

What Is a Healing Service?

(These comments, written by Rabbi Ellen Lewis about two years ago, prior to the healing service at which we dedicated our lift that made the building fully accessible, explains what you need to know about a healing service. It is important for us to be reminded. [Sharon Herson, February, 2007])

WHAT IS A HEALING SERVICE?

by Rabbi Ellen Lewis

I participated in my first Healing Service about ten years ago at a UAHC Biennial and have been part of many more since then. I had forgotten any apprehension I might have felt until a Temple member asked me: "For whom is the service intended? People who are seriously and/or chronically ill, sick at heart, recently injured?" She wondered if she should attend or if she would be uncomfortable. I am grateful to her for reminding me that Healing Services are so new that they require some explaining.

"What is a healing service? The simplest definition is: any service where healing takes place. A service of healing provides a place to pray, reflect and meditate. It makes a communal connection for those who are coping with illness, trauma, assault, grief or for families, caretakers, loved ones of those who need healing. For our purpose, it consists of Jewish liturgy (niggunim, psalms, blessings, prayers and Kaddish) and may include non-traditional activities such as communal sharing or stories. At the service one may gain spiritual strength through listening, reflection, meditation and prayers or just by knowing that you are not the only one on such a journey" (Chris and Dave Wattenberg, Healing/Spirituality Network of CAJE).

Our Healing Service is for anyone and everyone, for the sick and the ones who care for the sick, for the recovering and the healthy, for those who want to feel the support of the community and for those who want to do the supporting.

"What is Healing? For this discussion . . . a journey. It takes a person from where they are to a place of ease, from dis-ease to ease. Some think that healing means to return to where they were before the problem, whatever that problem is, started. They can never get back to that point; in fact, they can never get back to where they were five minutes ago. At the end of a healing journey, they should be better than they were when they started" (Chris and Dave Wattenberg, as above).

What if you don't feel like you personally are in need of healing? Then come for those who need you.

"Who are healers? Anyone can be a healer. Most people are healers and are not aware or refuse to use the title. A parent who hugs an injured child and makes them feel better so that they can start the healing process is a healer. The friend who attends a house of shiva so that the people know they are being supported and can start to move on in their lives is a healer.

The teacher who helps a student to realize his or her special gifts and starts to rebuild self esteem is a healer" (Chris and Dave Wattenberg, as above).

When I first heard about the Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey, the regional director told me, "They only have services every other Friday night, but they come!" This is a worshipping congregation. Our services always include prayers for healing in which we all participate. This service will be no different that way, although the liturgy itself will be different. Come to this service as you would to any other.

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