

Agudas Achim Congregation of Northern Virginia

Prospective Member Packet



Welcome to Agudas Achim Congregation!

We are a community built on covenantal relationships, generating the connections that bind one individual to another and one generation to the next. From newborns to seniors and everyone in between, we see each other – ourselves and our friends and our children and grandchildren – go through life together.

The strength of Agudas Achim is that it is a hub of communal and personal identity – a place of prayer, learning, and activism. I hope you will fully experience our vibrant community – enjoy our services, take a class, attend a concert, volunteer for a mitzvah project.

In this packet you will get a sense of the community that is Agudas Achim. More information can be found on our website, www.agudasachim-va.org, and of course, by visiting us.

I look forward to creating a personal relationship with you and ensuring that you will soon feel that Agudas Achim is your home away from home.

- Rabbi Steven Rein



The Agudas Achim Magen, our Jewish star logo, contains the values that drive our actions, with God at the center:

Mishpacha/Family | G'melut Hassadim/Compassionate Acts

Limud/Learning | Tikkun Olam/Repair the World | Tefilah/Prayer | Torah/Jewish Law

Building sacred community. Nurturing lifelong relationships.

Family



משפחה

Youth Groups

Agudas Achim Congregation is home to multiple youth groups offering opportunities to socialize with Jewish peers, to become involved in the synagogue and the Jewish community, and to experience a Jewish lifestyle: USY for high school students (grades 9-12); Kadima for middle schoolers (grades 6-8); Machar for students in grades 4-5; and Shoresch for grades K-2.



Men's Club

Men's Club fosters friendships while engaging in learning, service, health, and ritual activities. We provide opportunities for personal growth, and serve our Congregation and the larger community. We look forward to meeting you.

Sisterhood

More formally known as Women's League for Conservative Judaism, we run many programs, events and charitable activities, including the annual Purim carnival, shelter dinners, and active seniors lunch-and-learn programs. We create, we learn, we discuss – and we share companionship and fun. Join us!

Active Seniors

The Active Seniors group meets bimonthly for lunch-and-learn events. We have speakers, dancers, artists, thinkers, and journalists who share their craft and expand our minds.

Young Families

We are a volunteer-led group that plans and leads events for families with children ages 0-5. We offer a place where families can meet each other and build a Jewish community. Events are generally held on evenings and weekends and programmed for parents to attend with children.



Compassionate Acts



גמילות חסדים



Interfaith Families

Agudas Achim Congregation welcomes both Jewish and non-Jewish family members to be part of our community, including playing an integral role in life-cycle events. Our weekday, Shabbat, and holiday services are open to members of all faiths. Beloved members of the Agudas Achim family — both Jewish and non-Jewish — contribute to our mission to elevate and nourish our minds and souls while building a sacred community through the rich medium of Jewish life and tradition.

Caring Committee

The Caring Committee links congregants who need help with congregants who can offer assistance by providing meals, rides, a listening ear, a supportive hand, or a comforting shoulder.

Chevra Kadisha & Bereavement

The rabbi and executive director can help with arrangements for traditional Jewish burial practices with aide from our *Chevra Kadisha* (burial society). We provide *shomrim*, those people who sit with the deceased before the burial.

The Bereavement Committee, a subcommittee of the *Chevra Kadisha*, works with Sisterhood who provides a meal of consolation following a funeral and other assistance during the mourning period.

Whether you are seeking support or can offer it to someone else, we welcome you to Agudas Achim Congregation.



Inclusion

DISABILITY

Agudas Achim is committed to being a truly inclusive spiritual community. We welcome the participation, leadership, and friendship of all individuals without regard to physical, emotional, cognitive, sensory, or communicative ability. Our building is generally accessible and we are engaged in a continuous evaluation of congregational needs and expanding access for all.

ADOPTION

Our adoptive parent support group meets on a regular basis to share experiences and support each other on our journeys. All families are welcome at Agudas Achim.

LGBTQ

In alignment with our values, vision, and mission, Agudas Achim welcomes all Jews regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, as full participants in all religious practices and in the entire community life of the congregation. Everyone is welcome here.

JEWISH SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY (JSSA)

We are fortunate to have a close relationship with JSSA, which offers programs to our community, such as a Depression Support Group.

Building sacred community. Nurturing lifelong relationships.

Education



למוד

Agudas Achim Preschool

With a focus on the whole child, we practice a developmentally appropriate approach to teaching, emphasizing Jewish values. Children learn a range of skills such as social/emotional, early literacy, early numeracy, problem solving, and cooperation and collaboration. Children are immersed in Judaic beliefs, traditions, and ethics.

We are known for our spacious, well-equipped play spaces indoor and out; flexible hours for parents; and a warm, caring school community. Families of all faith traditions and levels of Jewish observance are welcome.



Religious School

Our religious school fosters strong Jewish identity with a focus on social, ethical, and moral growth to build a caring, involved, and committed Jewish community, as well as engaged, global Jewish citizens.

From kindergarten on, learning comes through meaningful classroom experiences, *chevruta* (pair or small group) study, and field trips with experiential learning. Students learn about Shabbat, holidays, holy texts, life cycle events, history, prayer, Israel, and Hebrew as an ancient and modern language.

Lifelong Learning

Agudas Achim offers educational opportunities for all — from novice through the deeply immersed — with ongoing classes, short series, and single session lectures; scholars-in-residence; *Shabbat* guest speakers; intimate discussions on *Talmud*, weekly *parsha*, Israeli poetry, films, and other topics.

Let us know of your interests; we are always looking for new ways to build community.



Repair the World



תיקון עולם



Social Action

The AAC Social Action Committee creates opportunities for members of Agudas Achim to perform *Tzedakah* (righteous giving), *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world), and *Gemilut Chasadim* (deeds of loving kindness).

Our congregation works to alleviate food insecurity, reduce homelessness, help the sick and institution-bound seniors, and support racial justice in partnership with local Alexandria institutions and national Jewish organizations.

Interfaith Dialogue

Our anti-racism and anti-bigotry programs take shape in dialogue and programs with our neighbors. We have been working with Alfred Street Baptist Church and the Dar al-Hijrah Islamic Center as well Westminster Presbyterian Church. We continually develop relationships to break down barriers and build understanding between different faith groups.



Caring for Our Neighbors

ALIVE! & CARPENTER'S SHELTER

Agudas Achim is one of more than 40 religious organizations in Alexandria that supports ALIVE! (ALexandrians InVolved Ecumenically) in its mission to help the needy in our midst. With a congregational representative to the group, we collect food on an ongoing basis, housewares when needed, support the women's transitional shelter, support the Child Development Center, and more.

We also provide and serve meals to the residents of the Carpenter's Shelter on a regular basis and especially for the annual Christmas Eve dinner.

Building sacred community. Nurturing lifelong relationships.

Prayer



תפילה

Services

Prayer lifts our voices, raises our spirits, and builds community. Regular Shabbat services, both Friday evening and Saturday morning, morning and evening *minyanim* during the week, and regular holiday services weave together the fringes and knots of the *tzitzit* with the ups and downs of daily life. Prayer in a *minyan*, or community, enables us to support each other when times are tough and to celebrate together in moments of joy.



Music

At Agudas Achim, we are proud of our vibrant music culture.

- Music is an ongoing component of our Religious School and Preschool programs.
- Sisterhood Ensemble sings during services and community engagements.
- On *Shabbat Shira* we celebrate with an Artist-in-Residence.
- Our house band, *Ein Lanu Z'man*, entertains at synagogue and community events.
- The annual David Sattler z"l Spring Concert brings guest performers to the community.

B'nai Mitzvah

Our community has an average of 15-18 *b'nai mitzvah* per year. Each student embarks on a journey of learning with a tutor, our Hazzan, Rabbi, and Education Director to prepare for his or her special day. The journey to Jewish adulthood includes individual study, class lessons and discussions, and a *mitzvah* (community service) project.

Adults can also celebrate *b'nai mitzvah*. Our Basic Jewish Ritual class studies the tenets and practices of our faith over three years, culminating in an adult class *B'nai Mitzvah* and celebration.



Torah



תורה



Study

Regular classes, lectures, and *Shabbatonim* provide our community with myriad avenues to expand our minds, challenge our beliefs, and seek God in daily life.

- High-profile speakers bring engaging dialogue to our *kehillah*
- Annual Scholar-in-Residence weekend offers an immersive learning opportunity
- Weekly *parsha* and *Talmud* classes give us a better understanding of sacred texts
- Leadership programs guide lay leaders

Observance

Join the congregation to celebrate *Shabbat* and holidays with services, *kiddush*, and community.

- Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: reflect, pray, learn
- Sukkot, Pesach, Shavuot: learn, pray, eat together
- Hanukkah: light candles, sing, enjoy latkes
- Purim: hear the *megillah*, watch the *shpiel*, have fun at the carnival, eat *hamentaschen*
- Tu B'shevat family seder
- Participate in holiday celebrations for the whole community



Israel

Ancient and modern Israel are brought to us through the *Shaliach*, or Israeli emissary, program. We have enjoyed many programs that connect us to Israel, such as:

- Windows on Israel: monthly discussions about aspects of Israeli society
- Israeli Film Nights: screenings and discussions of popular Israeli films
- Israeli Poetry Nights: readings and discussions of Israeli poetry in small group settings
- Congregational trips to Israel with our leaders
- Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel's Independence Day) celebrations

Building sacred community. Nurturing lifelong relationships.

Professional Staff



Rabbi Steven Rein

Rabbi Steven Rein has been committed to building a caring community, fostering Jewish learning, and encouraging members to turn words into action since he joined Agudas Achim in 2014. He aspires to make Agudas Achim a true *kehillah kedoshah*, a holy congregation.

He also serves as a reserve chaplain in the U.S. Air Force and on the JTS Religious Leadership Advisory Board.

Keep a look out and you may catch Rabbi Rein sporting his favorite attire — a New York Yankees or New Jersey Devils jersey — with his wife, Jodi Hirsch Rein, and their two children.



Hazzan Elisheva Dienstfrey

The Hazzan of Agudas Achim since 2000, Elisheva Dienstfrey nurtures our spirits through song, *niggun*, uplifting services, and community outreach. On an average day, you can find her singing with our children, seniors, or Sisterhood Ensemble; teaching *b'nai mitzvah* students; leading our house band, *Ein Lanu Z'man*; and serving on the Cantors Assembly Executive Council.

But watch out... this hazzan is also a second degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do.

Outside of AAC, Hazzan Dienstfrey enjoys spending time with her husband, Tobias, and their four children.

Rabbi Emeritus Jack Moline

Rabbi Jack Moline served as the rabbi of Agudas Achim Congregation for nearly 27 years. The congregation sponsors the annual Rabbi Jack Moline Lecture Series on Jews and Judaism in American life, featuring renowned speakers, in his honor.

Rabbi Moline teaches, offers *divrei Torah*, and performs other rabbinic duties at Rabbi Rein's invitation. He currently serves as the president of Interfaith Alliance, a national First Amendment advocacy organization.

Outside of their professional lives, Rabbi Moline and his wife, Ann, enjoy time with their children and grandchildren.





Professional Staff

Barry Nove, Executive Director

A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Barry Nove has led many synagogues and Jewish communal organizations to meet their goals in campaigns, leadership training programs, and much more.

In his free time, Barry enjoys writing, studying genealogy, and reading and watching science fiction.



Chaya Silver, Education Director

A Jewish pied-piper of sorts for our youth, Chaya Silver teaches our children how to grapple with God, to appreciate our tradition, and how to “do Jewish.”

She spearheads our religious school of approximately 120 children, oversees our youth groups, leads the Shabbat morning program for school age children, and runs the Drama *Chug* (activity group), which enhances our holiday celebrations with a Purim *shpiel* or *Hanukkah* play.

Chaya always strives to meet children where they are and engage them in Judaism.

Jen Halpern, Preschool Director

Jen Halpern has been a member of Agudas Achim Congregation for more than 25 years and director of our preschool since 2016. Affectionately known as Morah Jen, she continues to bring new and innovative programming to our preschool.

Our preschool's success is testament to her compassionate leadership and creative methods.

You can find Morah Jen reading with the children or playing with them in the STEAM lab, coaching teachers, and ready to speak with parents.



Community



קהילה

Synagogue Committees

The synagogue community offers many opportunities to engage as a volunteer. Our committees are run by dedicated lay leaders, populated by members of the congregation, and serve many needs within our community. Join a committee to build relationships, support the community and connect with others in a small group setting. Find the one that's right for you.

AA Rides

A.L.I.V.E.!

Bereavement

Caring

Cemetery

Chevra Kadisha (Burial Society)

Communications

Development & Fundraising

Disability Awareness & Inclusion

Endowment

Facilities & Administration

Financial Oversight

Legal Affairs

Library

Lifelong Learning

Member Services & Engagement

Men's Club

Music

Ritual

Senior Programs

Sisterhood

Social Action

Young Families

Youth & Religious School



Membership Application



Please complete the following membership application to join the congregation. Mail or deliver your application, along with your membership deposit, to Agudas Achim Congregation, 2908 Valley Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302. Questions? Please call the office, 703-998-6460.

MEMBER INFORMATION

Name _____
Last First Middle

Hebrew name _____ (pls transliterate)

Check one: ☐ KOHEN ☐ LEVI ☐ ISRAELITE

Father's Hebrew Name _____

Mother's Hebrew Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____

Occupation _____

Business phone _____

Email address _____

Cell phone _____

Date of Birth _____

Marital Status: ☐ SINGLE ☐ DIVORCED ☐ WIDOWED ☐ MARRIED

SPOUSE INFORMATION

Spouse Name _____
Last First Middle

Hebrew name _____ (pls transliterate)

Check one: ☐ KOHEN ☐ LEVI ☐ ISRAELITE

Father's Hebrew Name _____

Mother's Hebrew Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____

Occupation _____

Business phone _____

Email address _____

Cell phone _____

Date of Birth _____

(wedding date, if applicable) _____

CHILDREN

Name (English/Hebrew) _____

Birth Date _____

School/Grade _____

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date _____

Name (English/Hebrew) _____

Birth Date _____

School/Grade _____

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date _____

Name (English/Hebrew) _____

Birth Date _____

School/Grade _____

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date _____

Name (English/Hebrew) _____

Birth Date _____

School/Grade _____

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date _____

MEMORIAL RECORD

Relationship/Name _____

English Date _____

Hebrew Date _____

Relationship/Name _____

English Date _____

Hebrew Date _____

Relationship/Name _____

English Date _____

Hebrew Date _____

Previous Synagogue Affiliation(s) _____

Family Members Who Are Not Jewish _____

Please note: The Conservative Movement defines as Jewish a person born of a Jewish mother or converted according to Jewish law.

I have received a copy of the dues and assessments associated with membership in the Congregation. A deposit of \$_____ accompanies this application. I understand that obligations and expenditures are incurred by the Congregation based upon my pledges and the pledges of others, and I agree on behalf of myself and successors to pay any pledges made during the term of my membership in the Congregation.

Membership Category _____

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____



Our Mission

Agudas Achim is a community built on covenantal relationships. Each and every day we elevate and nourish our minds and souls while building a sacred community. We care about each other, we care about social justice, we care about Israel, and we care about YOU.



Our Vision

The vision of Agudas Achim is to be a vibrant and inviting place for Jews. By taking those things that already make our congregation a wonderful place and adding others, we enhance both our appeal and our congregational community. The goal is to be sensitive to the experience of being a Jew in modern times.

Office Hours

Mondays - Thursdays: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Fridays: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Closed on federal holidays

Daily Minyanim

Mornings, Sundays and federal holidays: 9 a.m.
Mornings, Monday-Friday: 7:30 a.m.
Evenings, Sunday-Thursday: 7:50 p.m.

Shabbat & Holidays

Kabbalat Shabbat/Welcoming Shabbat, Fridays: 6:30 p.m.
Shabbat and holiday mornings: 9:30 a.m.

Welcome to the Agudas Achim Community!

When you join Agudas Achim Congregation, you can be paired with another member based on where you live, ages of family members, and household interests. We would like this opportunity to welcome you, answer your questions, and introduce you to other members of the community.

Join now

Contact the office at 703-998-6460 or complete an application online, www.agudasachim-va.org/welcome/join-us