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Judaism :

- Strengthens modern, pluralistic Jewish life by establishing and supporting congregations and other communal institutions.
- Actively participates in building Israel as a democratic and pluralistic Jewish state.
- Unites Jewish religious tradition, inclusiveness, gender equality, and individual autonomy.
- Advances social justice, in the spirit of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).

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## SYDNEY AREA CONGREGATIONS REACH OUT TO GAYS AND LESBIANS

Temple Emanuel Sydney and Temple Emanuel Woollahra welcomed gay and lesbian worshippers last month on the Shabbat coinciding with Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, an annual event begun in 1978 as both a celebration and a protest for gay rights. At Temple Emanuel Sydney, Cantor Joseph Toltz inserted a special message into the Geula (Redemption) prayer, calling on society to recognize "our rightful place among families and friends, our rightful place in our communities." He said the Geula prayer is an appropriate place to address the issue of gay rights: "It speaks of the Jewish people's liberation from Egypt to the shores of freedom. Mardi Gras is a time where we speak out against persecution based on sexual orientation." Toltz was followed by Ilana Kaplin, a member of Dayenu, Sydney's Jewish lesbian and gay group, who read a special prayer. It said in part: "As lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer-identified people, family and friends, we are sometimes forced to pretend to be that which we are not, to present ourselves in ways which are not truthful, in order to feel safe in an intolerant world. But as we stand before You, our words and our thoughts speed to One who knows them before we utter them. We do not have to tell untruths to You as we often feel we must do in the world. We know we do not have to lie in Your presence." At Temple Emanuel Woollahra, over 100 gays and lesbians joined congregants for services and a special Shabbat dinner, at which Rabbi Mark Solomon of London was the guest speaker. Sydney-born and -educated, Solomon was ordained in 1991 at Jews' College, the British Orthodox seminary, and, after coming out, joined Britain's Liberal movement. He is currently a minister at London's Liberal Jewish Synagogue, "foster-rabbi" of the Liberal congregation in Edinburgh, Scotland, and an "honorary rabbi" of Britain's Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group. He is also the editor of B'rit Ahavah – Covenant of Love: Service of Commitment for Same-Sex Couples, which was recently published by the Liberal movement (see WUPJnews #191).