



Dear 8th-10th grader family,

I'm sure you've heard that there are some changes to the Kol Emet Confirmation program this year. The most notable change is that Confirmation classes don't start until December and will meet every week, Wednesdays 6:30-8:30, until March. Kol Emet has also added three overnight retreats, two at Kol Emet and one at Camp JRF in the late spring. These changes were made to enrich and enhance the confirmation program.

***The first retreat is open to ALL Kol Emet 8-10<sup>th</sup> graders, even if you have not enrolled in confirmation.***

This information packet is about the overnight retreat component of our program. **Three retreats will be held throughout the year to enhance in-class learning.** Each will focus on an important Jewish theme and put it into action through projects, activities and prayer and time to just hang out with friends. As wonderful as our teachers are, it is difficult to explore a topic with much depth in one class period--so important concepts are spread across many class sessions. The retreats will extend classroom learning through exploring Jewish values through fun activities and open discussions over an intensive weekend. This gives us the ability to take the learning to the next level, where students can more fully integrate it, to "live" it. Each retreat will also call on one of the confirmation classes to take on leadership roles, in planning and leading the activities.

One of the key values that we seek to experience through these retreats is Kol Emet's value of *Kehillah Kedoshah*--Sacred Community. We know that one of the reasons students come to confirmation is to be with their friends. That is exactly the point--we want to give the students and greater opportunity to be with their Kol Emet friends, but bond together and to learn together as a *Kehillah Kedoshah*. We hope that it is these connections, among other things, that will keep our students connected to Kol Emet as a community and encourage them to make Jewish choices throughout their lifetimes. These retreats are intended to give our students more time to connect as a supportive *Jewish* peer group.

The theme of the first retreat is **B'tzelem Elohim—In God's Image: Self, Others & Community**, held on November 20-21 at Kol Emet. The 10th graders are invited to help with planning and running some of the activities. I have already met with several over the summer, and invite any who others who are interested to contact me. I will send notice of the next planning meeting via email.

The second retreat will be all about **Israeli Culture**. Feb \_\_\_\_\_. Since I teach the 9th grade class on Israel, we will plan ways to bring our classroom learning to life.

The third retreat will be held at Camp JRF, date TBA. It is the perfect setting to hold a retreat about **Reconstructionist Judaism & the Environment**. I will invite the 8th grade confirmation class to help me plan this retreat.

I will be working closely with Carrie Walinsky, the Education Director, and Rabbi Cove as well as the students to create a successful program. Since I am new to Kol Emet--I began teaching last January--I'll tell you a little about myself. I have been teaching in the Jewish community since 2000. My day job is Program Associate at InterFaithways, where I provide outreach programming to interfaith families. In the past eight years, I've taught toddlers, elementary school, teens and adults. I even ran my own religious school. I was an advisor and later director of Gesher LeKeshet (bridge to connection), a Jewish teen leadership program based in Princeton. I am a trainer in issues of diversity, conflict resolution and leadership development for the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) and a facilitator and past board member with the Jewish Dialogue Group. I learned Hebrew and just about everything I know about being Jewish when I was in college and after. I think that gives me a unique perspective on teaching and learning about Judaism. Learning about the vast Jewish Tradition has been an amazing journey of learning about myself, one that I'm still traveling. That's the sort of journey in which I hope to guide all of my students as they find their own connections to Judaism.

Please feel free to contact me at any time by email, cell phone or on Facebook. I can't wait to meet each of you at our first retreat!

Kol tuv—All the best,

Mira Colflesh  
267-632-6994