

FAQ's of Parents with Very Young Children

Are my children welcome at the Emanuel?

Yes! The Emanuel Synagogue thrives on the mix of generations among its congregants. We warm to the sight of little ones in strollers, toddling along and cruising our halls. The laughter, cries and even screeches are music to the ears of a congregation that looks forward to a healthy Jewish future. Each *Shabbat* morning, all the children are called up to the *bima* at the end of the service for *Adon Olam*, *motzi*, hand washing and *Kiddush*.

Can we bring strollers into the sanctuary? Is the Emanuel accessible for strollers?

Yes, strollers are definitely welcome in the sanctuary. We suggest you sit on a side aisle with your stroller so it does not interfere with the Torah parade. Unfortunately, only part of the school wing is accessible to strollers. It is a long term goal to make the entire building accessible to strollers and wheel chairs.

Can my children sit with me during the High Holidays?

Yes! During the High Holidays, we open the back doors to the sanctuary so we have room to put chairs to the back of the auditorium and even onto the stage if we need to. There is room for all family members to sit together.

Are our children welcome at *Ruach Shabbat*?

Yes, definitely! *Ruach Shabbat*, our monthly musical Friday evening service, is a wonderful time to bring little ones to The Emanuel. At this service we sing and dance. Please check our website for service times. In the winter these services are often very early so that families with young children can enjoy them well before dinner and bedtime..

Is there a place to change diapers at Emanuel?

Yes! The baby sitting room has a changing table where you can easily change diapers. The women's room near the auditorium has a counter on which you can change diapers.

Is there a private place to nurse a baby at Emanuel?

Yes! The Executive Director's office and the women's room near the auditorium are available for nursing. Take a door sign from the Executive Director's office to ensure privacy.

Do our children have to dress up to come to synagogue?

In our dream-of-dreams, yes. Is it worth a big fight with your children? No. On *Shabbat* and holidays we would love to see everyone dressed in nice clothing befitting respect for the day and place. But, we would rather have your family join us than stay home because of clothing fights. Neat, clean, casual clothing will do.

***Shabbat* services are too long for my children to sit. Am I rude to come late or leave early?**

Coming for short periods of time is a good way to get your children used to the routine and atmosphere of services. Our monthly ChallahPalooza *Shabbat* play group is a wonderful first *Shabbat* experience. Come for ChallahPalooza and stay for *Kiddush* at noon. If that is nap time, try coming to *shacharit* at 9:00. This service is full of music which the kids generally like and is a smaller crowd. Parents are welcome to bring their children downstairs to our early childhood center for a parent-child play break during the service. We offer babysitting on *Shabbat* mornings that some parents use when their kids get cranky but they want to stay in the service.

What should I do if my children make noise at services?

It depends upon the noise. We know that children cannot stay quiet for long periods of time. Short bursts of enthusiasm from little ones are fine. If they are loudly crying or talking for a continuous period of time, we ask that you take them into the hallway for a while so that other congregants are not disturbed especially during *kaddish* or the Rabbi's sermon. Many parents bring quiet toys or books to occupy their children during services. Please do not bring toys that make noise.

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Can we bring in snacks for our children?

Yes, (as long as they are kosher) and no (in the sanctuary on *Yom Kippur*). Kosher snacks are fine to bring into Emanuel for your children. If you need help in knowing what brands are kosher, please ask one of our staff. However on the High Holidays, we prefer the snacks to be provided in the babysitting rooms. Especially on *Yom Kippur*, in respect to those who are fasting, we do not want snacks in the sanctuary. If you have special needs regarding food for your children, please see one of our staff.

Does the Emanuel offer child care for times when I want to have an adult prayer experience or attend an adult meeting?

Yes! Every *Shabbat* and *yom tov* morning we have a babysitter from 10:00 to 12:00. The room is full of toys, books and snacks for the children. You may bring your child into the babysitting room at any time and take them out at any time. High Holiday services have babysitting all day. Advance sign-up is required only for the High Holidays so we may be prepared for the proper number of children. During school family education programs on Sunday mornings, the school can arrange for our student aides to play with the little ones.

What programs do you offer that are aimed specifically at parents of very young children?

The Emanuel is a family oriented congregation, so the programs we offer, tend to be for the whole family. *ChallahPalooza* is a Shabbat morning play-based program for pre-school aged children and their families. It occurs the first *Shabbat* morning of each month. *Bagels, Blocks & Beyond* is a holiday based Family Education program for preschoolers and their parents. Programs are approximately 5 times a year. Our Families with Young Children group plans several low-key activities throughout the year. In the past, we have had groups for mothers-with-babies and mommy-and-me programs on a weekly basis. We will be happy to start these again if we have interest. Speak with our Family Educator, Grae Sibelman for more information.

How can I meet other parents with very young children?

The best way to meet other families like you is to attend *ChallahPalooza*, *Bagels, Blocks & Beyond*, and other events arranged by our Young Families group. Let us know if you have a little time to get involved in planning these activities. Sisterhood, Brotherhood, Minyanaires, Choir and synagogue committees are adult groups in which you can meet people of all ages.

Are dues lower for young families?

Yes! We realize that parents that are just starting families may also be just starting careers. Our dues structure accounts for this. Speak with Executive Director Stuart Levy about all dues questions.

If we have more questions, who do we contact?

Our Family Educator, Grae Sibelman, can answer most of your questions or direct you to the right person. Leave her a message at our school office (860) 233-2774 or speak with Director of Education, Judith Fox.