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Singing Before the Gates: GJC S'lichot Program Inspires with Song and Prayer

Philadelphia, PA

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The High Holidays are the time for us to open our hearts and to focus on how we can move ourselves and the world forward to a better place,” says Rabbi Adam Zeff of Germantown Jewish Centre, “but it can be hard to know how to begin. Our musical S’lichot service helps us get into the space of contemplation and introspection that we need to take stock of the past year and begin the new one.” The custom of reciting S’lichot – penitential prayers – on the Saturday night before Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) dates back at least 1,000 years, but Germantown Jewish Centre re-thought its traditional S’lichot service five years ago. “There’s the beautiful image of opening the gates of repentance so that we can enter and remake our lives so that we’re living out our highest ideals,” explains Executive Director and Cantorial Soloist Nina Peskin. “But what can make those gates open for us? We decided to use Jewish music from around the world as a way of getting past blocking points and engaging together in the spiritual work of reinventing ourselves.” Since the change in the format of the service, it typically draws 200 or more people to GJC’s sanctuary on Ellet Street in Mt. Airy each year. This year’s S’lichot program will be held on Saturday, September 24th from 8:00 to 10:00 PM. The service is free and all are welcome to attend. For more information, please contact Kate Lawn at 215-844-1507.

Germantown Jewish Center is a diverse and welcoming community that celebrates Jewish tradition in innovative and exciting ways, and embraces multiracial, interfaith and LGBTQ families and individuals. GJC is located at 400 W. Ellet Street, Philadelphia, PA 19119.

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