

Gishrei Shalom Jewish Congregation

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Guidelines

Approved March 9, 2000

Revised July 18, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2014, 2016

A Bar or Bat Mitzvah is an important event in the life of a young man or woman. It is a public affirmation of loyalty to Judaism and to the Jewish People. Accordingly, becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is both a joyous and serious event in the life of an adolescent and his/her family and is, therefore, subject to well-defined religious and educational standards.

A. Who May Be Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

Any child born of a Jewish parent, or being able to show proof of conversion to the Jewish faith in accordance with the standards of Reform Judaism, will be eligible to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah upon meeting the following requirements and upon performing mitzvot that show a commitment to a positive exclusive Jewish identity.

1. The child's family must be a member in good standing of Gishrei Shalom Jewish Congregation (GSJC) who has paid the current year's membership dues, subject to the usual considerations of financial need.

2. The minimal age of the student will be 13 and the education requirement will be the satisfactory completion of the 7th grade level at the GSJC Religious School. Students whose Bar/Bat Mitzvah occur during the 7th grade are expected to complete the religious school year. Children who will become Bar/Bat Mitzvah at GSJC are required to begin religious school by the third grade. Families of children who, for one reason or another, do not meet the educational requirements by the time of Bar/Bat Mitzvah age must meet with the Chairs of the Ritual, the Religious Education Committees, and the Rabbi to discuss ways in which the deficiency can be rectified. All of these factors will be considered in scheduling the ceremony. Progress will be monitored by the Hebrew school teacher together with the Rabbi. If it is determined that the student will not be ready by the designated date the Rabbi, President, and Ritual Chair will consult with the family to reschedule the Bar/Bat mitzvah service in order to allow for more preparation.

3. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah child **accompanied by an adult** must have attended a minimum of 12 Friday night or holiday services at the Congregation during the twelve-month period prior to the ceremony. It is the responsibility of the family to make sure that such attendance is recorded and verified by a designee using the tracking sheet provided by the education and/or ritual committee. There will be no reconstructing of attendance after the fact.

4. The student shall complete a community mitzvah project within GSJC or the community at large that has been previously discussed and approved by the Rabbi. This project will be completed over a period of 9 – 12 months leading up to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony and discussed in the students Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech. At least 8 hours will be devoted to such project.

5. Special arrangements will be made by the Religious Education Committee in conjunction with parents, for any child with a learning disability or other difficulties.

6. Any other requirements as indicated by future amendments.

B. Instruction

Parents are responsible for providing any additional instructional preparation deemed necessary for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah at their own expense. Regular attendance at Religious/Hebrew School (two days each week) and services should more than prepare students for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah eliminating the need for any additional private instruction. Students will also be provided with individual instruction by the rabbi at not cost to the family.

C. The Service

The first step is for the family to meet with the Rabbi 15 to 18 months in advance to discuss all aspects of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah including choosing the date, the Torah portion and beginning preparation.

Because the service is a public celebration, not a private one, a Bar/Bat mitzvah will be scheduled to take place at the Congregation's regular Shabbat morning service and the service will be open to all members of the Congregation. The service may take place in the Chapel or the Main Sanctuary, thus the date will be coordinated with the calendar of the First Congregational Church.

The family must also coordinate the date with the Chair of the Ritual Committee, and review the setup procedures if the ceremony is to take place in the Main Sanctuary rather than the Chapel. In consultation with the family the congregational president or ritual chair will contact the Church office regarding availability of the sanctuary

Family members and friends are welcome to participate in the service. Please see the Ritual guidelines attached for participation by non-Jews and discuss with the Rabbi.

In keeping with the Shabbat observance, no flash photography is permitted during the service.

D. Oneg Shabbat, Kiddush and Other Customs

It is customary for the family of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to sponsor the Friday night Oneg Shabbat and the Saturday morning Kiddush. The Saturday morning Kiddush consists of wine/grape juice and challah for the entire congregation. A donation to the congregation is also appropriate.

It is also customary for the family to provide flowers/plants for the Bimah for the Friday night and Saturday morning services. Arrangements may be made with the florist of your choice

It is also customary for the Rabbi to receive an honorarium from the family of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child.

E. Financial Obligations

The Congregation requires that all financial obligations of the family to the Congregation be met three months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Questions on this matter should be directed to the Congregation's Treasurer.

F. Acknowledgement

The child's parent(s) hereby acknowledge and accept these guidelines.

Signature of Parent(s)

Signature of Rabbi