

April 16, 2009

Happy end of Pesach and Shabbat Shalom!

The Seventh day of Pesach yesterday offered a constant flurry of activity at Temple. The 7th grade class prepared a Matzah Brei snack, enjoyed later by the school community, with our own chef and cooking teacher, Patrice Gerard. The 4th-6th graders joined with me in a service for the last day of Pesach from Gates of Prayer for Young People, as did the Pre-Kindergarten to Third Grade students a while later after our snack. We gathered on and around the bimah to pray, creating a sense of closeness and warmth for which any community should strive. After school ended, members of our worshipping community used the new Mishkan T'filah for Weekdays and Festivals for afternoon and memorial prayers for the end of Pesach. Our Kiddush afterwards included some of the last lingering tastes of Pesach that we will revisit next year.

Our prayers, our songs, our discussions about the coming of spring and the significance of freedom, and even the food we eat are a part of our heritage. We live this heritage that we choose in our own way every day. When we are at Temple, we try to fashion our communal observance in a way that touches upon everyone's experience in some way. Sometimes, that allows us each to explore "our own world" through readings in the prayerbook or discussions with other members. At other times, we link with "the Jewish world" and adopt a communal practice that will offer everyone a sense of comfort. And finally, we strengthen our ties to the entire human family when we reaffirm the values of concern for the world and consideration for all people. Feeding the hungry, working for justice and equality, giving to worthy causes, and doing acts of kindness all flow from the heritage that we share. Blessings, mitzvot/commandments, holiday observances (including Shabbat) and other traditions (including rules about what we eat) have lessons for living embodied in them. We can interpret these for ourselves and join in lively discussion on how we can observe those practices and live those lessons with dedication and mutual respect.

As we prepare for remembrance of the Holocaust (Yom Hashoah on Monday night/Tuesday April 20/21 – and our service tomorrow night), let us take pride in and further explore our heritage that has sustained us even in the darkest times.

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry K.