

High Holy Days in Jupiter's Cathedral City

By Barry Densa
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I went to my neighborhood church last month so I could participate in the Jewish Yom Kippur Service.

What? That's like Bill Clinton being invited to speak at a Republican fund-raiser, or hearing a shofar blown at the Vatican.

A shofar, by the way, is a trumpet made of a ram's horn. It was blown by the ancient Israelites during religious ceremonies and as a signal in battle. Modern Jews typically hear it in a synagogue during the High Holy Day services.

Nonetheless, there I was in a church for the Yom Kippur service. And the rabbi, standing beneath a two-story tall cross, pulled out a shofar, and blew it (for an impressively long time on one breath).

Now I know what you're thinking: These were Messianic Jews, otherwise known as Jews for Jesus. But no, these were normal, traditional Jews, members of the Reform Movement within Judaism.

It's a strange world we live in, isn't it?

But then I live in a strange neighborhood, a delightfully strange neighborhood, right here in Jupiter. I call it Cathedral City.

Actually, it's more like a religious triangle. A trinity, if you will, of physical juxtaposition and common cause. The heart of it is on the corners of Maplewood and Central. On the northeast corner, you have the Jupiter First Church. Across the street, on the northwest corner, is St. Peters Church. Then, just a stone's throw down the road on Central, on the southeast corner, there's Temple Beth Am.

Voila! Cathedral City.

A casual observer might think there's been a game of keep-up-with-the-Joneses going on, or as the case may be, keep-up-with-the-Catholics.

St. Peters not too long ago completed construction of its new, larger church and a day school. Now Temple Beth Am is building a larger temple and a day school.

Jupiter First, already housed in a relatively large edifice, has recently erected a large awning over its front entrance, (Well, they had to do something.)

But then right next door to it there's a large vacant lot. And though past church construction is no indicator or future church construction, to paraphrase the well-know investment disclaimer, I wouldn't bet against what might be built there some day in the future.

Yet, this presumed rivalry is no more than a chimera. In fact, there is quite a bit of interfaith cooperation in Cathedral City. And while all roads my indeed lead to Rome, so to speak, there's no argument here about which road is best.

So there I was, sitting in Jupiter First Church, because Temple Beth Am is under construction, and Juipoiter First had been gracious enough to lend its facility.

I have to admit though; it was a weird feeling being there, even though a chair is a chair, walls are walls, a prayer is a prayer, and there is but one God. Still, it's sort of like the feeling you have when you walk into the girl's bathroom by mistake (if you're a guy).

I know that's a strange analogy, but it was the first one that came to mind.

Naturally, the rabbi immediately addressed that issue, stating it's perfectly all right for a Jew to pray in a church, as long as it's not habit forming. Presumably, the same would apply to walking into the girl's bathroom.

Then I looked to the back of the church, to the booth where the DJ was sitting. Well, he wasn't exactly a DJ; he was the sound and light technician for the church. But he looked like a DJ.

During church services, when fire and brimstone is being spewed, he'd orchestrate the thunder and lightning, or he'd cue the harp as angels fluttered down from heaven with sweet cherubic blessings. At least that's what I imagined he would do.

For the Yom Kippur service, he just made sure the rabbi's microphone didn't squelch with feedback, or that the rabbi wasn't standing in the dark when he should be in the spotlight.

Anyway, judging by the smile on his face, he seemed amused, and I might say pleased, by the Jewish liturgy. He reminded me of my grandmother, who was deaf, but yet loved watching *I Love Lucy* on her little black and white TV. Another strange analogy, I know.

But he and my grandmother, though clueless about “the what and the wherefores” going on before their eyes, knew in their heart of hearts that it was good, and deserving of their time and attention.

And though the technician may have been disappointed that the rabbi wasn’t blowing an electric shofar, he, Jupiter First, and Cathedral City, strengthened my faith in humankind.

It’s good to live on a planet called Jupiter.