

# Music director to lead women's Seder

By VICKIE BECK  
of The Tampa Tribune

**PALM HARBOR** – Joy Katzen-Guthrie's faith shines through whatever she's doing. And as a lyricist, performer, tour guide, church music leader and cantorial soloist for a local synagogue, she does a lot.

"My desire when I perform and

## Faith in focus

write is to encourage people to find insights, to find

answers and to receive comfort," Katzen-Guthrie said.

The Palm Harbor resident has written and recorded in a variety of musical styles, including liturgical, folk and stage songs.

"Everything I write has a message. The most pervasive, basic themes are to be true to oneself, to be what you are meant to be; and to see the divine power in humanity and to use our connection to God, or to the divine presence, to affect change in one's self and in the world," she said.

Her "Passages" album, which includes the original songs "Be

Yourself," "Woman to Woman," and "Every Day More Love," clearly deal with these ideas.

Katzen-Guthrie has served as cantorial soloist at several syna-



**Katzen-Guthrie**

gogues in West Central Florida for more than 10 years. Since last year, she has worked in that capacity for Temple B'nai Israel in Clearwater. She is respon-

sible for music for both the worship services and for festivals and other special events.

"Traditionally, the role of the cantorial singer is one of intermediary between the congregation and God, to carry the music to God," Katzen-Guthrie said.

"My desire is to evoke the spiritual feeling of the congregants. I like to vary the music each week, and introduce new melodies."

As Passover approaches,

Katzen-Guthrie is preparing to lead a communitywide women's Seder at Congregation Beth Shalom in Clearwater.

"A Women's Seder is a different way of telling the story of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. Several women central to the story — Miriam, Shifrah and Tuah — have been overlooked in the past," she said.

"Women today are craving the opportunity to celebrate women's role in Judaism. Throughout history, it is the women we have to thank for the survival of the faith, the people."

Although Jewish, Katzen-Guthrie is also music director of Unity Church of Today in Tampa, which, at first glance, might seem a bit incongruous.

"My personal faith is a combination of many elements. What I love about Judaism is it is inclusive — it doesn't limit one's religious beliefs and spiritual views.

"People get all caught up in the law of Judaism, but what is beautiful is it celebrates the beauty of all life and the divinity of humanity," she said.

### At a glance

The Women's Seder will be at 6:30 p.m. March 20. Cost of \$10 includes a light, symbolic meal. For more information call 530-9634.

For information on Katzen-Guthrie's other performances or activities, call 785-4568, or check the website: [www.joyfulnoise.net](http://www.joyfulnoise.net), or email Katzen-Guthrie at [joyfulnoise@earthlink.net](mailto:joyfulnoise@earthlink.net)

As music director at the Unity church, Katzen-Guthrie provides music for the weekly services and well as for special programs.

"The Unity Church is non-denominational and draws references from all faiths. It recognizes our in-born divinity, and is perfectly in line with Judaism," she said.

Over the past year, part of Katzen-Guthrie's focus has turned to leading Jewish Heritage Tours to China.

"The tour has allowed me to connect to a little-known, highly impactful part of Jewish history that has had a personal effect on me.

"In reading and researching, I was amazed to learn that China is the only place on the planet where Jews were not persecuted. I never knew [that]."

The second China tour is scheduled for April, and will include stops in Beijing, Kaifeng and Shanghai.

Whatever she does, Katzen-Guthrie's spiritual philosophy — "the power of the individual to affect change in the world through a connection with the divine force" — is clearly evident.

► Vickie Beck covers religion in Pinellas County. She can be reached at (727) 799-7413 or [vbeck@tampatrib.com](mailto:vbeck@tampatrib.com).