Jewish life by connecting them to prayers and being able to take part in Jewish life wherever they pray. The curriculum that we felt would meet our expectations and challenge our students is Hebrew In Harmony. This is a four year curriculum, beginning in 3rd grade that uses the power of music to engage students with prayer. The first year will focus on learning the Hebrew letters, vowels, along with the pronunciation of two and three letter syllables. In year two, three and four, the focus will be learning different prayers, chosen from individual modules. These dynamic multi-media lessons can be built around singing, drama, art and more.

This Hebrew program will lay the foundation for our students who seek to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, at The New Reform Temple. Our families will meet with Rabbi Levinsky to determine the date and when tutoring will begin. Tutoring should begin no later than 18 months prior to the ceremony. The tutor will be selected by Rabbi Levinsky. It is expected that each student would continue in the Hebrew program through 6th grade.

Hebrew In Harmony will be based on one-to-one tutorials each week, held on Zoom, and will be taught by Brendan Howard, our Hebrew Coordinator. Schedules will be determined by Brendan and parent(s).