

Academy for Jewish Religion creates video series to foster knowledge and awareness

BY ORA HORN PROUSER

Mosaic Religion and the Religious Mosaic, a project of the Academy for Jewish Religion (AJR), is designed to foster greater knowledge and awareness of the diversity of Jewish life and thought for students at Christian seminaries.



photo courtesy of Mosaic Religion and the Religious Mosaic

The project, funded by our Phase I *Pathways for Tomorrow* grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., called upon the expertise of AJR leaders, faculty members, and alumni to develop innovative materials promoting interfaith and intercultural competency in collaboration with our colleagues at other ATS member schools. The shared goal was to help prepare priests, ministers, and lay leaders to build bridges of Christian-Jewish understanding and respect in their diverse communities.

After consulting with leaders of several ATS seminaries about their needs in helping to share information about Jewish life with their students, it became clear that most were looking for short videos that could be easily inserted into their courses. AJR, therefore, created a series of 25 videos—each of which is five to ten minutes long—that can be used to share valuable information about Judaism. The videos include topics such as Jewish Identity, antisemitism, how Jews read the Bible, God language, the Jewish calendar, Jewish views of death and the afterlife, understanding synagogues, and a discussion of whether Jews are considered white. These free videos, created specifically for our ATS colleagues and available

on the [AJR website](#), were introduced at a [webinar](#) on February 28.

This project is part of a larger initiative at our own institution, launching an interfaith center as a part of AJR's newly created [Institute for Applied Pluralism](#). Given our unique role as the only Jewish seminary accredited by ATS, the focus of this center is on working with Christian seminaries and seminarians rather than with Christian communities in general. This center has become even more important given the rise of antisemitism in the United States and the current war in Israel following the devastating terrorist attacks of October 7.

We are now developing a program titled “*La’et Kazot: For a Time Such as This*” whose goal is to build interfaith relationships and understanding among future clergy while they are still seminary students. We plan to bring together Christian and Jewish seminarians to study together and build personal connections. Our hope is that these early networks will have a deep and enduring impact on future dedication to cooperation in general, and allyship against antisemitism and in support of Israel's rights as a democratic state. We think that



The Academy for Jewish Religion community prays together at its recent Intensive.

Our students thrive because we provide the academic rigor they seek in addition to the flexibility necessary to fully realize their personal Jewish identity and become the clergy and leaders their communities need. In addition, they are trained in a community that values and lives pluralism—helping them to become clergy who not only respect diversity but who cherish the other and know that they grow through their

experiences with those who differ from themselves.

working together will enable all involved to broaden their perspectives and deepen their understanding of and relationship with the other. We also hope this program will cultivate allies among future Christian leaders who can stand together with their Jewish colleagues against antisemitism and promote the safety of the Jewish community through deeper knowledge of contemporary Judaism.

As the first and oldest pluralistic Jewish seminary training and ordaining rabbis and cantors as equal partners, AJR is a community of learners that cultivates insightful, creative, and caring Jewish leaders who are ready to meet the evolving needs of the entire Jewish community. As the only Jewish school accredited by the The Association of Theological Schools, we educate future rabbis, cantors, and communal leaders to serve within the Jewish community and to be sensitive to interfaith relations.

This has been a difficult year for the Jewish community. We are grateful for our connections within ATS, and we look forward to working together with our colleagues and friends in building the relationships that are the core of interreligious connection and growth. We are grateful to Lilly Endowment Inc. for its generous support of *Mosaic Religion and the Religious Mosaic*. We know this project enabled us to create the groundwork of strong future relationships and mutually beneficial programs.

Please be in touch with us to learn more about our series of videos, or to connect with our students and our institution. We know that it is through working together that we will build a brighter future for all of us.



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