

**EMANUEL BOARD OF TRUSTEES ZOOM MEETING
12-21-21**

ATTENDANCE: Fern Cohen, Reesa Olins, Andrea Goldenberg, Hilda Slivka, Deb Zuckerman, Sheila Silverman, Ken Simon, Howard Smith, Tammi Kraushaar, Rick Lasker, Mickey Libbin, Michael Kamins, Joanne Pasternak, Emily Lebovitz-Miller, Jay Smith, Joe Bacher, Mark Jacobson, Gail Adler, Jeff Adler, Michele Parker, David Bomzer, Faith Helene, Susan Goldberg, Gail Weinstein, Don Miller, Fred Spaeth, Mel Simon, Rona Gollob, Carolyn Sorkin, Michalee Merritt, Elysa Graber-Lipperman, Lisa Behan, Barry Feigenbaum, Avi Cramer, Jackie Isaacson, Hannah Zwiebel, Ken Malley, Meredith Smith, Marc Resnick, Lisa Levy, Ray Weinstein, Jeff Cohen, Alan Parker, Joyce Libbin, Kobi Benita

Zoom meeting called to order at 7:35pm

D'var Torah by Sheila Silverman: Moral limits to power

Members of the medical advisory panel urged no in person meeting at this time due to widespread Omicron variant and unknown about the virus.

Motion to suspend rules and proceed with virtual meeting passes unanimously

Minutes of 11/16/21 passes with two abstentions

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT Kobi Benita

Life Cycle

Mazel tov: Francene and Jeremy Weingast on the birth of grandson Aaron Davis Weingast, son of Jay & Melissa Weingast

Nehamas

Selma Budkofsky, mother of Alan (Sharon) Budkowsky; sister of Seymour (Judy) Melnick
Judith Krinsky Peretz, sister of Dr. Michael (Marsha) Krinsky
Dr. Mark Blumenfeld, father of Corey (Jason) Glider
Mark Levine, husband of Shirley Levine - former member
Elliot Nirenberg, cousin of Sheldon Kafer
Alan Moshe Epstein, grandfather of Isabella & Gabriel Epstein; former father in law of
Angela Epstein
Trip to Israel cancelled; not enough registrants; hope to try again in the future

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE Elysa Graber-Lipperman

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee has been meeting since the summer. Members of the committee include Elysa Graber-Lipperman, Ken Simon, Michalee Merritt, Michele Parker, Marsha Wolfberg, Meredith Smith, Judy Fox, Danielle Wu, Philip Thierman, Jeni Magalhaes, and Don Miller. Rabbi Small is an ex-officio member of the committee.

The committee is focusing on identifying how the synagogue can move further towards including the spouses and family members of congregational members who come from different faiths and cultural backgrounds in a manner that is acceptable to Rabbi Small as the synagogue's spiritual leader and consistent with the principles and standards espoused by the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

It is important to try not to refer to families as interfaith or spouses and family members as not being of the Jewish faith when describing people who come from different faiths or cultural backgrounds for two reasons. First, a spousal member from a different cultural background

may not have grown up with a faith or be practicing a faith. And, second, referring to important members of the community as “not Jewish” is non-inclusive.

Unfortunately, the committee has learned of instances when the synagogue is perceived to be neither warm nor welcoming, and the committee feels it is important for the synagogue to embrace an inclusive culture fully and meet families where they are. There is a difference between feeling welcomed and feeling included or that you belong.

The committee is working on a positively-phrased document which outlines the synagogue’s participation guidelines. The guidelines include all the ways everyone in the community is able to participate in services and life cycle events which is quite extensive. It also mentions additional covenantal honors, such as an Aliyah or dressing the Torah, that Jewish individuals are able to partake in. The goal of this document is to be fully transparent to avoid any surprises or misunderstandings.

The committee is also seeking grant monies from the Jewish Community Foundation to hire a consultant to help the congregation navigate through this process and re-orient the discussion around these issues, i.e. the mitzvah to honor and cherish all people as Children of G-d, made in the Divine Image, being a truly inclusive, rather than just a warm and welcoming, community, meeting families where they are, etc.

SCHUL CLOUD TRAINING Reesa Olins

Transitioned from Chaverware to Schul Cloud in February 2021. Both staff and lay leaders are still not proficient, and specific training guidance is needed for the office staff, Amy Dembo, and Michael Kamins. Need an consultant for training, financial processes and efficiencies, with implementation and stream lining. Twelve BOT members stepped up to contribute \$250 each to help defray the cost of the consultant.

MOTION: Engage consultant for up to 50 hours of training with an additional cost of \$4000
motion passes unanimously

TREASURER’S REPORT Michael Kamins

Estimating an addition \$169,000 will come in by the end of the year; on track to receive the full \$725,000 income that is in the budget. Currently a \$118,156 projected deficit.

We have NOT spent the previous year’s \$15,000 NAA grant; had been earmarked for temperature control improvements to the school building, but didn’t need after Lollipop departed the premises. *Question as to who will follow and record grant monies received.* Is it part of the Treasurer’s responsibilities? NAA requires demonstration of what monies are used for: energy management gives donor 100% deduction, while social programs only allow donor to take a 70% deduction. There is a two year window to authorize a change of purpose use. *Please produce budget sheets for distribution ahead of meetings.*

STRATEGIC PLAN Michalee Merritt

A LADDER TO THE SKY

THE 2026 EMANUEL SYNAGOGUE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Board of Trustees established a Strategic Planning Committee to develop a strategy for Emanuel’s growth and success in the next five years. The committee studied our membership’s

views on synagogue membership, assessed the reasons that people join our synagogue, the reasons they leave and why others opt not to affiliate in the first place. The Committee conducted an online survey and Community Conversations to gauge our members passions and interests in synagogue life and the role the Emanuel plays in their lives. With over 200 responses to the survey and two dozen in-depth conversations, we learned that we have many highly engaged members who value the guidance and leadership of our Clergy and Director of Youth and Family Learning, and that our adult education programs are well received.

We also learned that the cost of membership is a major consideration for those who leave or opt not to join in the first place.

The Emanuel Synagogue can be proud of its reputation for meaningful and quality religious study, spiritual support, education, ritual observance, social action, and programming developed over its hundred-year history.

Our members want diversity and inclusivity, social programing, warm welcoming of new members, and assistance with the costs of membership and other fees.

The below plan is presented to the Board of Trustees for adoption. It represents the considered assessment and input of the Strategic Planning Committee. We believe that the Synagogue has a highly qualified group of clergy, educators, and professional staff as well as a robust lay leadership. Properly organized and supported this group can create an Emanuel Synagogue that will attract new members seeking social connections, entertainment, spirituality, ritual observance and lifelong learning, while continuing to provide the same to our existing membership.

VISION

The Emanuel Synagogue is a pathway to create a spiritual journey, nourish social connections and explore learning opportunities for all ages and stages.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Our community members have many opportunities to invest their time and resources.

Many current and former members see the synagogue as a place to educate their children so that they can become a bar or bat mitzvah but do not view the synagogue as a broader option for life long social connections spirituality, or learning.

The demographic studies across the Jewish community both locally and beyond indicate that affiliation with synagogues is no longer a priority in many Jewish households.

The cost of synagogue membership is perceived as high particularly by those who do not immerse themselves in the life of the congregation.

There are a growing number of interfaith, nontraditional and special needs families amongst our members and in the broader community who seek Jewish journeys.

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GOALS

A. Provide new members with incentives to join the Emanuel Synagogue

Strategy No. 1: Create a Membership and Marketing Committee.

Strategy No. 2: Develop and Implement a Marketing Plan.

Strategy No. 3: Clergy and Volunteers Engaging with Members.

Strategy No. 4: Develop and market a new members discounted dues program. Strategy No. 5: Create transparency in the membership

Intended Outcomes:

If the Emanuel Synagogue is successful, it will:

- Clearly communicate its welcome and warm spirit;
- Provide an easy and understandable path to membership
- Engage all of its members
- Clearly communicate the benefits and costs of membership • Retain and grow membership

B. Empower and engage all members of the Emanuel Community

Strategy No. 1: Create a Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Strategy No. 2: Develop and adopt governance policies that value members.

Strategy No. 3: Develop a resource center for non-traditional and special needs families

Intended Outcomes:

If the Emanuel Synagogue is successful, it will:

- Be known for its diverse and inclusive membership
- Embrace all who seek to practice and affiliate with Conservative Judaism
- Provide support and resources for those in need

C. Engage parents and children in lifelong Jewish journeys

Strategy No 1: Engage Parents in programming, social connections, and educational opportunities while their children are of religious school age.

Strategy No. 2: Develop a Parent Teacher's Organization to spur volunteerism and provide a means of communication between this cohort and the synagogue's lay leadership, staff and clergy.

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Strategy No. 3: Make the family journey toward Bar and Bat Mitzvah a bridge to continued involvement beyond the big day.

Intended outcomes:

If the Emanuel Synagogue is successful, it will:

- Retain a higher percentage of families after their children have become bar/bat mitzvah.
- Engage more of its religious school parents in volunteerism and leadership
- Create spiritual and social connections for more of its members and prospective members.

ULTIMATE STRATEGIC GOAL

The Emanuel Synagogue will be known as the gateway synagogue for unaffiliated and non-traditional Jews, as well as their spouses, partners, and families, seeking social and spiritual connections; the fun synagogue, the place to be no matter how you arrived. The Emanuel will be known for its leadership in spirituality, entertainment and the arts, its amazing clergy, and professional staff. The Emanuel Synagogue of 2025 will be a ladder connecting its members to each other, to the almighty and to the rich traditions of Jewish life.

Thank you to all our committee members who together brought this plan to fruition.

Michalee Merritt, Reesa Ollins, Glenn Blumenstein, Mark Merritt, Ken Simon, Josh Cohen, Rabbi Small, Barbara Fink and Mel Simon, Rabbi David Small, Executive Director Kobi Benita and Executive Assistant, Lisa Taylor

Membership and marketing committee members need to engage people coming into synagogue for minions. Strategic plans should not only focus on new younger members, but on also targeting new older members. Develop havurot? *Please send any questions and comments to committee.*

PRESIDENT'S REPORT Ken Simon

Installation of Cantor Risman to be scheduled: looking at a Sunday afternoon in March.

Working on another concert to be held at the synagogue on 11/20/22, with Cantor Risman, Cantor Joseph Ness and his orchestra, and other special guests to be scheduled. Will be looking for people to work on this.

Due to increasing cases in the Omicron variant, the Medical Committee has suggested suspending in person services for the time being.

MOTION: Suspend in person services starting at 5:30pm tomorrow (12/22/21) until further notice

36 YES

4 NO

motion carries

Religious School will continue to follow guidelines of West Hartford Public Schools. School not in session next two weeks due to winter break.

Parsonage allowance vote has been moved to Executive Session minutes, following discussion between Secretary Andrea Goldenberg and President Ken Simon. Andrea looked back three years and all those votes were recorded in Executive Session, as it pertains to employee's salaries.

Adjourn to Executive Session at 9:20pm

