



Mah tovu

Throughout this year, as Women's League for Conservative Judaism celebrates its hundredth anniversary – we are observing this milestone with the shared Torah Fund theme “*mah tovu*” – *how majestic are your tents, O Israel*.

Mah tovu: Just look around this sanctuary – count the many women who are active participants today in this Women's League/Sisterhood Shabbat. How many women have *aliyot*, are reading Torah and serve as *shlichot tzibbur*.

Many of our members can still recall the time, only a scant generation or two ago, that ritual participation in Women's League Shabbat -- like every Women's League gathering from sisterhood meetings to conferences and conventions – was the dominion of men -- clergy and members' spouses. For the most part women were consigned to the non-liturgical margins of the service. They were effectively spectators to the main event. The blessings for their honorific aliyot were recited by their husbands or the rabbi or cantor. Women's participation was restricted to English readings and maybe a devar Torah.

Mah tovu: how much have we achieved in such a short period of time !

Mah tovu: how much more Judaically and Hebraically knowledgeable and enriched are our members than in generations past.

Women's League Shabbat was mandated by that first generation of Women's League leaders as a day on which its members gather together in synagogues throughout North America to commemorate our organization's history and accomplishments through communal prayer and study.

Imagine if that first generation of leaders, Mathilde Schechter, Fanny Hoffman, Dora Spiegel, Carrie Davidson, Henrietta Szold and Sarah Kussy could join us today in this Women's League Shabbat observance -- no doubt they would look around in wonder and perhaps proclaim aloud: “*mah tovu*”!

Shabbat Shalom.

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2003-2017