

Jewish-Christian Dialogue sponsors 'The Seasons of Our Lives'

By Perilla Wilson

Jewish-Christian Dialogue sponsored "The Seasons of Our Lives," an enactment of the rituals, customs and traditions of the Jewish life cycle events at the Springhill Avenue Temple for the December program. The presentation, written and directed by Elaine Geller, has won a number of awards in cities where Rabbi and Mrs. Geller lived prior to moving to Mobile.

Jack Friedlander welcomed all and introduced narrator Iris Fetterman. Mary and Paul Filben are the archdiocesan representatives and were co-hosts.

To the music of Sunrise/Sunset, the groom, portrayed by Sam Goldstein, entered with his parents, acted out by Shirley and Howard Hochman. The bride, Robin Goldstein, processed to the wedding canopy with her parents, Sandra and Harvey Gandler. The traditional ceremony was held and the couple then sat on either side with their parents for the continuing cycle, coming back together for the culmination of the program.

Kathy and Forrest Rubenstein brought their baby, Melinda, to the sanctuary when the wedding party was seated, for a Baby Naming Ceremony. The newborn receives a Hebrew name at this time as a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham. In the case of a male baby, he is circumcised in the home on the eighth day. A girl child is named in a ceremony at the synagogue, or in the home within thirty days.

At age 13, a Jewish boy becomes bar mitzvah and a girl, bat mitzvah — son and daughter of the commandment. Jamie Friedlander, who recently bat mitzvah, replayed the occasion with her parents, Amy and Jack Friedlander, and grandparents, Becky and David Friedlander. Rabbi Geller removed the Torah (a scroll containing the first five books of the Bible in Hebrew) from the Ark of the Covenant and it was passed from grandparents to parents to daughter, who then read in Hebrew and English from the Torah. Mrs. Fetterman related that the custom dates from the Middle Ages. Although it is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible, tradition holds that the father's

religious duty ends with the child's thirteenth birthday. After many years preparation leading up to the event, the bar or bat mitzvah is called on to read from the Torah during a Sabbath service.

Scott Silverman, dressed in white robe, portrayed the confirmand, who at 16, is called upon to confirm his faith and identity as a Jew. Confirmation is held on the festival of Shavuoth and commemorates Moses receiving the commandments from God.

Finally, the wedding ceremony was resumed to complete the cycle. The ritual included the breaking of the wine glass to symbolize that even in this most joyful time of life, one must be aware of the sorrows of the Jewish people. Mrs. Fetterman

pointed out that once the wedding date for a Jewish couple is set, even death in the family cannot change the date. The wedding goes on at the appointed time, although the family may choose to postpone the reception.

According to Mrs. Fetterman, the Jewish emphasis is on life rather than death and the hereafter. The Jewish funeral service is quite simple with prayers and a eulogy. The Kaddish, a prayer for the living in praise of God's goodness, is recited at the burial. The family then sits Shivah, a traditional seven day mourning period in the home following the death of a close relative.

Rabbi Geller answered questions following the presentation and a "reception" followed in the Polloch Auditorium.



JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE — (Left to right) Mary Filben, archdiocesan co-director of Jewish-Christian Dialogue; Elaine Geller and Iris Fetterman, pause for refreshments after the program presented at the Springhill Avenue Temple.