

Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom plans Shabbat service highlighting inclusion

"We have two hopes for this event: First, we want to open our doors and enable individuals with hearing loss to experience a Reform Shabbat service, and second, we will highlight the past year's Inclusion Initiative. We hope to bring an awareness of our inclusion efforts to the larger congregation" said Rabbi Ellen Greenspan, Rabbi Educator at Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom in Westmount.

Temple has long been recognized as a synagogue that fosters inclusive values and practices. In the words of Senior Rabbi Lisa Grushcow, "Temple's mission has always been to open the doors of Judaism to all who want to connect with Jewish life. Interfaith and LGBT families are part of the fabric of our congregation, and we are working hard to make sure people of all abilities are fully welcome as well." The new ramp outside of Temple, the first project of the Capital Campaign, is one external sign of this commitment.

In early 2013, a group of temple parents, congregants and lay leaders formed the Special Needs Working Group. Their mandate is to widen access and break down barriers to full participation in Temple life for all members of the congregation and community. As a result of the work of the Special Needs Working Group, Temple received a generous grant from the Miriam Foundation, part of

which covers the cost of hiring Rachel Desjourdy, Temple's first Inclusion Specialist. In February 2015, Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom officially launched their "All-Abilities Inclusion Project," also funded by the grant from the Miriam Foundation. Since then,

the Special Needs Working Group has been examining all aspects of congregational life, identifying areas in which access can be improved, and working towards inclusion.

Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom is not alone in its inclusive efforts,

but it is the first Canadian congregation recognized by the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) as a "committed congregation" in this area. The URJ, in conjunction with the Ruderman Family Foundation, has created an integrative online toolkit, the Disabilities Inclusion Learning Center, aimed at empowering Reform congregations everywhere to include persons with disabilities in all aspects of congregational life.

The Friday night service on Friday, June 19 at 7:45 PM will highlight the efforts of Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom at being welcoming and inclusive. The service will feature an ASL interpreter, participation by the Special Needs Working Group, and a sermon by Rabbi Ellen Greenspan focused on inclusion.

Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom is Montreal's only Reform synagogue. With more than eight hundreds member families, Temple is a caring, supportive and inclusive congregation built on Jewish tradition, education, celebration and community. Temple offers worship, learning and social opportunities for all ages, including programming for interfaith families and 20 to 30 years old group and social action initiatives. For more information, visit www.templemontreal.ca or call 514-937-3575.



Rabbi Ellen Greenspan