

IMMERSE Judaism at the Global Village

By Participants, Rabbi Jo Beilby and Mr Bach



The Wandering Temple visited St Francis Catholic College to participate in the Global Village, during the Feast Day celebrations. Students participated in an immersive, experiential and interfaith day learning about Judaism with Rabbi Jo Beilby and our own Italian teacher Mr Bach who showed us what a Gabbai does! (He's the assistant to the Rabbi!)

The room was transformed into a special space where we could learn and experience Judaism by engaging in what resonated with us. It was especially interesting to find out that Judaism is at its core, a peoplehood, and that other aspects are optional and expressed differently by every other Jewish person!



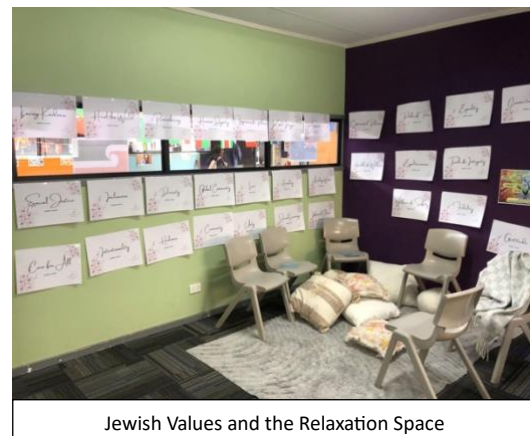
Many things we thought we knew about Judaism, we found out weren't quite accurate. For example, we found out about the origins of Jewish Communities and found that Jewish communities were in many places around the world for the last 2000 or more. There are Ethiopian and Sub-Saharan Jewish communities too!

Jewish Traditions were very interesting, and Rabbi Jo told us about the special season of Elul that we are currently in, and we got to hear the

shofar blown by Mr Bach! (A ram's horn!) A tradition of communication that goes back to before Temple times 2000 years ago.

There were posters around the walls of Jewish Values – and we were surprised to see just how similar they are to ours. There was also Jewish music playing that was traditional music from diverse Jewish populations.

The Relaxation Space was really welcoming and full of comfy cushions and a cosy rug and blankets. We were able to sit and chill out there. There were also booklets of Psalms and poems to reflect on and I can imagine this would be great if you were feeling overwhelmed or sad.



The Jewish Interfaith outreach was a great example of *'tikkun olam'* – the Jewish value to heal the world. Rabbi Jo and Gabbai Bach were here for us when we had questions, to show us interesting things, or just to have a chat. The take home gifts were really popular! The Wandering Temple gave us “Moments of Reflection” wristbands (quotes from the Psalms). It was lovely to see the Psalms are common to both of our traditions providing consolation, reassurance, and unity.



Gabbai Bach & Rabbi Jo Beilby

We really enjoyed the activity that showed how Judaism evolves and responds to society's needs. We looked at the ethical understanding of the Ten Commandments and then thought and answered the question, “If you were to write the 10 commandments, what would you add?” Many people had different answers, but it showed us what is important to us today.

There was a whiteboard where we explored the development of prayer called “Many paths to peace.” I liked the activity because I got to reflect on myself and on my community when I wrote messages with others. There was a personal and communal aspect that came from the heart and the

whiteboard messages grew to show us that empowerment and self-belief was really important to us.

Some of us took up the opportunity to receive a blessing under the *Tallit* (Prayer Shawl) from Rabbi Jo and to also contribute our own blessings to others. Our friends and family were most important to us.

Also, ‘doing’ religion, not just calling ourselves our religion, really showed itself in the Jewish practises we experienced. Even though many of them are the same, we don't think to do them. Some students thought it was really important to “do your religion”. This was a really interesting discussion that came up. We also really liked that women can be Rabbis! (Rabbis are like Priests for the Jewish religion).



Gabbai Bach raises the Torah Scroll after reading.

There was lots to learn as well as do, such as Jewish History, Jewish Languages, (it's not Just Hebrew, there's heaps of them!). There were display tables featuring items from a Jewish home, especially things Jewish people might use on *Shabbat* (Friday night to Saturday night). We were able to look at the 2000 year old Sacred texts in Aramaic! The language that Jesus spoke. And also to learn how Jewish people are known as “The People of the Book”. There was a library nook with many books for all ages, specialty books on synagogues around the world, books on different Jewish theologies, tales that help explain Jewish teachings, and

more. One of our teachers loved the book "God Wears Lipstick" where God can be thought of as female or gender neutral. Very interesting ideas!

The mock *Bimah* activity, (a *Bimah* is an altar) and Torah reading (the Torah is the first five books of the Hebrew Bible written on a scroll) was very sacred and special. We got to learn all about it and hold the pointer called a *yad*, and the handles of the Torah scroll called the *etz chayim*. We even heard Rabbi Jo and Gabbai Bach chant and read in Biblical Hebrew from the Torah, the very first section beginning with "In the beginning..."

In the room there was also a visual presentation of innovative and traditional Melbourne Jewish events such as *Bar/Bat Mitzvahs*. I had no idea Judaism was so diverse and also so similar to Catholicism. The Wandering Temple was full of really lovely experiences and fascinating information.