TEMPLE SINAI
STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Plan 2016-2019 and
Summary & Analysis of Congregational Survey Results
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Message from Strategic Planning Committee Chair

Temple Sinai has long been engaged in planning. In 2009 as part of implementing Sinai at 60 and Beyond, the Report and Recommendations of the Temple Sinai Long Range Planning Committee, the Board adopted a formal Strategic Plan which has served as a very useful guide, particularly during the early years of Rabbi Roos’ tenure. The Plan was twice updated with detailed objectives, in 2011 and 2013. Yet, in 2014 it became clear that many of the goals and objectives of the Plan had already been met or were well on their way to being met. Therefore, the Strategic Planning Committee determined that a more strategic, less prescriptive Plan was indicated.

The face of Temple Sinai has changed dramatically since the 2008 survey. A full twenty percent of member households are new, as is almost the entire clergy team. The Strategic Planning Committee decided that a new survey was needed so that the new Plan would accurately reflect the current membership. The consultant who had designed the survey in 2008, Sid Groneman of Groneman Research and Consulting, was again engaged to assist in the development of the new survey. In April 2015, the online survey was launched, with paper copies made available to those who requested them. Over a period of three weeks, 636 members responded to the survey. With the aid of temple member Sherm Edwards, the Committee began analyzing the data from the survey and from the subsequent listening sessions which were held in order to engage members more fully in the process. The Committee presented its findings and analyses to the Board at a number of meetings and is pleased to report that the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan was officially adopted by the Board of Trustees at its April 2016 meeting.

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On behalf of the Strategic Planning Committee, I am pleased to present the following document that includes both the Strategic Plan 2016-2019, and an Appendix with a summary and analysis of the results, both quantitative and qualitative. It was rewarding to lead this process, in large part because of the high level of interest demonstrated by our Temple Sinai members who committed themselves to diligently work together on this very important project. I look forward to continuing to support our congregation’s strategic planning efforts as we go forward from strength-to-strength.

Marcie Solomon, Strategic Planning Committee Chair
Acknowledgements

The Strategic Planning Committee would like to thank the Board of Trustees and Rabbi Roos for their support in undertaking the survey that formed the basis of this new Strategic Plan. The committee also expresses appreciation to Past President and then-committee member Rosann Wisman, who first identified the need for a major strategic review, as well as those members who served as hosts, facilitators and recorders of the Listening Sessions that followed the survey: Gary Friend and Tara Sonenshine, Dan and Flo Rosenblum, David Eichenbaum, Ann Ingram, Katie Herman, Caryn Seligman, Tracy Mann, Barbara Kraft, Todd Rosentover, Steve Metalitz, Naomi Camper, and Barry Wides. We also appreciate the support of the Temple administrative staff that helped with the many logistics needed for the survey and listening sessions to run smoothly. And to the 636 members who cared enough to thoughtfully express themselves about their experiences and hopes for our community – thank you.

Finally, on behalf of the entire Strategic Planning Committee, I would like to express particular appreciation to Sherm Edwards for the many hours he spent working with the Committee and analyzing the data, and for his valuable insights as both a temple member and a planning professional.

Strategic Planning Committee:

Marcie Solomon, Chair
Ellen Agler
Elaine Binder
Jill Chenok
Andrew Engel
Rabbi Hannah Goldstein
Steven Guttentag
Forrest Maltzman
Steve Messner
Rabbi Jonathan Roos
Marsha Shaines
TEMPLE SINAI STRATEGIC PLAN for 2016-2019
Adopted by the Board of Trustees April 20, 2016

Mission:

Temple Sinai is a center for those who seek to develop and enhance their Jewish identity through worship of God, ritual life, education, social action, concern for the State of Israel, and communal involvement, with an emphasis on the enduring Jewish values expressed by the Reform Movement.

Core Values:

- **Strengthening the Jewish Community** – by fostering an open, egalitarian, and welcoming approach to all congregants; encouraging personal connection between clergy and congregants and among congregants; and providing opportunities for all of our members to find inspiration, comfort, and learning across all ages.
- **Tikkun Olam** – by linking Jewish spirituality and ethics to action through promoting social justice and, in taking advantage of our location in the nation’s capital, having a positive impact on our community and the world in which we live.
- **Balancing tradition with innovation** – by affirming our Jewish heritage and commitment to Reform Judaism, while welcoming innovation in worship, education, and all other aspects of congregational life.

Vision for the Future:

Temple Sinai will be a congregation whose members feel a binding sense of Jewish community; are building a strong foundation for the future; enjoy a personal connection with the temple and their clergy; are intellectually and spiritually engaged; and are inspired, stimulated and challenged by the Reform Jewish tradition.
Goals and Objectives

Meeting the Jewish needs of our members

- Maintain a full calendar of religious services throughout the year, including alternative services for Shabbat and the High Holy Days
- Celebrate life cycle events with creativity and inclusiveness, along with incorporating emerging practices
- Provide pastoral care for the needs of congregants across the life spectrum
- Provide support, including officiating at life cycle events, to families of members
- Ensure inclusion of interfaith families in temple life
- Maintain Temple Sinai’s cemetery at Garden of Remembrance and provide support to family members throughout their mourning

Facilitating a vibrant sense of community for members

- Engage in “Audacious Hospitality” – be as welcoming as possible to everyone who comes in the door in order to create a sense of belonging
- Intensify member-to-member support through the Kathie Rabinovitz SinaiCares Program
- Create opportunities for members to develop meaningful long-term connections with one another
- Ensure that sensitivity to the special needs of congregants and families permeates all aspects of temple life including education and ritual
- Expand youth engagement activities
- Provide personal connections with clergy
- Use and evaluate a variety of communication vehicles to inform and maintain connections with members
- Ensure transparency in the governance of the temple
- Expand the current Leadership Development effort to ensure active involvement of members in board and committee activities
Maintaining Social Action Activities

- Create an environment for Social Action to permeate all activities including ritual and spiritual activities as an embodiment of Jewish principles and the value of Tikkun Olam
- Continue to advance the goals of the Social Action committee while maintaining flexibility to address emerging issues
- Serve as an active progressive faith voice in the local community, both independently and in partnership with other groups, both Jewish and interfaith
- Continue ongoing support for Sinai House and integrate it into the life of the congregation

Providing excellent educational opportunities for members of all ages

- Continue to offer intellectual and stimulating programs for members of all ages, recognizing that education is as much about building community as delivery of content knowledge
- Ensure that Religious School and Nursery School programs reflect the highest standards of Jewish education
- Foster creativity and flexibility in all programs, structures and systems
- Continue to provide and promote a broad range of Israel programs

Physical plant and facilities

- Modernize the building for current as well as future use, particularly by renovating the sanctuary and by creating flexible communal gathering spaces
- Continue to improve the exterior facilities to ensure safety and accessibility for members and guests
- Ensure that Temple Sinai is environmentally friendly

Financial health

- Maintain a professional approach to development
- Increase operations support through an increasingly robust annual campaign and major program gifts
- Include endowment and planned giving opportunities in development activities
- Launch fundraising initiatives to support building modernization
- Engage more members in directing their philanthropic giving to support Temple Sinai
APPENDIX

Summary of Temple Sinai 2015 Survey

In the fall of 2015, Temple Sinai conducted the third survey of adult members in recent years. The first, in 1995, was part of Project Jubilee and obtained responses from 870 members. The second survey, in 2008, focused on members’ thoughts about the imminent change in rabbinic leadership among other topics. Some 875 members responded on the Web. Between 2008 and 2015, there has been a complete change in the TS rabbinate and the leadership is now considering a number of capital improvements, so a new survey seemed appropriate both for taking stock and looking to the future. Some 636 members completed Web surveys in 2015, a noticeable decline in participation from the prior surveys. This decline is similar to what has been experienced in survey research generally, reflecting perhaps an overall increase in demands on people’s time and attention from multiple sources and media. It is not clear how this lower response might affect cross-survey comparisons.

Cross-survey comparisons

Very few questions from the 1995 survey were repeated in either 2008 or 2015. We do know that the 1995 respondents were generally younger and had been members for a shorter time than those in either of the later surveys. The remainder of the comparisons will focus on 2008 and 2015 responses.

There were few demographic (age, gender, marital status) differences or differences in tenure, distance lived from TS, or number of close friends at TS between 2008 and 2015 respondents.

Generally, 2015 respondents seemed more positive about TS than did those in 2008:

- When asked how well TS meets their needs, 65 percent of 2015 respondents said “excellent in all respects” or “very well,” compared with 50 percent in 2008;
- About 29 percent of 2015 respondents said they had seriously considered leaving TS in the past 3 years, while 36 percent of 2008 respondents had considered it “in recent years”;
- 2015 respondents gave higher ratings than did 2008 respondents to several aspects of TS life, including High Holy Day services (66 percent rating as 7 [outstanding] or 6, vs. 56 percent), Shabbat services (47 vs. 40 percent), and clergy leadership (57 vs. 38 percent);
- 2015 respondents also gave higher ratings for TS being “friendly and welcoming” (58 vs. 50 percent), “a community I feel close to” (33 vs. 28 percent), and for interfaith families being “just as welcomed” (81 vs. 64 percent).

One caveat for these comparisons, as noted, is the lower response to the 2015 survey. It is possible that respondents are generally more positive than those not responding.

Another important difference between 2008 and 2015 is in responses to a question asking about reasons for belonging to TS:
• 2015 respondents were less likely than those in 2008 to say that “having a place of worship” (68 vs. 77 percent) or “spiritual fulfillment” (36 vs. 52 percent) was very or moderately important;

• 2015 respondents were also less likely to say that friendships were very or moderately important (54 vs. 82 percent), although the question was worded somewhat differently across the two surveys.

How closely do survey respondents resemble the overall membership?

Some administrative data are available on which to compare survey respondents with the overall membership. One caveat is that the administrative data are at the family level while survey data are person-level. As shown in Figure 1, there is a reasonably good match between survey respondents and the membership on age, with the oldest members less likely to complete the survey. In Figure 2, we see that newer members were less likely to complete the survey than those with longer tenure. As far as they go, these comparisons are reasonably encouraging on the representativeness of the survey respondents.

As is typical of household surveys, more women (65 percent) than men responded. Ninety percent of respondents reported being currently married, and most (78 percent) live within 5 miles of TS. Eighty-five percent of respondents reported being raised Jewish or partly Jewish, while 95 percent currently identified themselves as Jewish (“Jewish,” “Jewish and other religion,” or “No religion but ethnically or culturally Jewish”). Twenty percent reported being in an interfaith family, that is, where one spouse identified as Jewish (religious or ethnically/culturally) and the other did not or identified as “Jewish and other religion.”

Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported having a child in TS religious school grades K-6 in past two years, and 19 percent in grades 7 or higher. Seven percent reported having a child in TS’s nursery school. There is some overlap in these proportions, as families have children in different levels of school.

Communities within the congregation

Religious observances are often associated with lifecycle events – birth, bar/bat mitzvah, marriage, becoming an “empty nest,” and those associated with aging (e.g., retirement, failing health). Often too, people at different lifecycle stages have different interests and needs that may be addressed in a religious community. Thus, it may be helpful to look at how survey responses vary by these lifecycle stages. Other individual characteristics often considered in analyzing survey data include race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity; these are not available for the TS survey. The only available indicator of socioeconomic status is level of TS dues.

We use the following lifecycle stage definitions to examine differences in survey response, in priority order:

• “Senior”: age 70 or older (19 percent of survey respondents);


- “Religious school parent”: reporting a child in TS nursery school or in TS religious school in past 2 years (43 percent);
- “Empty nester”: ages 50-69 with no child in TS religious school in past 2 years (note that this designation would include those without children) (33 percent); and
- “Young adult”: under age 50 with no child in TS nursery or religious school (6 percent); most of this relatively small group are married, and judging by some of their text responses, many have or anticipate children.

**Reasons for Maintaining Membership**

Question 16 of the survey asked, “How important are [sic] each of the following for your continuing membership at Temple Sinai?” with response categories Not at all important, Slightly important, Moderately important, and Very important. Respondents not rating a reason were not included in the calculation. Figure 3 shows the proportion of respondents rating each of the reasons given as very or moderately important. High Holiday services lead the list (88 percent), followed by “services throughout the year” (68 percent), “availability of clergy in times of duress” (68 percent) and clergy leadership (64 percent). Figure 4 shows the same proportions separately for each of the life stage groups described earlier. High Holiday services are rated almost equally among the life stage groups, as are services throughout the year. Religious school parents and “young adults” rate sending children to religious school and having a place for them to become bar/bat mitzvah about equally as important as High Holiday services. Clergy roles are somewhat more important for the older age groups (empty nesters and seniors) than the younger ones, and there is a wider gap by life stage for supporting a Reform Jewish congregation and adult learning.

**Rating Aspects of Life at Temple Sinai**

Question 21 asked respondents to rate programs and other aspects of Temple Sinai life on an 8-point scale, from 0 (poor) to 7 (outstanding). The items overlap considerably, but not entirely, with the reasons for maintaining membership in Question 16. Figure 5 shows the proportion of respondents rating each item either 6 or 7, omitting from the calculation those who marked “don’t know/does not apply” or left the item blank. The top three – “Availability of clergy during times of duress” (80 percent), “Your family’s bar/bat mitzvah experience” (76 percent), and “Life cycle celebrations” (74 percent) – all were not rated by more than 30 percent of respondents. Among those aspects rated by almost all respondents, “High Holiday services” (73 percent) and “Social action and community service” (68 percent) were rated highest, while “Building and grounds that meet the community’s needs” (48 percent) and “Being a community I feel close to” (36 percent) were rated lowest. Later sections of this report will examine the last two aspects in more detail.

Figure 6 shows the same ratings, broken out by life stage group. Some of the variations in this figure are indicative of relatively small sample sizes, notably for the “special needs” topic. Two noteworthy differences are the relatively higher ratings given by empty nesters and seniors for High Holiday services and adult education.
Matching reasons for staying and ratings

Figures 7A-D show, separately by life stage, how important reasons for staying and TS ratings compare for items included in both Questions 16 and 21. One way to think about these comparisons is that relatively high importance and a relatively low rating may indicate an area of focus for planning. That is, if the blue, or lower, bar is noticeably longer than the red, or upper, bar, there may be a gap between expectation and performance.

As one example, consider “High Holiday services,” the last item in each figure. In each case, the blue line is longer than the red line, and the gap is greater for religious school parents and “young adults” than for empty nesters and seniors. Another perspective on this comparison is that High Holiday services were among the higher-rated aspects of TS life in Figures 5 and 6. They were also the most important or one of the most important reasons for continued membership for all groups. Whether these gaps indicate an area for planning focus is open to interpretation.

A clearer example is “community,” which in Question 16 is represented by “To maintain/strengthen friendships with other members.” Again, the blue bar is longer than the red bar for all groups. Here, however, this aspect of TS life had the lowest rating overall and for each group. Thus, increasing a sense of community at TS may be an important focus of planning.

Religious school was rated only by religious school parents. In Figure 7B, the bars for religious school are nearly identical with those for High Holiday services discussed earlier. While the ratings for both are relatively high, a benchmark for this group is the bar/bat mitzvah experience. The proportion rating religious school a “6” or “7” is almost 20 points lower than for bar/bat mitzvah.

Social action is one area where the red bar is longer than the blue bar in every group. This has been an area of particular focus in recent years. Adult learning is another area with a longer red bar, for every group except seniors. On the other hand, seniors are the group giving adult learning the highest rating; they are also the group for whom it is most important.

Building and grounds

Fewer than half of survey respondents rated TS building and grounds as “6” or “7” in Question 21. The survey also included questions about capital improvements being considered by TS leadership. One set asked respondents to prioritize each capital improvement as low, medium, or high; the other question asked respondents to rank the improvements from 1 to 8. Figure 8 shows the number of respondents picking each of the improvement projects either as one of the top two or bottom two. The projects are listed in descending order of mean rank overall. Figure 8 indicates strong support for external access improvements, sanctuary upgrade, and social hall renovation. There was less support for improvements related to adult learning and the Bet Am. The other three projects were more controversial, especially the major south addition, with about as many top twos as bottom twos.
Figure 9 shows how members of each life stage group selected their “top two” improvements. There are clear differences by life stage for many of the improvements. Older respondents were more likely to select exterior access and a major south addition in their top two, while younger respondents were more likely to select sanctuary upgrades and nursery and religious school improvements. Religious school parents favored social hall renovation, while both seniors and “young adults” favored improvements to benefit adult learning.

Another look at the responses on capital improvements is shown in Figure 10, which maps the proportion of respondents rating each project a high priority by the number of times the respondents were at TS during the previous year. More active members were more likely to rate five of the improvements as high priority than were less active members. There were smaller differences by number of times at TS for improvements to the religious and nursery schools, the Bet Am, and the lobby.

“Community” at Temple Sinai: Text Responses from Survey

Just over one-third of survey respondents rated “Being a community I feel close to” a “6” or “7” in Question 21, by far the lowest proportion of any aspect of TS life covered by that question. The survey also included several opportunities for respondents to enter text responses, all of which elicited a number of comments about TS as a community:

- Q15 asked respondents to expand on their response to Q14, “Would you like to get more involved or connected at Temple Sinai than you are now?”
- Q18 asked respondents why they had thought about leaving TS in the past several years if they reported they had in the previous question.
- Q20 asked what TS could do better, immediately after a question on how well TS met their needs overall.
- After respondents rated aspects of life at TS, indicated how likely they would be to recommend TS to a friend, and reported how welcomed they thought various subgroups were at TS, Q24 asked them what they thought TS did well.

**Getting more involved**

There were 316 comments in Q15, with some respondents entering more than one comment. About half of the comments offered reasons why the respondent was not or not able to be more involved at TS. Among those reasons, almost half were lack of time or motivation. A few cited specific barriers, such as health problems or transportation. Almost a third (44), however, indicated in some way that they didn’t know how to become more involved.

Of the comments including specific or general ways of getting more involved, about half related to adult education, social action, or services. The other half were more focused on interaction with others, such as TS Men and Women of Reform Judaism or kallot. Another way to contrast these two
halves is as program orientation or community orientation. (Of course there are no programs without a community, and no temple community without programs.)

Reasons for thinking about leaving Temple Sinai

Twenty-nine percent of respondents said that they had “thought seriously about leaving Temple Sinai at any time during the past several years for reasons other than moving out of the area.” More than a third of those who said they had thought about leaving cited the cost of membership as a reason. The next most cited category (about one-quarter of respondents) was related to community – few friends, “impersonal,” etc. Another 10 percent mentioned that there was less of a reason to belong after their children finished religious school, which is another kind of community reason. Other reasons mentioned by at least 10 percent of those who had thought about leaving were issues with clergy (either current or former), services, religious school, and political or ideological issues.

What about life at Temple Sinai could be improved

About a third of comments on what TS could do better had to do with community, including more outreach, age group-specific opportunities, and making the size of the congregation seem less overwhelming. Another category, about 12 percent of comments, related to relations or involvement with clergy. Other categories for these comments, each with about 15 percent of mentions, included religious school, services, and other programming.

What Temple Sinai is doing well

This question had the largest number of text responses, because it was asked of everyone. Again, the single largest category of responses related to community, with about a quarter of mentions. Among the words used were “welcoming,” “egalitarian,” and “supportive.” Services and spiritual aspects and programs for children each accounted for almost one-fifth of the comments.
Tables

Figure 1

![Age of survey participants generally matches member family age](image)

Figure 2

![Newer members somewhat less likely to complete survey](image)
### Figure 3

**Moderately or very important factors in staying at Temple Sinai**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To have a place to attend High Holiday services</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have a place for worship throughout the year</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For availability of clergy during times of duress (hardship, illnesses, death)</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For inspirational/intellectual/spiritual leadership of Temple Sinai’s clergy</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support a Reform Jewish congregation</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maintain/strengthen friendships with other members</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>To enable my children to become bar/bat mitzvah</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to send (or continue to send) my children to Religious School</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For opportunities to participate in social action and community service projects</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For opportunities to participate in adult Jewish learning</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To facilitate spiritual fulfillment such as feeling closer to God</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 4

**Moderately or Very Important Factors by Life Stage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>Empty Nester</th>
<th>Religious School Parent</th>
<th>Young Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5

Aspects of Temple Sinai Life Rated "6" or "7"

- Availability of clergy during times of duress: 80%
- Your family's bar/bat mitzvah experience at Temple Sinai: 76%
- Life-cycle celebrations: 74%
- High Holiday services: 73%
- Social action and community service: 68%
- Addressing the special needs of your family: 65%
- Inspirational/intellectual/spiritual leadership of clergy: 62%
- Providing a consistently friendly, welcoming atmosphere: 56%
- Jewish education for adults: 56%
- Shabbat services: 53%
- Building and grounds that meet the community's needs: 48%
- Being a community I feel close to: 36%
### Differences by life stage in rating of TS programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Empty Nester</th>
<th>Religious Schoo; parent</th>
<th>Young Adult</th>
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</table>
Figure 8: Ranking capital projects shows two clear winners, some controversy.

Figure 10: More active members more likely to say "high priority" for most improvements.
Differences by life stage in "top two" capital improvements

- Exterior Access
- Sanctuary Upgrades
- Social Hall Renovations
- Nursery and Religious School
- Lobby/Core Areas
- Major South Addition
- Bet Am Upgrades
- Adult Learning

Categories: Senior, Empty Nester, Religious School Parent, Young Adult