



Madison Minyan Reclaims Historic Synagogue

By ELLEN GULLER

On the corner of Gorham and Butler streets sits one of Madison's most beautiful historic buildings. On any given day it might host a wedding, a birthday party, or a concert, but peek through the old wooden doors on the second Friday of each month, and you will see the building being used for its intended purpose—as a house of prayer for the Jewish community of Madison.

Built in 1863, *Shaarei Shamayim*, or Gates of Heaven, is one of the oldest synagogues in the United States, and today it is home to Madison's newest prayer group, Madison Minyan. Known as an independent minyan, Madison Minyan is a lay-led Jewish prayer community that strives to combine a commitment to Halachah (Jewish law) with egalitarianism, ensuring that everyone feels comfortable and included. Here, traditional prayer becomes a spiritual experience, as a room full of voices sings and prays the Shabbat evening services. And of course, there is a delicious kosher potluck that follows, fostering true community bonding.

Madison Minyan was conceptualized and realized by a group of Jewish graduate students and young professionals. Since its inaugural event in September of last year, Madison Minyan has met monthly, each time providing 30-50 community members with a place to express their Judaism. In addition to organizing a monthly service, the volunteer-led, non-denominational minyan provides opportunities to its congregants to learn how to lead a service, sing the classic Shabbat songs, and even prepare kosher dishes.

In its first five months of existence many new faces have joined Madison Minyan. For some, it is their first time participating in a Jewish spiritual event; for others, it is the first since their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and still others are regular synagogue attendees. Regardless of experience, everyone finds a warm and welcoming group whose participants are eager to introduce others to the Jewish community of Madison.

Madison Minyan is a special place. Join us for services and a kosher potluck dinner on Friday, February 10, at 6:00 pm at the Gates of Heaven Synagogue in James Madison Park. For more informa-

tion, check out the website at www.madisonminyan.com, find us on Facebook or email info@madisonminyan.com.



Left to right: Eitan Bodien, Monica Woll, and Julie Waisbren pose for a pre-Shabbat photograph at Gates of Heaven.