

# Or Ami<sup>congregation</sup>

you're **home**



**Calabasas' First Jewish Community Serving the West San Fernando and Conejo Valleys**

Rabbi Paul Kipnes • Cantor Doug Cotler • Rabbi Julia Weisz

# Or Ami

congregation  
you're home

*May the door of this synagogue be  
wide enough to receive all who hunger for love,  
all who are lonely for friendship.*

*May it welcome all who have cares to  
unburden, thanks to express, hopes to nurture.*

*May its threshold be no stumbling block  
to young or straying feet. May it be too high to  
admit complacency, selfishness, and harshness.*

*May this synagogue be the doorway  
to a richer and more meaningful life.*





*Congregation Or Ami is a sanctuary of kindness,  
a safe Jewish community for today, your second home.*



*Bask in our **welcoming, inclusive, musical, innovative** Jewish community.*

*Connect with **warm, accessible, insightful** clergy.*



*Be **spiritually inspired**.*

*Discover **deep connections** with Torah, Israel, and the Holy One.*



*Partner with others who seek justice to **change the world**.*



If this kind of community feels exciting to you, then stop by to *schmooze* (talk) or grab a cup of coffee with our rabbis and cantor. We know you will feel the warmth.

***Come home to Judaism. Come home to Congregation Or Ami.***



## *Bask in our welcoming, inclusive, musical, innovative Jewish community*

### *A Congregation that Inspires*

At Or Ami, we deepen relationships with each other, while immersing in Torah, Israel and the Source of All Life. We travel together down Jewish paths which inspire our hearts and souls, and transform us to seek justice and nurture compassion in the world.

### *A Community that Embraces All*

Congregation Or Ami cherishes the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim* (welcoming guests) as a most important tenet of our faith. We believe that being inclusive is central to being a Jewish community.

We actively welcome **interfaith** couples and families into our community and encourage their participation. Recognizing that we are all created *b'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God), we are pleased to celebrate **Jews of Color**, and other multicultural Jewish individuals, couples and families. We embrace **young families** and **active adults of all ages, tots and teens**, individuals of all ages and all family structures. We reach out to families with **special needs** to ensure that they fully share in the warmth of Judaism. Jewish **LGBTQ+** individuals and families are embraced fully within our congregation. Our arms are open wide to those **struggling with illness, recovering from addictions, and seeking spirituality** for whatever the reason. Come home to Or Ami.

### *Henaynu Caring Community*

We are there for one another in good times as well as difficult times. *Chesed* (kindness) defines the way we interact at Or Ami. As a *Henaynu* Caring Community (*henaynu* means “we are here”), our congregants and clergy reach out during times of illness, birth, death, need, and celebration.



# Connect with warm, accessible, insightful clergy

## **Rabbi Paul Kipnes**

rabbipaul@orami.org

As spiritual leader of Or Ami, Rabbi Kipnes inspires creative Torah learning, meaningful communal caring, life-altering social justice work, and deep Jewish spirituality. He practices what he preaches: audacious hospitality and all embracing inclusion. He guides us to experience holiness throughout the wilds of California, down by the beach, in the local state park, in congregants' backyards, and around a campfire circle. Under his leadership, Or Ami earned fourteen national awards and received multiple grants from major foundations. Rabbi Kipnes has mentored over 45 rabbis and Jewish educators and served as Vice President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Rabbi Kipnes was a Camp Director, a trained Addictions and Recovery Spiritual Care provider, and Faculty Dean for Camp Newman. Warm and accessible, Rabbi Kipnes shares relevant Jewish wisdom on the *bimah*, in his blogs ([paulkipnes.com](http://paulkipnes.com), [MidrashicMonologues.com](http://MidrashicMonologues.com)) and, with his co-author/wife Michelle November, in their book *Jewish Spiritual Parenting*.



## **Cantor Doug Cotler**

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Cantor of Or Ami since its creation, Doug Cotler is a Grammy Award winning composer and an accomplished singer, songwriter and musician. Blessed with a warm and expressive voice, Doug's sensitive and penetrating interpretations of liturgy, as well as his insightful and humorous songs about Jewish events and heroes, have placed him in the forefront of contemporary Jewish music. Trained from the age of nine by his father, also a cantor, Doug Cotler's professional career began at 14, singing in Southern California synagogues and Jewish Community Centers. When Doug's father passed away, he assumed his father's position as cantor at a large reform congregation near San Francisco. Cantor Cotler believes that ritual is supposed to get you in the mood, to center you, and to get your mind off the world outside. He helps our congregants do that by leading us through the words and into the heart and spirit of Jewish ritual. Cantor Cotler is well known throughout the Jewish world for his stirring songs – including *Listen*, *Standing on the Shoulders*, and *A Rose in December* – all of which can be heard on his many CD's ([www.dougcotler.com](http://www.dougcotler.com)) and in the concerts he performs around the country.



## **Rabbi Julia Weisz**

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Rabbi Weisz is a nationally-recognized “pied piper” for teens and young people, uniquely talented in creating Jewish experiences that make our youth feel safe and valued. She directs all of our learning programs for youth, adults and families. Under her visionary leadership, Or Ami's teen programs have become national models for youth engagement. Her Madrichim Leadership Institute has re-imagined Jewish learning by guiding teens to become Jewish role models for their younger peers. Her exciting retreats, Hebrew through Movement, and camp-at-temple experiences have realized a 22% increase in teen participation. Rabbi Weisz leads our homelessness project, serves on the Leadership Team for California Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, and assists book editing committees for the CCAR Press. Her presentations at Hebrew Union College have distinguished her as a “rock star rabbi.” An insightful teacher and preacher, Rabbi Weisz inspires others as she leads services and provides compassionate pastoral care.





## Be Spiritually Inspired

### *God and Jewish Spirituality can be found everywhere!*

That is why we venture beyond our sanctuary walls to celebrate Shabbat and Holy Days in the natural sanctuaries of the California wilds. Annually, we trek to Paradise Cove in Malibu for a post-Rosh Hashanah *"Tashlich by the Beach"* picnic. Our backyard services in the summer attract friends to their neighbors' backyards. We celebrate under the stars in the spring and summer, and in living rooms during the winter. On *Tu B'shvat* in January, we tend our *Mitzvah Grove* in Malibu Creek State Park. Passover in April is celebrated with reenactments of the Exodus. Join us for *Men's Nights Out* and *Women's Nights Out* as we create friendships in congregants' homes.

### *Inspiring Prayer*

Or Ami is dedicated to celebrating Shabbat, life-cycle events and holidays in meaningful, spiritual ways. Friday night is a holy evening. Our Shabbat services are spiritually inspiring and socially satisfying. We sing together, led by multiple musical instruments and beautiful harmonies. We begin services by warmly welcoming guests and always include prayers for strength and healing. Monthly Tot Shabbat engages our young children while Family Shabbat inspires all ages. We shake up Shabbat, pushing the boundaries to open us spiritually through themed Shabbat services: Broadway, Color Me Prayer, Classic Rock, Inclusion, Mental Health, Drum Circle and Guitar Circle. Neighborhood Shabbat celebrates Shabbat in homes throughout the community.

### *Being Together – Deepening Relationships*

*At Or Ami we find joy in being together.*

Our **Men's Night Out** and **Women's Night Out** bring us together every six weeks at different congregant homes for a socializing and *schmoozing* (conversation). Over dinner and drinks, new friendships are created and Judaism is enhanced. Our rabbis guide us to explore what it means to be a man or woman, and to be part of a Jewish family.

Our **Business Roundtable** is a community of professionals who serve their clients as trusted advisors and share the highest standards of integrity, performance and accountability. Meeting monthly over breakfast, we enable relationship building, information sharing, and collaboration for the benefit of clients and one another. We enjoy a Jewish take on our work so that Judaism can keep us grounded and our integrity intact.

We cherish our relationship with **Chaverim**, a program of Jewish Family Service, which provides classes, programs and religious activities for developmentally disabled adults (age 18 to 80). Or Ami is Chaverim's Conejo Valley synagogue, offering full participation so that they can truly feel part of a Jewish community.

Our **Shared Interest Groups** foster relationships all over the Conejo and West San Fernando Valleys. Recent Shared Interest Groups include the Or Ami Chorale, Book Clubs, Cooking Group, 10 Plagues Softball Team, Photography, Hiking, Avon 2-Day Walk Team, and Jewish 12 Step Recovery, with others in formation for Runners, Bowlers, Museum Mavens, and more.





## Discover deep connections with Torah, Israel, and the Holy One

### ***Mensch-ify*** Families with kids pre-K to 6th grade

Introducing *Mensch-ify*, a parenting and pre-K to 6th grader Jewish “how to” experience, guiding parents on how to raise Jewish *mensch*es (kind and compassionate Jewishly-engaged children), while simultaneously teaching pre-K to 6th graders how to live as *mensch*es. Using Jewish texts and tradition, we apply Jewish stories and commentaries to develop kindness, compassion, and motivation to improve the world. Mensch-ify families prefer family learning because they want to embed *mensch*y values in their home and family, participate in mitzvah projects, and interact with mitzvah heroes.

### ***Kesher*** Children in Pre-K to 6th grade

*Kesher* (connection) connects your child to Judaism, the community and Israel. We foster within each child the knowledge and skills needed to live Jewishly and feel a part of our Jewish people. Fun, engaging activities, music and drama, games and project-based learning explore the breadth of Jewish tradition. We nurture Jewish spirituality and root our lives in Jewish values. *Kesher* students meet once a week on Wednesdays.

### ***Bar/Bat Mitzvah***

During Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies, our children emerge into adolescence. Passing the sacred Torah into your child’s arms creates an intensely spiritual moment for all. As a child leads the prayer service, chants from Torah, and teaches us through an insightful *d’var Torah* (speech), you will be inspired, knowing that Judaism will be safe for another generation.

Each student leads his/her own service. The preparation is deeply personal. Students study with our Bar/Bat Mitzvah teacher. They also meet individually for two months with Rabbis Paul Kipnes or Julia Weisz to develop the rabbi-student relationship, study the Torah portion, and prepare a *D’var Torah* (speech). Cantor Doug Cotler rehearses every student to offer helpful advice and reduce the level of anxiety. With personalized attention, you will enjoy a transformative spiritual experience of deep meaning.





# *Tikkun Olam: Repairing the World*

## ***Center for Tikkun Olam***

*Tikkun Olam* means, “repairing the world.” At Or Ami, we travel together down Jewish paths, which inspire our hearts and souls, and transform us to seek justice and nurture compassion in the world. Too often, the pressures of daily life provide easy excuses not to invest ourselves in social justice mitzvah work. Our Center for Tikkun Olam creates multiple opportunities to engage in healing our broken world.



## ***Mitzvah Day November Caring for Abused and Neglected Children***

Each November, our synagogue becomes a sacred assembly line as we fill and personalize over 400 duffel bags for children who will be removed from their homes and are entering foster care. Tens of thousands of donated items of clothing, activity books, books, journals, toiletries and night lights are collected to ease the lives of these kids.

## ***Child Shopping Spree***

Each December, we chaperone 50 at risk youth through a local department store. For many, this is their first shopping trip, and often their first experience with new clothes. Donated gift cards ensure each child can purchase needed clothing. Volunteers also provide a delicious meal and dessert.



## ***Parent-Teen Mental Health and Wellness Summit***

Parents, teens, parenting experts and therapists gather together for a daylong summit to learn real skills for resilience, stress management and anxiety reduction. We aim to transform our Or Ami into a truly safe place for teens and the parents who love but are unsure of how to protect them.

## ***Conejo Valley Food and Shelter Program***

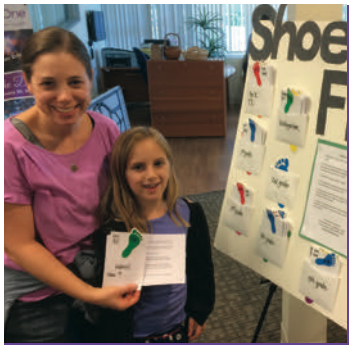
Our Jewish impulse to feed others (*essen mine kin* – eat, my child) compels us to feed the hungry. As part of a coalition of churches and synagogues in the Conejo Valley, Or Ami volunteers to cook for and feed the hungry one Sunday each month.

## ***SOVA Food Pantry***

On the High Holy Days, when we take stock of our lives and consider how to change them for the better, we stock the shelves of the SOVA Food Pantry so that others can share our blessings. Rosh Hashanah worshippers fill grocery bags with canned goods, returning them on Yom Kippur for distribution through SOVA. Or Ami regularly volunteers at SOVA, sorting food items and preparing food bags for SOVA's clients.







## ***Brandon's Buddies***

Or Ami youth join with children who have different abilities and special needs for fun days of playing and arts and crafts projects at Brandon's Village, a universally accessible playground. When both groups play together, we celebrate the holiness that we share.

## ***Community Organizing***

Committed to a vision of justice, we are organizing to act powerfully and successfully across lines of faith, class, and race to address the root causes of economic and social injustice. Our core team nurtures and trains congregants to build deep relationships grounded in Torah and *avodah* (religious meaning), and to foster authentic relationships with other communities who share a vision of a world redeemed. Our purpose is redemption: the sacred transformation of the world as it is into the world as we know it should be – overflowing with justice. We are currently focused on ending homelessness in Southern California.

## ***Jewish World Watch***

Our Jewish voice against genocide was raised against the genocidal destruction that took place in the Darfur region of western Sudan. Since then, Jewish World Watch led synagogues, schools and churches to speak out against major human rights violations consuming the Congo, Uganda and Central African Republic. Or Ami participates in the Walk to End Genocide, petition signing, and letter writing to ensure that "Never Again!" is more than just a post-Holocaust slogan.

## ***New Directions for Youth Supporting At-Risk Youth***

During the summer, we take at-risk youth on a fishing trip. On Mitzvah Day November, we create over 400 comfort backpacks to be given to children entering the foster care system because of abuse or neglect. At our December Child-Spree, we chaperone these kids through Kohl's Department store, using donated gift cards to purchase new, discounted clothes. Our Future Coaches teen program creates Sports Days to lead and play with these young people. During Prom Prep, we ensure that foster children are able to take part in their high school proms. Many of our Bar/Bat Mitzvah students develop engaging mitzvah projects with New Directions for Youth.

## ***And...***

We collect and distribute: **Shoes that Fit** for school children, **Jill's Coats for Kids** so even the poorest will be warm during the winter, and the **Green Bag Project** so people in Downtown LA have clothing and toiletries. We partner with **ETTA** to support adults with disabilities. We support **Hand in Hand**, schools for Jewish and Arab children in Jerusalem, and partner with **American Jewish World Service** to fight hunger, disease and poverty in the developing world. **AIPAC**, **ARZA**, **J-Street**, **IMPJ**, and **Women of the Wall** allow us to build a stronger American-Israel partnership and to deepen progressive Judaism in Israel. You see, at Or Ami, we take seriously the responsibility to fix the world, one life at a time.

***Partner with others who  
seek justice to change the world.***



## *Nurturing the Next Generation*

### ***Kid-ish Club (for Tots and the Adults who Love Them)***

Our Kid-ish Club gathers families with tots for monthly activities, including Tot Shabbat, holiday celebrations, Shabbat in My Gym, and Pancake Breakfasts at the Park. We introduce our young children to the joys of Judaism with music, hands on experiences and warm experiences with the Rabbis and Cantor.

### ***Shabbat Pajama Party (Grades K-3)***

Our Kindergarten through 3rd grade children gather a few times a year for a Pajama Party with our rabbis and cantor. Dressed in matching jammies, our clergy lead songs, tell stories, and guide our young students in positive encounters with Judaism.

### ***4th-6th Grade Retreat***

Because your children are exceedingly busy, Or Ami's retreat is so important. During a Shabbat at Camp Alonim with their Or Ami family, they develop friendships with other temple kids, relax away from the pressures of school, and take in some fresh air. The weekend – staffed by our rabbis and cantor, interns and beloved teachers – includes games, food, fun activities, sports, and a festive Shabbat celebration.

### ***GoMPTY (Grades 4-6)***

GoMPTY (Glimmer of My People Temple Youth) is our newest Jr. youth group for 4th through 6th grade students. Focused on fun activities, GoMPTY nurtures friendship and Jewish connections.

### ***SoMPTY (Grades 7-8)***

SoMPTY (Sparks of My People Temple Youth) is our energetic youth group for 7th and 8th grade students. Led by youth advisors and guided by our senior youth group board, SoMPTY is designed for socializing and relationship building within our community. Whether engaging in fun activities or social action projects, the teens develop an appreciation for Jewish community and their own worthiness as pre-teens.

### ***Triple T (Grades 7-12)***

Our Tracks for Temple Teens weave Jewish learning, sports, arts, drama and volunteerism into exciting, meaningful youth learning activities.

### ***LoMPTY (Grades 9-12)***

LoMPTY, our social and cultural Jewish youth group led for teens connects them to fun Jewish living! Whether enjoying a ballgame, or late-night broom-ball, participating in social action projects, or leading music for Havdalah services, our teenagers experience the delights of being Jewish, as they develop leadership skills, social consciousness, and Jewish joyfulness. LoMPTYites also engage in social action projects and meaningful discussions about peer pressure, sex, the world at war, human rights and more. Our teens participate in the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY SoCal region).

### ***Jewish Summer Camp***

Rabbis Paul and Julia (and their families) lead a delegation of 40 people each summer to Camp Newman, a Jewish summer in Santa Rosa, CA. We believe that Jewish summer camp is one of the best ways to build self-esteem, create new friendships and inspire children to love being Jewish. Additionally, Or Ami sends young people to many area camps including Camp Hess Kramer, Gindling Hilltop Camp, Camp Alonim, JCA Shalom, and Camp Ramah. We guide families to scholarships that help underwrite the costs of camp.





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