

TEMPLE EMANUEL LONG RANGE PLAN

Spring 2014

I. Background and Overview

Temple Emanuel is a thriving religious, educational, and social institution with about 550 membership units. This long-range planning and visioning exercise was begun in October, 2012 and delivered to our community in March 2014. Our community had not undertaken a long-range plan since 1995, with an update in 1997. The principal challenge for this effort has been to develop actionable ideas to build upon the changing demographics in our community and to meet identified Temple Emanuel priorities.

This is the third Long Range Plan (LRP) prepared for Temple Emanuel. It is intended to take the congregation through the next three to five years and to provide a process for future leaders to plan for longer horizons. Prior planning efforts addressed specific needs in our community including membership, building and infrastructure, and staffing. This LRP focuses on specific and more abstract congregational issues such as demographic trends and their impact on our community, the importance of connectedness among our members, meeting our spiritual and educational needs, and ensuring that the Temple is positioned to address future uncertainties. This LRP should be considered a living document and a guide because members' needs, desires, and circumstances will change over time. Re-evaluations and revisions are both to be expected and a sign of a healthy, vibrant congregation.

Two overarching principles for this LRP were to provide an opportunity for all Temple members to have their voices heard, and to be as thorough as possible in collecting data that would underlie findings and recommendations. As detailed in the Appendix to this report, during an 18 month-long process the Long Range Planning Team conducted numerous interviews, focus groups, town hall meetings, Board retreats, and surveys to compile an overview of our community which we hope accurately reflects the Temple's membership. The planning process was built upon data collection, congregant feedback, and planning discussions conducted by the LRP Team and revealed a desire by many

congregants for future directions that, building upon our strengths, will bring us together as an even more vibrant, welcoming, and sacred Jewish community.

As discussed below, this LRP was prepared during a period of relative stability and success in our community. We have been blessed by long-term, steady leadership from our Clergy and our senior staff. Our lay leadership has proved capable and visionary in times of critical need. And, our surrounding community has continued to grow even in times of economic uncertainty. Therefore, this plan does not call for wholesale changes to who we are as a Jewish religious community, or to our operating model in general. We believe that this fortunate circumstance provides a unique opportunity for us to focus inward and to strengthen those areas that define our community. Notably, we do not recommend modifying the long-time mission of Temple Emanuel, which has served our community well:

Temple Emanuel is a Reform Jewish Congregation affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism. In adherence to the concepts of God, Torah, and Israel, it seeks to:

- 1. Strengthen our faith, commitment, and observance as Jews;*
- 2. Foster the love of Judaism and the preservation of Judaism and the Jewish people;*
- 3. Promote Jewish learning as a lifelong process for ourselves and our children; and*
- 4. Maintain our Congregation as a caring community based on Jewish ethics and principles.*

This LRP is organized in six general categories that emerged from the process, findings and recommendations. The sections which follow discuss, in turn, our **Evolving Demographics** – how we define ourselves as a community; **Worship and Spirituality** – the heart of the Temple Emanuel experience; **Outreach** – to all parts of our community; **Engagement** – responding to changing congregational needs; **Education** – ensuring our programs are incorporating the best ideas with respect to optimizing the educational experience; and **Addressing Future Uncertainties** – so that the Temple is prepared to deal with “over the horizon” issues, expected or unexpected.

II. Evolving Demographics

Temple Emanuel's membership is on the whole pleased with who we are as a community. We view ourselves as warm and welcoming. We are proud of our Clergy, who make exemplary contributions not only at Temple Emanuel but nationally and worldwide. We are also proud of our staff, our Board of Trustees, and other volunteers who continue to set high standards of excellence. While many Jewish organizations are facing declining membership, our numbers remain stable, fluctuating between 555 and 575.

Among members, there is great pride and satisfaction with our commitment to social activism and environmental issues, and our creative and innovative approaches to these priorities. The Temple Emanuel Early Childhood Center (TEECC), in its sixth year, has brought renewed energy to our community. This has fueled growth in many aspects of Temple Emanuel (religious school, volunteer leadership, financial stability).

Temple Emanuel cannot, however, count on its current successes indefinitely. We need to continue to strengthen our community. Congregants are pleased with how Temple Emanuel meets spiritual and community needs; at the same time we desire increased connectedness at multiple levels. While we are proud of our Clergy, we want more interpersonal interactions with both the Rabbi and the Cantor. There is a desire to create communities within communities to bolster relationships among the members.

Two concerns were raised focusing on generational distinctions. Younger families yearn for increased participation with the community as a whole. At the same time, many senior members are concerned that we not focus too heavily on the younger population. This is a challenge to keep in mind as we move forward with our recommendations.

III. Worship and Spirituality

Our community is formed on the basis of our Jewish heritage and our faith, and our connections to that faith. It is important to check to see if our varied worship and spiritual needs are being met. As a congregation, we come from many religious backgrounds and providing for all our expectations, needs and desires can be a challenge to our Clergy. We are lucky that as a congregation we are accepting of interfaith families.

It was with much delight we find that as a whole the congregation appreciates the Clergy and the variety of spiritual experiences they provide. We accept that spirituality can be achieved through a myriad of experiences using all of our senses-communal prayer, introspection, music, movement, explanation of the service.

With that said there are areas where growth is desired. Since we have members who do not come from a Reform Jewish background, education about the history and reasons for much of liturgy is wanted. Explanations during services are one way but not the only. Classes can be taught by the Clergy or knowledgeable lay members; articles can be published in the Kol Kore or online; field trips can take place to locations of Jewish interest.

The data collected by the LRPT also indicated a clear desire to have more speakers or special themed services. This all fits into understanding of what it means to be a member of a Reform Congregation. We need to understand the connection of these types of services to our Jewish heritage. All of these activities could lead to a larger participation in services.

In order to encourage attendance at Friday night Services a predictable pattern of times for services needs to be established. There was some concern over the variations in the start times of the Services – mainly with respect to not knowing well enough in advance the times that Services begin. This can be addressed by establishing – and communicating to Congregants – a predictable schedule (e.g., the second and fourth Fridays will start at 6:30, or something to that effect).

A wish to continue and grow our appreciation and knowledge of the many types of Jewish liturgical music- both contemporary and traditional – was articulated. It is hoped that as a congregation we will continue to be introduced to contemporary music and composers as

well as learn about music from the past. A question arose as to what is traditional. Throughout time music has been written and adopted. Perhaps traditional is what one heard as a child or a particular style of music that one loves. There is much to learn here.

The Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah ceremony is a major milestone in the life of a young person. It represents growth and learning on the part of the teen. It is the ceremony where the congregation welcomes them as an adult into the congregation. It would be lovely to encourage broader participation at the B'nai services, so Congregants can be part of the welcoming process. Encouraging the Congregation to attend B'Nai services could be a priority for families and Clergy.

Temple Emanuel is blessed to have Clergy that membership likes; who encourage our participation in the spiritual life of the congregation; who listen to our thoughts, interests and concerns and adapt our spiritual life to these. We have a solid foundation upon which to build, and for that we are fortunate.

Recommendations:

1. **Build on what's working** – The likeability of Clergy, strong love of music at services, interfaith acceptance, and religious acceptance and compatibility serve as a good basis for how we continue to define ourselves.
2. **Encourage attendance (and congregational welcome) at Saturday B'Nai Mitzvah services** – and follow services with a short Clergy-led kiddish that would be open to all.
3. **Have more themed speakers and services** - this was the clearest recommendation regarding worship and spirituality that emerged from our study.
4. **More music** - of all kinds, **modern and traditional**.
5. **Explore and Teach The Liturgy** – We encourage more opportunities to learn about the history and reasons for our Reform liturgy.
6. **Develop a better articulated, more predictable approach to starting times for Friday night services** – responses were varied on this, but there seems to be a desire for more predictability.

IV: Improving Outreach

The Temple Emanuel Early Childhood Center is expected to continue to flourish over the next few years and demographics are favorable for Temple Emanuel. Nonetheless, these positive indicators cannot be taken for granted, and the Temple should avoid complacency at all costs. A fundamental responsibility of our congregation is to serve the needs of existing members most effectively, while also thinking about how to sustain healthy level of membership moving forward. Practically speaking, the Temple should continue to prioritize internal outreach efforts that would ensure our long-term strength.

We believe that, right now, the Temple has a unique opportunity to look for creative ways to reach many diverse constituencies within our community, focusing on:

- Members of the Temple Emanuel community who may (or may not) be actively seeking greater involvement in Temple activities, or even leadership opportunities, and who would have much to add.
- Those who may be unable to immerse themselves in Temple life to the extent they would ideally like, but still seek a greater level of involvement. This group may include, for example, members with young children and other family responsibilities, or invalids or elderly members unable to provide for their own transportation.

As a starting point, Temple Emanuel is well suited to build on its strengths, embodied in how the TE community perceives itself – welcoming, innovative, and charitable. We have opportunities to strengthen ties to our members, while also strengthening our efforts to make them feel welcome – thus encouraging their integration fully into the community.

An important result of the survey, supported by the town hall meetings and other data collection efforts, is a desire among members for more ‘tailored’ approaches to outreach. While the Kol Kore and topical e-mail blasts are appreciated, there seemed to be a desire for internal outreach reflecting the diverse interests and needs of specific groups of

recipients, where feasible. This could mean, for example, outreach tailored to different age groups, interfaith families, or those concerned with particular causes, such as global warming or human rights. The idea of streaming services for those unable to leave their homes, or offering transportation to and from the Temple at High Holiday services, was suggested by congregants as ways to reach specific members.

Another important consideration that came up repeatedly in the data gathering efforts is a desire among Temple Emanuel congregants for stronger ties to our Clergy. This clearly reflects the affection among Temple members for both Rabbi Stone and Cantor Boxt, but it also suggests any number of opportunities in the context of internal outreach.

For example, there are opportunities for the Clergy to help new members feel welcome, and to reinforce relationships with existing congregants, as well. The Clergy could routinely conduct interviews with new members, better promote opportunities such as “Walk With The Rabbi,” and intensify involvement with ECC and religious school families. The value of outreach to the education programs cannot be underestimated. There are any numbers of reasons, including the long-term survival of Temple Emanuel as a flourishing community, to ensure that ties to these constituencies are as strong as possible.

It is recommended that the Temple consider, among other things, small steps that may not necessarily have huge payoffs, but which would be appreciated by members and help to strengthen ties to the TE community. These could include encouraging members to wear nametags at community events (including services), e-cards on birthdays, or finding additional opportunities to reduce or remove costs for some events, such as pot luck dinners or other community building activities.

The LRPT considered the extent to which outreach efforts should be oriented outside the existing TE community. There is a continuing need to monitor membership to ensure that our Community remains dynamic, robust, and sustaining. Our community benefits from diversity and “new blood.” The TEECC provides a conduit for new members and that should

be encouraged, and while we may not necessarily be currently seeking to grow our congregation, new ways to ensure it does not attrit should always be explored.

Recommendations:

- 7. Strengthen the connections between TE Clergy and membership** – For example through Clergy interviews and discussions with, or “first-year” programs with, new members.
- 8. Identify opportunities for tailored outreach** (e.g., to life cycle events, to TEECC families, and to other specific communities.
- 9. Consider establishing a volunteer coordinator position** – which, among other things, would help outreach to the full breadth of membership, and strengthen opportunities to grow lay leadership.
- 10. Reduce or eliminate costs for some activities.** Potlucks were held in the past; other ideas can be considered as well.
- 11. Don’t neglect the “small and doable”** – E-cards for life-cycle events, holidays and birthdays, re-usable nametags, continued marketing and promotion of “Walk with the Rabbi” and other “small” steps can be helpful.
- 12. Monitor evolving demographics and seek ways to ensure a robust, dynamic community over the long term.** While growing membership is not an imminent priority, ensuring our Temple’s long-term health is critical to our future.

V. Engagement – Creating Communities with the Community

Many congregants – well over half the survey respondents - expressed an interest in becoming more engaged in the TE community. Members indicated that personal invitations to participate in Temple events are highly appreciated, and wanted to be apprised of opportunities to volunteer within the Temple community. Members seem to respond to connections with others within the community more than to new technologies or to opportunities outside the Temple.

In focus groups, the town hall, and informal discussions, many congregants identified their participation in a Chavurah as their main means of engagement with the Temple. Others noted that a major gap in their Temple experience was never having the opportunity to participate in a Chavurah, or that the Chavurah experience did not work for them. Helping congregants to form havurot, either through a traditional “match-making” model or by facilitating groups that form “organically” may lead to a richer Temple experience.

Some congregants were less sure that a traditional “in for life” Chavurah experience was right for them, and sought instead to be able to move from one engaging opportunity to another. Particularly for younger members, the ability to find a smaller, but flexible, community of people who share their interests or life stage without having to commit long term may work effectively. Younger adults within the Temple community have had success with Keshet, a loose group that sponsors get-togethers and other activities without following the Chavurah model. Still other models may appeal to congregants with different interests and at different life stages.

Many congregants expressed an interest in identifying opportunities to volunteer and participate in activities without a long-term commitment. Some felt that many current options required joining a committee or group or committing to regularly volunteer. This is not always the case, but this was the clear perception.

The Long Range Planning Team also concluded that Temple Emanuel should embrace and promote a culture of giving back, which should be part of how we define ourselves.

Although Temple Emanuel members have not expressed dissatisfaction with the current

membership system, a time may come when traditional membership dues no longer make sense. Establishing a culture of voluntary giving will have short and long-term benefits.

Additionally, members have made clear that they want to volunteer within the Temple community. Encouraging members to play leadership roles in the community, get involved in committees, plan activities, and help out other members as part of a covenant of membership can play an equally important role in ensuring the long term health and richness of the community.

Recommendations:

13. Establish a “Creating Community” committee: This committee would take the place of the Chavurah Committee. It would still facilitate Havurot, but it would also help those who are interested in different kinds of smaller community opportunities tailored to life stages or interests to form those communities.

14. Institute Clergy- or Educator-led day trips that would be affordable, easy, and accessible: International trips are valuable. At the same time, however, day-long excursions to nearby locations, like the Baltimore Jewish Museum or a local historic synagogue, could give a broader group of congregants the chance to connect with the community, learn about religion and culture, and benefit from the insights of our Clergy and lay leadership in an easily accessible way.

15. Identify “one off” volunteer and other events: Temple Emanuel should promote opportunities for people to volunteer without a sustained commitment, or to participate in individual social, intellectual, or communal events. If congregants are given the opportunity to engage on a single-day or single-event basis, more members may get involved, get to know each other, and feel part of the broader community.

16. Reach out to peripherally connected members: Members respond to direct outreach and invitations. We heard from older congregants and others without children in religious school that they often feel disconnected from Temple life. Inviting these congregants to participate in events and, particularly for older

members, to let them know that rides are available to High Holiday Services could help them feel more connected. Providing streaming feeds of services and special events could help those who cannot physically come to the Temple.

17. Seek to create a covenant of membership: The Temple would benefit from an emphasis on a culture of giving that would encourage financial support, perhaps as a “Covenant of Membership,” without constant or unwanted requests for money. Members want to volunteer within the Temple, and should be encouraged to give of their time and effort, which can be more important to the life of the Temple.

18. Explore “out of the box” ideas: Exploring new ideas – perhaps a theater company, networking happy hours, book clubs, Shabbat dinner groups in homes, or other such ideas could lead to new ways to engage different groups of people. This could be a project for a new committee or for various existing organizations.

VI. Education

Congregants reiterated the value of Jewish education throughout every stage of Temple Emanuel's strategic planning process, exemplifying the priority that our community places on lifelong learning. The importance of the Early Childhood Center (ECC), the Religious School, and adult education was raised in all data collection efforts of our study.

Congregants shared that one of the primary reasons they initially connected with Temple Emanuel was for the education of their children. To that end, many viewed the schools as primary entry points to our community, and vehicles of congregational growth. The ECC was the focus of community pride, with many praising its strong staffing and model, its ability to attract young families to the congregation, and its financial stability. Congregants expressed satisfaction overall with the Religious School, with recommendations focused on increasing innovation and further strengthening Religious School engagement for both students and families.

The vast majority of survey respondents agreed that Temple Emanuel fosters an environment of lifelong learning and that it provides members with valuable and engaging educational opportunities for adults. Although congregants expressed satisfaction with the current level of emphasis on a series of educational topics for adults, they also expressed a desire for increased emphasis on adult education overall.

Given the strength of our current educational programs for both children and adults, our congregation has an opportunity to be innovative – perhaps cutting edge—while continuing to grow our educational foundation.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations related to education are focused on three broad categories: the Early Childhood Center, the Religious School, and Adult Education/Lifelong Learning. Of course, in reality they are deeply interconnected.

Early Childhood Center (ECC)

19. Implement a Board or other oversight mechanism for the Early

Childhood Center. The LRPT sees strong value in consistency in oversight mechanisms for the educational programs (Religious School & ECC); increasing the involvement of community members in the operations of the school; and creating a forum to monitor future demographic trends or community changes.

20. Develop clear guidelines and structure for ECC parents. Current and former ECC parents expressed the view that increased structure related to parental involvement could help the ECC community further benefit from the willingness, interests, and talents of these parents.

21. Increase interaction between ECC parents and Clergy. Although not every ECC family is a member of the Temple, many ECC families are either current or prospective members. In an effort to increase the connection between the ECC and the congregational community, ECC parents expressed the desire for more direct interaction with the Clergy.

Religious School

22. Pursue innovative and cutting edge curricula. The Religious School's current efforts (through the so-called "Rebel Group" and other means) to strengthen the innovation of its curricula should be lauded and can be built upon through more student-directed inquiry and exploration (i.e., Reggio Emilia or similar approaches), family educational programming, and alternative uses of technology.

23. Continue to prioritize post-B'Nai Mitzvah retention and post-B'Nai Mitzvah Outreach. The LRPT recommends a concerted effort to increase participation by strengthening post-B'Nai Mitzvah educational and engagement opportunities for our older youth. The B'Nai Mitzvah Revolution project and application of practices learned through the URJ Campaign for Youth Engagement can be instrumental in this respect.

24. Increase direct interaction between Clergy, students and parents.

Congregants expressed a desire for increased, direct interaction with Clergy throughout the religious school years, in particular during the months leading up to families' B'Nai Mitzvot experiences.

Adult Education and Life-long learning

25. Increase alignment between youth and adult educational programming to create a “seamless” community of learning among all ages.

Strengthening the connectedness of educational opportunities in the ECC, Religious School, and Adult Education programs would increase the complementarity between the educational opportunities of parents and children, and would also increase connectivity among our greater community of congregational learners.

26. Be bold. Experiment. Temple Emanuel can experiment with innovative educational opportunities in both formal and informal settings. At the same time, we can deepen the engagement of our adult learners and take advantage of the diverse expertise among our members through nurturing opportunities for our membership to lead “Study Groups” or other educational activities. Finally, we can customize programming to meet the needs of selected demographics, with the end goal of ultimately engaging a wider adult audience in our educational opportunities.

27. Consider a part-time adult education coordinator. Temple Emanuel should consider creating a position designed to establish consistent processes related to adult education. This could potentially be (or begin as) a volunteer opportunity within our community.

28. Identify opportunities for adult “retreats” and other experiential learning opportunities. In addition to more traditional adult educational opportunities, we could identify more opportunities for adult experiential learning, such as through retreats or other engaging activities that extend beyond the walls of Temple Emanuel.

VII. Addressing Future Uncertainties

Temple Emanuel must remain a forward leaning organization. Demographics, in particular, cannot be counted on to remain positive in perpetuity and are subject to uncontrollable and often unpredictable factors. There should be systematic efforts to routinely collect data and analyze trends to understand and respond to changing demographics, evolving approaches, and innovative thinking with respect to “membership” and “dues,” member income, changing TEECC income, capital needs to sustain the facilities and grounds, and programmatic needs.

With respect to future renovation priorities, survey respondents support modernization of the Kitchen, followed by upgrading the Social Hall. The community is highly satisfied with the sanctuary, which indicates that attaining buy-in for a renovation may be a challenge.

Recommendations:

29. Undertake a formal Capital Replacement Reserve Study for large capital components of the building and grounds. A Capital Replacement Reserve Study provides a rigorous quantitative analysis of how much money an organization needs to set aside each year to ensure that adequate funds are available for the anticipated replacement of major building components. Governing bodies, across real estate asset classes, use reserve studies to fulfill fiduciary responsibilities related to the budgeting process. *(Note: The TE Board of Trustees adopted this recommendation at its February, 2014 meeting).*

30. Begin thinking about succession planning for senior professionals. For example, an Associate Rabbi/Educator would be one way to meet the burgeoning needs of a growing community while also serving to groom prospective Clergy.

31. Establish a task force on improving TE and TEECC governance. *(Note: As of March 2014 – the time of this report – the TE Board of Trustees adopted this idea and the Task Force has begun to meet).*

32. Establish a Planning Committee or other mechanism to anticipate longer-term challenges and establish processes to address them.

Given our community's anticipated growth trends, ensuring our responsiveness to evolving community needs will be essential to maintain member satisfaction. Issues that could fall under this Committee might include:

- a. **Sustaining long-range planning efforts.** It would be beneficial to reevaluate this Report's findings and check back in with membership every 3 to 5 years. This will help TE leadership to monitor and facilitate the implementation of our current recommendations. It will also serve to ensure that we are continuing to address changing trends.
- b. **Changing membership and demographic conditions and impacts on TE.** Recently, there has been an active debate in the Reform community examining new models for membership/dues that may be more responsive to evolving demographic conditions and attitudes.
- c. **Initiating occasional "Survey Monkey" polls to gauge evolutions in Congregational attitudes or priorities, and to help "market" the Temple as needed to ensure our Long Term viability.** The survey used in this Report provided a rich source of data. Given the relatively low cost and high benefits of an internet-based survey, this type of tool should be encouraged more broadly for both large and small issues.
- d. **Ensure sustained thinking about the "synagogue of the future."** As a forward leaning organization we should prioritize adaptability to ensure Temple Emanuel's relevance based on its ability to meet people ever-changing needs and expectations.

Appendix I - Source Materials from within Temple Emanuel

We would like to thank all the members of Temple Emanuel who shared their time and innermost thoughts for this process. It would not have been possible without the hundreds of you who participated in our work. The Board of Trustees under the leadership of Bob Rich shared its vision for the ensuring the Temple's future and encouraged our work at every step. The Temple's Clergy and staff have welcomed our inquiries and provided invaluable feedback and input. Finally, the planning team, co-chaired by Monte Mallin and Al Tanenbaum, included Bob Rich, Noah Bookbinder, Adam Landsman, Dianne Neiman, Jana Sharp, and Esther Starobin. We thank each and every one of you. As we have discussed so many times during our work together, this holy work is useless without follow-up and actionable results. We hope this document is used to stimulate discussion and action to ensure that our Temple community is a place we all are proud to call home. Among many other efforts, the Long Range Planning Team collected data from the following sources:

- Conducted 5 professionally moderated focus groups, attended by over 40 people (see templemanuelmd.org/members-only/TELRP2014_appendix)
- Held a Town Hall in May, 2013, with over 75 Temple Members participating (see templemanuelmd.org/members-only/TELRP2014_appendix)
- Facilitated a Board Retreat in July to draw out leadership perspectives
- Designed and implemented a comprehensive on-line survey in August and September, with almost 200 respondents (see templemanuelmd.org/members-only/TELRP2014_appendix)
- Conducted individual interviews with Temple Clergy and all professional staff
- Reviewed the prior Long Range Planning documents of our synagogue, principally the 1995 and 1997 reports.

Appendix II – Source Materials from outside our community

- Reviewed, with URJ support, the methodologies and perspectives of five recent peer congregation Long Range Plans.
- Studied demographic data and trends with the support of Federation and URJ
- Studied the book Sacred Strategies: Transforming Synagogues from Functional to Visionary by Isa Aron, Seven M. Cohen, Lawrence A. Hoffman and Ari. Y. Kelman (2010)
- Reviewed the Pew Survey “Portrait of Jewish Americans”
<http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>