

Humanistic Judaism: A Community for Secular Jews - St. Paul JCC, April 12

On April 12 at 7:30 PM at the St. Paul JCC, Miriam Jerris, Rabbi of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, will describe the current challenges facing Humanistic Judaism and the opportunities available to it as it recently marked its 50th Anniversary. More than half a century ago, former Reform Rabbi Sherwin Wine developed Humanistic Judaism to serve the growing number of Jews who valued cultural Jewish identity and sought Jewish community, even if increasingly uncertain about a theistic world view espoused by all other branches of Judaism. This fact made many Jews uncomfortable saying words in the liturgy they did not fully believe. In founding Humanistic Judaism, Rabbi Wine argued that Judaism began as a nation before it came to be defined primarily as a religion. Today, Humanistic Judaism defines Judaism as the historical and cultural experience of the Jewish people. Building on this definition that is still widely shared by many non-theistic Jews who identify deeply as Jewish, Humanistic Jews choose to celebrate many holidays and traditions of Judaism from a cultural perspective. Humanistic Judaism also serves the increasing number of multi-cultural families in the Jewish community, as well as humanists who appreciate Jewish culture. and seek to identify with it.

Rabbi Jerris will also discuss the implications of the recent Pew Study, A Portrait of Jewish Americans. One of the more pointed and controversial findings is that the majority of Jews see being Jewish as more a matter of ancestry, culture and values than of religious observance. Additionally, the number of unaffiliated Jews is now greater than ever. The fact that the humanistic values of ethics and social justice are already shared by many secular and unaffiliated Jews and other humanists makes Humanistic Judaism an interesting option for those seeking Jewish community and identity.

“Rabbi Jerris’ address will be in the auditorium at the St. Paul JCC on Saturday, April 12, with **a humanistic Havdalah service open to the public at 6:00 PM, a social gathering and oneg at 6:30, and Rabbi Jerris’ talk at 7:30.** The evening is free and open to the public. We hope to attract secular Jews,

unaffiliated Jews, Humanists of many backgrounds interested in cultural Judaism, and mixed couples.