

Celebrating Shabbat  
Shabbat Initiative Report to Ritual Committee  
May 2009

The Shabbat Initiative committee spent many hours examining both Jewish tradition on observance of Shabbat as well as members' own practice and attitudes about Shabbat. We joined together in study and in personal practice, and our observance of Shabbat entailed not only worship together, but also sharing of meals, rest and relaxation, and home ritual practices including both Friday night and Havdalah.

Through these activities, the group gained understanding of one another and built relationships of trust and caring. At our April 25 summary meeting, group members endorsed the idea of seeking to maintain those relationships through ongoing activities, and proposed two major ideas for extension of its work to the congregation as a whole.

Within the group itself, participants in one of our own "25-hour Shabbat" activities – the Saturday afternoon study session on *mussar* – expressed interest in making *mussar* study an ongoing activity. Arrangements for establishing this are underway.

Many Initiative members expressed the feeling that the group's erev Shabbat dinner held in members' homes had been a personal highlight, broadening their understanding of home ritual. The group endorsed the idea of setting up a system of "floating" erev Shabbat dinners for the congregation. While logistic details would need to be fleshed out, the general idea was to establish a series of occasions when members of the congregation would open their homes for erev Shabbat dinners that would provide the sort of experience that the Initiative group had enjoyed. Initiative members might take the lead in organizing and conducting these dinners, with the hope that many in the congregation would learn more about this important element of Jewish home life. (One committee member has already taken initial steps toward work on this project.)

Second, the committee endorsed the idea of planning a congregation-wide "25-hour Shabbat," along the model of what the group did on April 17-18. We recognized that putting this together would require extensive planning, and three committee members have volunteered to work on this event.