

TEMPLE SINAI STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027

Introduction

Background

Temple Sinai is a vibrant Reform congregation whose history, since its establishment in 1951, has been characterized by meaningful ritual; innovative programming and educational offerings; an audacious commitment to social justice; and a warm, welcoming, and energetic community. We are a spirited Jewish congregation rooted in tradition and looking joyfully toward the future.

This commitment to tradition and enthusiasm about future possibilities characterizes Temple Sinai's regular practice of planning for its future. Strategic planning has long been a Temple Sinai priority. The Temple Sinai Board of Trustees (the Board) established the Strategic Planning Committee in 1995. Since then, the Board, with the guidance of the Strategic Planning Committee, has implemented regular strategic plans. The Temple's latest strategic plan was approved in April 2020.

Significant Events and Inputs Shaping the 2024 Strategic Plan

The Hebrew year 5784, and the secular year 2024, present a unique period for Temple Sinai, as well as for the Jewish community worldwide. In many ways, this is an exciting and hopeful time. Following the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, Temple Sinai exuberantly returned to in-person gatherings with renewed joy for worshiping, learning, and celebrating together. The sanctuary and social hall have been renovated and modernized and the new South Addition of the Temple, with multiple spaces to learn and gather, will soon open. Temple Sinai said farewell to our beloved Senior Cantor Laura Croen, who retired after 29 years with the Temple, and we welcomed new Senior Cantor Rachel Rhodes. We have been thrilled to get to know Cantor Rhodes as she has begun to execute her vision for the congregation's music program. Furthermore, while Temple Sinai has a long history and tradition of making social justice an integral part of congregational life, the Temple was excited to establish the Davis Center for Social Justice in 2021 to organize, support, and strengthen the Temple's long-standing social justice work. Each of these events, as well as the continued leadership of Temple Sinai's dedicated, wise, and talented clergy and staff, are blessings and causes for great optimism for the congregation's future years.

Recent years also have seen tragedy that weighs on the minds and hearts of our community. The Jewish community continues to mourn Hamas' October 7, 2023 attacks on Israel and the ensuing war in Gaza and across multiple fronts. The precipitous rise of violent antisemitism in America during these years is felt keenly in our congregation and across the Jewish world. While the most acute phase of the Covid-19 pandemic appears to be behind us,

we mourn the 1.1 million Americans along with countless others globally who died in the pandemic. We recognize that many people continue to face physical and mental health challenges as a result of the pandemic. We write this report with a humble awareness that the pandemic's long term impact of lost education and socialization years for children, the shifts in cultural norms and values, and the financial strain on our communities are not yet fully understood. Temple Sinai's role in providing spiritual sustenance, pastoral care, and community support continues to be critical.

These events provide an important backdrop against which the goals and objectives of the current Strategic Plan have been considered. This Strategic Plan has been produced after almost a year of careful consideration of current circumstances as well as past strategic plans, from which the current Strategic Plan draws significantly. In addition, this Strategic Plan takes into account, and is indebted to, the excellent work of other committees that seek to guide Temple Sinai in considering new approaches for core issues. The thoughtful and comprehensive efforts of the 2021 Nursery School Subcommittee of the Strategic Planning Committee, the 2022-2023 Membership Growth Task Force, the 2023-2024 Early Childhood Task Force (ECTF), and the Finance Committee's five-year financial projections have been integral to the development of many goals and objectives, as this Strategic Plan details.

Framework of the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan

The 2024-2027 Strategic Plan begins with a vision statement, followed by a statement of Temple Sinai Core Values. As with previous strategic plans, the Core Values in this Strategic Plan express what we believe are the principles for which Temple Sinai stands and that distinguish Temple Sinai among other Jewish congregations. Following this, the Strategic Plan includes goals in ten essential areas comprising the activities and operations of Temple Sinai, which are intended to implement the Core Values statement. These goals address the areas of ritual, financial sustainability, education, membership and member engagement, social justice, programming, pastoral care, music, building/grounds, and governance.

Each of these goals is followed by an introduction and a series of objectives—that is, actions that break down goals into more explicit directions. Certain objectives are further followed by strategies, which are specific tactics suggested as ways to implement the objectives. Some of the objectives are time-sensitive and are intended to be accomplished, or have significant strides made toward accomplishment, during the term of this Strategic Plan. Others are “evergreen” and are intended to be ongoing guidance to Temple Sinai.¹

The ordering of the goals and objectives in the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan is not meant to indicate a literal ordering of priorities; every goal is important. However, the goals' ordering is designed with intention, to reflect their centrality to Temple Sinai's activities and operations, and the urgency of accomplishing the goal's objectives within the period of this Strategic Plan. We

¹ This plan is significantly more specific than its predecessor plan. This difference reflects input from the clergy, staff, and Temple leadership that at this particular time in the life of Temple Sinai, more detailed strategic guidance will be helpful in working toward the current goals and objectives.

recognize that there are necessary overlaps and interrelationships among many of the goal areas.

In determining the goal areas that comprise the strategic plan, we also took into account the appropriate balance of “head” and “heart” goals. Certain of the plan’s goal areas—for example, ritual, education, and programming—correspond to the “heart” of Temple Sinai, in that they align with our values and interests. Other goal areas—for example, financial sustainability, membership, and building/grounds—correspond to the “head” of Temple Sinai in that these functions, when well executed, underpin the successful management of the congregation. The rationale for including each type of goal is straightforward. Temple Sinai’s ability to provide meaningful ritual and opportunities for individuals to pursue life-long Jewish education and social justice depends on the financial sustainability of the institution. On the other hand, retaining membership and encouraging development is dependent on members feeling a sense of belonging and community, as well as excitement about the opportunities and program offerings that Temple Sinai promotes. Our sages expressed this interrelatedness two thousand years ago in *Pirke Avot* (3:17) when they taught: “If there is no basic sustenance in a community, there will be no Torah; and likewise if there is no Torah, there will be no basic sustenance.”

Values, Goals, and Objectives to Highlight

While Temple Sinai’s Core Values, as well as each of this Strategic Plan’s goals and objectives, are detailed later in this document with context for situating these values, goals and related objectives, there are several themes and points to highlight, as they represent areas where more significant developments have occurred or may occur in the future.

- *Membership:* The 2024-2027 Strategic Plan takes into account the recommendations of the 2022 Ad Hoc Committee on Membership Growth, which includes an in-depth exploration of ways to increase membership and better retain current members. A primary objective is further examination of Temple Sinai membership structure and financial commitments. This could result in changes in the approach to Temple membership in future years.
- *Financial Sustainability:* While Temple Sinai’s membership remains robust, the Temple has been facing a challenge to bring its annual expenses and revenues into alignment, exacerbated by the pandemic and an estimated \$4.5 million bank financing to cover the increased costs of the construction project. Consequently, the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan makes financial sustainability a high priority.
- *Temple Sinai Nursery School:* Temple Sinai Nursery School (TSNS) remains a well-respected institution among Temple members, future members, and others. It has faced unique operating challenges in recent years, notably those relating to the 2020 pandemic and building renovations. The 2024-2027 Strategic Plan takes into account the recommendations of the 2023 ECTF, which address these challenges. These

include recommendations to establish an extended-day option that expands the school's attractiveness to additional families, helps build the membership of Temple Sinai, and is financially sustainable.

- *Music:* Music has a special role at Temple Sinai, and the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan includes a goal and objectives relating to music that are separate from the goals and objectives relating to ritual and education. This is designed specifically to emphasize the broad significance and multi-year process of a senior cantor transition and to announce and shape a newly increased focus on the role of music at Temple Sinai now and in the near future.
- *Israel:* Developments in Israel over the term of the last Strategic Plan have motivated us to express explicitly as a value our abiding support for Israel as a Jewish state that reflects liberal democratic values. The formation of Temple Sinai's Committee for Israel Engagement and Social Justice in 2023 with its own carefully crafted mission statement demonstrates this value.
- *Building Renovation and Expansion:* Interior renovations that include a refreshed sanctuary and social hall, with more comfortable seating, a more accessible bimah, and state-of-the-art audio-visual systems were completed in 2021. The new South Addition expansion, marking the next step in the growth of our spiritual home to meet the needs of our community and enrich the religious lives of our members, will open in 2024. The goals and objectives for the use of the Temple's building and grounds reflect the exciting possibilities that these recent developments provide.
- *Governance:* Temple Sinai members are devoted leaders and generously give their time to many Temple committees. The number of committees and high level of activity, however, can lead to the risk of information being siloed, which can create challenges to effective collaboration and knowledge-sharing in carrying out Temple programs and operations. The governance-related goal in the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan includes objectives to improve committee processes and clarify authority.

Implementation of the 2024 Strategic Plan

The 2024-2027 Strategic Plan sets an agenda to guide Temple Sinai's clergy and staff in making decisions about programmatic priorities, Temple leadership in developing the Temple's annual budget and in effective governance of the congregation, and committee chairs in appropriate deployment of Temple resources. Indeed, a new governance-related objective in this Strategic Plan directs the Temple Sinai Board to develop processes relating to a periodic review of progress in advancing the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives.

Additionally, this Strategic Plan sets an agenda for each of us as members of Temple Sinai. We believe that, in its ideal form, our Temple should change the lives of those people who engage with it. We urge Temple Sinai members to read this Strategic Plan and to consider how

we all can implement its values, goals, and objectives in our interactions with everyone in our Temple Sinai community and bring to life the enduring Jewish commitment to *tikkun olam*, repair the world.

The Strategic Planning Committee

Marsha Shaines, Chair
Craig Iscoe, Co-Chair
Ellen Agler
Elaine Binder
Mindy Richman Garfinkel
Robert Hazan

Ken Jaffe
Ellen Leibenluft
Rabbi Jonathan Roos
Dianne Rudo
Natalie Royal Selzer
Amanda Hollander Wagner

VISION

Our Vision is that Temple Sinai will be a vibrant Reform Jewish community that embodies joyful worship, lifelong learning, people caring for each other, and the creation of a more equitable world.

CORE VALUES

These Core Values further expand on the elements of our Vision and represent the fundamental reasons that people join Temple Sinai.

We believe that the values of Reform Judaism and its rituals and prayers are the essence of our Temple Sinai community and a source of comfort, support, inspiration, and strength in our lives.

We believe in engaging individuals and families without judgment, and we welcome everyone seeking connection to our inclusive and diverse Reform Jewish community.

We believe that *tikkum olam* (repairing the world) and *tzedakah* (charity) are essential elements of Judaism, and we are committed to Temple Sinai continuing to be a strong, audacious leader for social justice.

We believe in being a caring community whose members feel a sense of belonging and support from the clergy and each other in times of celebration and need.

We believe in providing Jewish education that has a meaningful impact on its participants from early childhood through adult education.

We believe in and are committed to the State of Israel as the historical homeland of the Jewish people and as a democratic, pluralistic state.

We believe in responsible and transparent stewardship of our congregation's resources.

We believe that Temple Sinai should be a vibrant, joyful, and spiritually and intellectually stimulating place.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

RITUAL

Goal: The ritual life of our congregation is dynamic, impactful, and touches people's souls and hearts.

Ritual life is at the heart of Temple Sinai. We strive to reassess our practices continuously to adapt to the changing needs of our community. Our goal is to provide a spiritually meaningful worship experience for all members, regardless of age, background, or prior Jewish experience.

Objectives and Strategies

- a. Define, hone, and implement our worship style to provide a clear and fitting framework and expectations for ritual life at Temple Sinai.
- b. Emphasize Friday night Shabbat worship as the primary weekly gathering for our congregation and the centerpiece of our ritual life. In addition, develop and implement practices for Shabbat mornings that foster congregant engagement and participation in the “Shabbos Community” of Temple Sinai.
 - i. Include and reflect upon important events of the week at Friday night Shabbat services.
 - ii. Develop ancillary programming to support this priority, such as *onegs*, Shabbat dinners, offering babysitting during services, transportation, and high-quality remote opportunities for participation.
- c. Re-examine our life cycle rituals to assure that they are consistent with Temple Sinai’s values and worship style, and with our understanding of the post-pandemic, post-October 7 Jewish world.
 - i. Assess B’nei Mitzvah program - preparations, systems, and the ritual itself - and improve as needed.
 - ii. Assess Temple Sinai’s conversion program and rituals and improve as needed.
 - iii. Assure that funerals are meaningful end-of-life rituals that honor the fullness of the individual’s Jewish journey and reflect the significance of losing that person from the fold of *Knesset Yisrael*.

- d. Ensure the ritual life of the congregation - including holidays, Shabbatot, and life cycle events - appropriately engages and provides meaningful worship for members across the age spectrum and including non-Jewish members.
 - i. Identify and acquire a new machzor.
 - ii. Engage more congregants in ritual events and programs as participants, ushers, and attendees.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Goal: Secure and sustain the long-term financial health of Temple Sinai by creating a culture of philanthropy and by integrating financial impact into all segments of program planning and decision making.

While the financial support that Temple Sinai's members provide to the Temple is generous (including the recently-concluded capital campaign that surpassed its goals), the costs of our staff and facilities to provide the worship, education, programs, and pastoral care that draw members to the Temple currently exceeds our revenues. This situation has been exacerbated by a pandemic-influenced drop in membership of 4.7% (and resulting reduced membership financial commitments) and increased South Addition construction costs, which has necessitated bank financing to cover these costs, adding annual debt service payments to our budget.

As a result, this Strategic Plan makes financial sustainability a high priority for the next three years. We anticipate that the congregation will have to make some hard choices in order to balance its budget and be responsible stewards of our financial resources. Focusing on accomplishing the objectives in this section of the Strategic Plan will facilitate data- and policy-driven decisions about our finances.

Objectives and Strategies

- a. Balance Temple Sinai's annual operations budget within three to five years, and maintain a balanced budget going forward.
 - i. Develop and implement a medium-term (five-year) financial plan to identify and manage funding requirements.
 - ii. Develop policies and procedures to implement a methodology to allocate Temple-related facility expenses to the programs, events, and facility uses that contribute to these expenses, as reasonable and appropriate. Include the total of direct costs and Temple-related facility expenses to evaluate the costs of new and existing programs, events, and facility use.

iii. Create and implement a financial approval process for all proposals that would have a significant impact on Temple resources (e.g., senior staff contracts, Temple Sinai Religious School (TSRS) tuition levels, major events and programs scheduled outside of the budget process).

iv. Ensure financial cost considerations are included in program planning by Board leaders, committee chairs, clergy and staff. Enhance awareness of the necessity of including the financial implications in decision-making to all relevant parties.

b. Work with those evaluating Temple Sinai's membership structure (see Membership and Member Engagement goal) to assure that any proposed changes are consistent with the goal of the Temple's financial sustainability.

c. Identify and implement approaches to continue to expand a culture of philanthropy at Temple Sinai, including a long-term (phased) advancement/fundraising plan targeting Temple Sinai's priorities, to encourage greater giving in a manner consistent with Temple Sinai's values.

i. Increase clarity and transparency about the Temple's financial resources and expenses.

ii. Develop strategies to encourage members to view Temple Sinai as one of their primary philanthropic priorities.

iii. Promote coordinated targeted fundraising for Temple Sinai's affiliates (Women of Reform Judaism, Men of Reform Judaism), dedicated funds (e.g., music, social justice, Nursery School, Sinai House), and endowments.

iv. Charge the Advancement Committee (previously called the Development Committee) with developing an integrated framework for donor stewardship that includes Board leaders, committee chairs, clergy, and staff.

d. Identify and effectuate additional revenue streams, such as private rentals (e.g., speaker series, concerts, exercise classes), that make use of the building, including our new spaces, to contribute to fixed and operating costs, alleviate upward pressure on membership commitments, and repay debt.

i. Establish a fee schedule and scheduling parameters for use of the building for private rentals that considers facility wear-and-tear and results in net positive proceeds.

ii. Develop internal and external marketing approaches to promote private rentals of available spaces. Consider mission-driven, fee-paying events where the community can be invited.

EDUCATION

Goal: Temple Sinai will be a vibrant setting for life-long learning, and will continue to provide education opportunities for our congregants beginning with early childhood education, and spanning religious school, high school, and adult learning opportunities.

Temple Sinai currently provides dynamic education opportunities for congregants of all ages. TSRS enrollment from Kindergarten through high school-aged students has remained relatively steady over the past three years, and member families and students regard the TSRS teachers, learning opportunities, and school community highly. TSRS program offerings are intended to be vibrant and creative. Temple Sinai also offers a variety of well-attended adult education opportunities. These include, for example, weekly Torah study, regular book clubs, and educational events on a variety of religious, cultural, and political topics.

Temple Sinai's educational structure also includes TSNS, a high-quality early childhood program operating since 1992. TSNS emphasizes the values of Reform Judaism and has benefited its students and their families, many of whom are Temple Sinai members. TSNS remains a well-respected institution among Temple members, prospective members, and others. TSNS has, however, faced operating and financial challenges over recent years, stemming in part from the 2020 pandemic and recent building renovations.²

In 2023, the Temple Sinai Board of Directors charged the Strategic Planning Committee with creating the ECTF to develop recommendations to: (1) strengthen TSNS for current and future families and their children, and (2) increase engagement and a sense of belonging to Temple Sinai among families with young children, whether or not they are enrolled in TSNS. The ECTF has prepared a report with recommendations responding to this charge, which include among other things recommendations to establish an extended-day option for TSNS that expands the school's attractiveness to additional families, helps build the membership of Temple Sinai, and is financially sustainable. This Strategic Plan incorporates the ECTF recommendations as discussed in more detail below. The ECTF report is appended to this plan as Attachment 1.

Any evaluation of program changes and/or expansion must practically consider the natural limitations of the Temple's physical space, as well as the resources and time of the Temple's education, facilities, and security staff.

² TSNS's expenses currently exceed its revenues. Without certain grants and internal allocations, TSNS would be operating at a deficit.

Objectives and Strategies

- a. TSNS will continue to deliver a high-quality early childhood program in an inclusive, joyful, Jewish learning environment. The program will implement the ECTF recommendations, including recommendations to establish an extended-day option at TSNS which will help build the membership of Temple Sinai (for example by connecting TSNS families to Temple resources and programs). Consistent with the ECTF recommendations, TSNS and Temple Sinai more broadly will work jointly to improve marketing and communications related to TSNS and step up recruitment for membership of TSNS families.

- b. TSRS will continue to engage school-aged children in programming designed to result in a sense of significance, belonging, and fun, to build strong Jewish identities and foster a love of Jewish living and learning.
 - i. Encourage more families to enroll their young students (grades K-1) in TSRS. Consider how best to promote TSRS to member families with young children. Improve coordination between TSNS and TSRS to ensure a smooth transition for families whose children graduate from TSNS and advance into TSRS, and consider what early-years TSRS and Temple programming would best serve the educational goals of TSRS and the needs of Temple Sinai families and prospective families.
 - ii. Gather parent feedback (including via the Religious School Committee) to assess satisfaction and areas of improvement for TSRS.
 - iii. Continue to prioritize supporting and including students with diverse learning needs and their families, and consider ways that Temple Sinai may grow in this area.

- c. Temple Sinai will continue to enhance preteen and teen programming through formal and informal education and social offerings. It will work to foster a dynamic teen community with programs that actively engage youth through religious, social, and programmatic involvement.
 - i. Continue to consider innovative practices to maintain participation and active engagement among post-B'nei Mitzvah students, for example by evaluating and enhancing late elementary and middle school curricula.

- d. Temple Sinai will offer a rich array of adult learning opportunities aimed at deepening the Jewish life of adult members. This programming will be designed to attract and engage adults at a variety of educational levels.
 - i. The clergy team will identify strategies, including evaluating a plan for coordinating the leadership and preparation of adult education opportunities, to accomplish this objective.

MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Goal: Temple Sinai will maintain a strong and vibrant membership of life-long congregants whose association with the Temple is essential to their lives and who share the values of Temple Sinai, and will foster a culture of belonging, where members feel known, seen, and heard.

In 2022, Temple Sinai formed the Ad Hoc Committee on Membership Growth to explore ways to increase membership and better retain current members. The Committee's 2023 recommendations identified multiple areas in which changes might enhance both the financial proposition of membership and membership stability, by challenging the premise that membership is simply a transactional relationship; rather, membership should reflect a long-term connection with the congregation and a sense of belonging. The objectives under this goal are intended to reflect those recommendations.

Objectives and Strategies

- a. The Board or its designees will examine the Temple Sinai membership structure and financial commitments and make recommendations for changes that foster membership stability, financial health, and involvement in Temple programs, activities, and initiatives.
 - i. Consider implementing varying levels of financial commitment (including the Capital and Building Maintenance funds) and benefits of membership for families, reflecting a range of levels of involvement and needs (e.g., non-resident, TSNS families, families with school-age children, philanthropic intent, etc.). This process should be coordinated with the Finance, Development, and Membership Committees, and related Temple staff.
 - ii. Clearly define who is a member and what benefits are available only to members (v. past members, extended family of members, non-members participating in Temple programs, non-member TSNS families, etc.).
- b. Temple staff and lay leaders will jointly develop a plan for maintaining Temple Sinai membership.
 - i. Analyze membership resignations, and develop and implement a more expansive plan for outreach by staff, clergy, and lay leaders to members at risk of leaving Temple Sinai (e.g., people behind in dues, post-B'nei Mitzvah families, empty nesters). Share information gained from this analysis with Temple staff and the Board.
 - ii. Identify sources of new members (e.g., TSNS, the neighborhood surrounding Temple Sinai (including Ingleside)) and implement regular customized programs to introduce these groups to Temple Sinai. Regularly follow up with those who attend Temple programming (e.g., add them to a potential member list, send communications about programs of interest).

c. Temple staff and lay leaders will develop a strategy to engage new and existing members enthusiastically to assure that people feel seen and known, and to help create lasting relationships among Temple members.

i. Identify and implement ways to increase congregants' getting to know one another, such as clergy asking worshippers to introduce themselves to one another at onegs, requesting that members and staff wear name tags in the building, etc.

ii. Create/expand the outreach program to new members to integrate them into synagogue activities (e.g., new members' guide, buddy system with existing members, etc.).

iii. Reintroduce dinners, onegs, and social gatherings around Shabbat and holidays in a way that is appropriate and effective for Temple staffing, building, finances, and level of congregant interest.

iv. Consider implementing a program to facilitate the formation of "small groups" of congregants who meet periodically for group-led programming (as described in the footnote below), including the development of a road-map for group-led programming, with the goal of creating further opportunities for Temple members to broaden their circle within the community and build deeper bonds.³

v. Work with committee chairs to connect new members with committees in their areas of interest.

d. Temple Sinai staff and lay leaders will evaluate and revise existing forms of communication with members and consider new communication vehicles, to build community, attract new members, complement ritual observance, make Temple operations more transparent, and raise the Temple's profile in the broader community (e.g., the greater Washington, DC area and nationally). This evaluation should focus particularly on the Temple website, modifying it to better transmit information to current and prospective members.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Goal: We will act primarily through the structure of the Davis Center to engage a significant number of congregants in meaningful *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). We will focus on areas where we can maximize the impact of Temple Sinai's efforts to create a better world while serving as a model for other congregations.

The Davis Center for Social Justice is the home for Temple Sinai's social justice work. Established in 2021 as a part of the "Honor our Heritage, Build our Future" campaign, it has strengthened the support for, and scope of, Temple Sinai's work to repair the world. Current

³ See "How Small Groups Can Strengthen Your Synagogue," Rabbi Bethie Miller (Mar. 2, 2018), available at <https://urj.org/blog/how-small-groups-can-strengthen-your-synagogue>.

projects focus on refugee, asylum, and migrant support; gun violence prevention; reproductive rights; climate action; get out the vote efforts; and interfaith organizing.

Objectives and Strategies

- a. Complete a strategic planning process for the work of the Davis Center for Social Justice, articulating clear areas of focus where Temple Sinai's efforts can be effective, impactful, and consistent with available Temple resources.
- b. Explore financial models, including an endowment and funding sources beyond congregational fundraising (e.g., grants and foundations), to allow for the continuity of the Davis Center for Social Justice budget after the sustaining fund resources have been exhausted.
- c. Offer a menu of social justice programming to engage the congregation, from TSNS through older adults, in meaningful and age-appropriate justice work, through direct action, advocacy, and work in support of partner organizations.
- d. Strengthen the ongoing, supportive relationship between Temple Sinai and the Sinai Assisted Housing Foundation, also known as Sinai House.
- e. Develop programs to educate our community, both within and outside the synagogue, on diversity and inclusion as it pertains to race, religion, sexuality, and other marginalized identities. We include anti-Semitism as a critical component of this work. We will engage in multi-faith, multi-racial coalitions in pursuit of racial justice and of eradicating racial and religious prejudice.

PROGRAMMING

Goal: Temple Sinai will continue to offer informative and stimulating programming to meet the spiritual, intellectual, cultural, and social needs of the congregation as a whole.

Temple Sinai programming has been consistently well-attended and well-received, and engagement following the re-opening of in-person programming after the 2020 pandemic has been especially high and spirited. This enthusiasm, combined with the opening of the South Addition in 2024, provides exciting opportunities to develop and promote a variety of new programming— and continue current successful programs— to give many paths for Temple Sinai members and others to engage with the community and their Judaism.

Objectives and Strategies

- a. Continue to maintain a diverse schedule of programs designed to engage Temple Sinai and the wider community. These programs will include one-time stand-alone events and ongoing programs.

- i. Consider creating a small task force to poll or survey adult members for ideas/priorities on topics for adult-oriented programming in the upcoming years. Track and analyze attendance at current programming to assess member interest.
 - ii. Increase programming that brings together multiple generations and affinity groups within the congregation (i.e., WRJ with families with young children).
 - iv. Build a programming calendar that includes recurring activities, to facilitate members' attendance at Temple Sinai programs.
 - v. Incorporate "programming-lite" -- regular drop-in opportunities for Temple Sinai members to connect.
 - vi. Consider methods for increasing program attendance, e.g. by having lay leaders greet attendees and encourage their attendance at the next similar event.
- b. Expand family programming offerings and opportunities for parental involvement in Temple Sinai.
- i. Evaluate family programming and engagement at Temple Sinai, including offerings for families with young children who are not enrolled in TSNS.
 - ii. Consider how to empower lay leaders to plan and/or lead family programs (e.g., Shabbat dinner cohorts, grade-level family get-togethers).
 - iii. Consider planning periodic (e.g., monthly) programs for parents to occur at the same time as Sunday religious school.
- c. Continue to provide programming that is accessible to all attendees, regardless of their experience with, or knowledge of, Judaism.
- d. Maintain the library as an important resource for Jewish education, gathering, and support for programming and ritual life at Temple Sinai, and consider best ways to publicize and encourage use of library resources.
- e. Offer programs, opportunities, and spaces for members to explore their relationship with Israel and engage with Israel in the context of a post-October 7th world.

PASTORAL CARE

Goal: Our pastoral care practice is comprehensive, fosters a culture of caring for our congregants, and is grounded in our mission and our capabilities.

Pastoral care is provided by the clergy, a Temple social worker, other staff members, and volunteers to help address and support the social, emotional, and mental health needs of our congregants within the framework of our religious tradition while incorporating best practices of mental health providers.

Objectives and Strategies

a. Incorporate pastoral care and the culture of caring into the ritual and learning life of the congregation through sermons, classes, Torah study, and other Temple activities.

i. Develop regular healing services and other pastoral care-related ritual opportunities.

b. Develop Temple Sinai's identity as an effective first stop for members in their times of need.

i. Communicate and regularly publicize to members the Temple's multiple channels and access points for support, including clergy, a social worker, member-to-member volunteers, and other staff (i.e. teachers, admin team members).

c. Ensure that resources are in place to respond to the pastoral care needs of our members and staff in an appropriate, timely, and relationally meaningful way.

i. Develop meaningful member-to-member pastoral support.

ii. Plan and implement regular, ongoing, appropriate training and professional development for clergy and other members of the pastoral team and volunteers.

iii. Develop and maintain an effective and easy-to-use system for tracking pastoral care.

iv. Build and maintain a network of professional mental health care providers to help congregants identify appropriate and timely care that is sensitive to cost and other barriers.

v. Develop and offer support groups at Temple Sinai or other locations, including but not limited to YAWS (Young Adults Who Struggle), grief support, aging, and other issues that many individuals face.

vi. Build and maintain a bank of written and online resources that addresses the spectrum of pastoral care needs and is available to both the pastoral team and Temple members.

vii. Ensure that pastoral caregivers have the resources and opportunities for self-care and respite needed to ensure their own wellness and maintain their high level of empathy and psychological acuity.

MUSIC

Goal: We will expand the role of music at Temple Sinai to assure a musically rich congregation that allows congregants to be active participants in the musical life of the synagogue through a variety of avenues.

Music has always been an important element of worship and learning at Temple Sinai, and it traditionally has been an element of the Ritual goal in the Strategic Plan. But as the Temple recently said goodbye to our first Senior Cantor Laura Croen, and welcomed Senior Cantor Rachel Rhodes, we believe that there should and will be an increased focus on music at Temple Sinai now and in the near future. Therefore, we have included music as its own strategic goal in this Strategic Plan.

Objectives and Strategies

a. Continue to integrate our new Senior Cantor into the culture and programs of Temple Sinai and welcome the evolution and development of new traditions under her leadership.

b. Elevate the importance of music as a conduit of prayer in the Temple Sinai Shabbat experience.

c. Broaden the music programming at Temple Sinai to deepen our relationship to Judaism through diverse musical experiences.

i. Develop new avenues for members to interact with music as engaged listeners and active participants.

ii. Bring in outside artists multiple times each year.

d. Expand the role and membership of our existing adult choir so that it evolves into an even more vibrant musical force within and beyond Temple Sinai.

i. Consider more regular participation of the adult choir on Shabbat and in interfaith choral events.

- ii. Emphasize the spirit of the adult choir as a joyful place for community building, so more people feel welcome to join.
- e. Create and sustain multiple avenues for the congregation's youth to engage in Jewish music.
 - i. Implement programs such as Shir Shalom (3-6 grade choir), Shirlings (K-2 grade choir), Noar youth band, Temple Sinai Religious School (TSRS) and teen song-leader training, teen choir, Shabbat Sing in TSNS. Support a culture of active and joyful prayer participation in TSRS.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Goal: The Temple's building and grounds will be well maintained, and will provide a comfortable, accessible, secure, and inviting place where people of all ages can gather for worship, social events, education, programming, and social justice activities.

The use and maintenance of Temple Sinai's building and grounds should be conducted in a manner consistent with our Jewish values. The new South Addition provides many opportunities for creative and cost-effective use of our expanded physical resources, particularly with regard to outdoor space. Safety and security are always of paramount importance.

Objectives and Strategies

- a. Develop a facilities and grounds long-range plan for both the must-dos and like-to-dos.
 - i. Consider engaging a professional organization to conduct a facility assessment, aimed to support long-term financial planning for maintaining our existing facilities.
- b. Utilize new spaces provided by the South Addition for informal gatherings, events, and programming in a way that makes efficient use of staff resources and Temple space overall.
 - i. Emphasize scheduling activities outdoors, including on the Social Hall Patio, Terrace, Out-atorium, and Bet Am Patio.
- c. Advance the Temple's values of environmental stewardship, utilizing goals established in the context of Temple Sinai's participation in the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition.
 - i. Explore projects such as composting, native planting, and additional bioretention features) to use them as opportunities to educate and engage Temple youth.
- d. Follow best practices to maintain security appropriate to a changing threat environment while working to maintain a welcoming environment.

GOVERNANCE

Goal: Temple Sinai's governance, leadership, management, and communications processes will reflect best practices in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and collaboration.

As provided in the Bylaws, the Board of Trustees is responsible for the general management of the affairs, funds, records, and property of the Temple. The duties of the Nominating Committee are also described in the Bylaws. We believe the Board and Nominating Committee have carried out their responsibilities capably, professionally, and in the best interests of the Temple. The objectives and strategies listed below are recommended ways of ensuring that the governance of the Temple will continue to be efficient, effective, and collaborative.

Objectives and Strategies

- a. The Board will continue to be composed of individuals who possess appropriate experience and expertise, are aware of the interests and priorities of congregation members, and are committed to working actively to move the Temple forward.
 - i. The Nominating Committee will develop procedures to further this objective.
- b. The Board will develop a process for assuring that the goals and objectives of this Strategic Plan are priorities for those responsible for the areas addressed by the Plan, and that progress is made toward accomplishing these goals and objectives.
- c. The Board will appoint a committee or task force to propose policies regarding the leadership of, and membership on, Temple committees; the authority of committees (especially with respect to use of Board-designated funds in a committee's area of interest); and communication among committees and between the committees and the Board.
 - i. Create Board liaisons to Temple Sinai Committees.
- d. The Board will appoint a committee or task force to review the Bylaws and other governing documents and Temple policies to ensure that governance is effective, efficient, fair, and transparent.

ATTACHMENT 1

Temple Sinai

Report of the Early Childhood Task Force to the Strategic Planning Committee

April 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Early Childhood Task Force (ECTF) has three major recommendations, which are detailed later in the report. Temple Sinai should:

- A. Strengthen the Temple Sinai Nursery School (TSNS) with an extended-day option that is responsive to the needs of a wider range of families and supports the school's ongoing financial sustainability.**
- B. Improve the marketing, communication, and coordination of Temple Sinai programming for families of young children whether they are already enrolled in the TSNS or Temple Sinai Religious School or are prospective member families.**
- C. Step up recruitment for membership of families with young children and consider lower membership rates for these families.**

The ECTF and TSNS leadership worked collaboratively to develop this mission statement:

Temple Sinai's Nursery School provides exceptional early childhood educational programming in a framework that reflects Temple Sinai's mission and values. The Nursery School serves as an important link for its families to Temple Sinai's clergy and programs, and paves the way for long-term involvement and integration into the fabric of the Temple Sinai community, where families can maintain and grow the connections forged during their children's early childhood years.

CHARGE TO THE EARLY CHILDHOOD TASK FORCE

The Early Childhood Task Force was established by the Temple Sinai Strategic Planning Committee in the summer of 2023. The full charge for the task force is attached (appendix #1)

and articulates that the results of the task force's recommendations should accomplish these two goals:

1. Strengthen the Temple Sinai Nursery School for current and future families and their children.
2. Increase engagement and a sense of belonging to Temple Sinai among families with young children, whether or not they are enrolled in the Temple Sinai Nursery School. The Task Force also would develop plans for the implementation of the recommendations and advise on procedures for monitoring their implementation.

Moreover, the charge includes these specific tasks:

The Early Childhood Task Force will (1) review and formally articulate the mission of TSNS; and (2) consider and make recommendations about changes both within and beyond the Nursery School to enable the early childhood program to be better integrated into Temple Sinai's overall vision. If changes to TSNS's operations are recommended, the Task Force will also investigate, research, and make recommendations about alternatives. Considerations should include but not be limited to operating a program for young children (i) that serves the needs of a broad range of Temple Sinai members and so attracts more current and prospective Temple Sinai members (e.g., by reducing the effective cost of the program for members, offering extended hours to better meet the needs of members and potential members who work full-time) and (ii) that has a cost structure that reflects a sustainable financial model within Temple Sinai

THE TASK FORCE

Members of the task force are Sara Rosenblum, Natalie Royal Selzer, Amanda Wagner, David Wessel, Rabbi Jonathan Roos, Rabbi Hannah Goldstein, Marsha Shaines (ex-officio), Craig Iscoe (ex-officio), and Rosann Wisman (chair). The task force held its first meeting on August 8, 2023, and met twice a month through March 2024, in addition to discussions via extensive online communications. It has been a very thoughtful and thorough process and the chair wants to thank all of the members for their time and dedication.

The task force members conducted 24 interviews of families who had enrolled their children in TSNS or chosen other early childhood programs. We reviewed websites of area Jewish congregations with early childhood programs as well as other non-denominational programs. The task force also communicated by phone, email, and in-person meetings with :

Dolores Siegel and Katie Joselow, TSNS Committee Co-chairs,

Ali Hurewitz, Director of Early Childhood Education

Alyssa Policarpio, TSNS Operations Manager

Allison Tierney, TSNS Finance Consultant

Cantor Rebecca Robins, Cantor/Educator

Ellen Agler, Executive Director

Karen Auerbach, Member Relations and Engagement

BACKGROUND

TSNS was founded in 1992. As the Strategic Planning Committee observed in its charge to the task force, TSNS was to be budget-neutral (excluding rent) and did not have a clearly articulated mission for ways in which it would align with the Temple's mission and strategic plan. Enrollment in TSNS has fallen from 165 and 155 children in the years before the pandemic to between 72 and 80 in the past three years. About 90% of current TSNS families have at least one Jewish parent, but only about a third are Temple Sinai members. (Several other congregational early-childhood programs in the area have a higher proportion of members; some offer free or significantly reduced membership options to families with children in those programs.) Currently approximately 25 -30% of students in all RS classes attended the TSNS, although there was a drop in the current 2nd grade due to the pandemic. About 250 – or roughly 25% – of all current members of Temple Sinai sent their children to TSNS. In other words, TSNS has a substantial constituency among our current members.

The TSNS day begins as early as 8:15 a.m. (Early Birds Morning Drop-off for up to 10 children) and goes as late as 2:30 p.m for three-year-olds participating in Afternoon Enrichment programming and children in pre-K. The TSNS program runs from September to June with an optional seven-week summer camp. Most other early childhood programs in the community offer a more extended day program.

Why an early childhood education program?

The task force was unanimous in affirming the importance of Temple Sinai offering an early childhood education program. One, a core value in the Temple's strategic plan is: "We [Temple Sinai] believe in providing Jewish education that has a meaningful impact on its participants from early childhood through adult education." Two, engaging young families at Temple Sinai is essential for the long-term growth and stability of our congregation and the Reform Jewish movement more broadly. Specifically, TSNS has been and should continue to be an important source of new members (and thus more revenue) for the Temple.

What kind of program should we have?

- The program must align with the Temple's values
- The program should offer a high-quality educational program.
- The program should be financially sustainable (as defined below)
- The program should offer an extended day option

TSNS as part of Temple Sinai's core program

We believe Temple Sinai should be a leader among congregations in our community in offering programs that attract and engage young families and engage them in our community. We understand that at its inception, the Temple Sinai board was not enthusiastic about starting a nursery school and said it had to be financially self-supporting. One outcome of this was that TSNS created its own budgetary structure, including a reliance on significant fundraising efforts, and was not fully integrated into the Temple's administrative systems (e.g. it had a separate schedule of employee benefits). Substantial progress has been made in recent years in integrating TSNS into the Temple (administratively and in mission) and that must continue. We have found the current TSNS leadership understands that the current schedule and level of enrollment is not a sustainable option and has been proactive in examining new approaches, especially the extended-day offering. We believe this can work, provided there is a climate of mutual respect and trust between the TSNS leadership and the Temple's lay leaders, clergy, and other senior staff.

An important step towards strengthening the relationship between TSNS and the Temple more broadly is this new mission statement that the TSNS leadership and ECTF crafted collaboratively.

Temple Sinai's Nursery School provides exceptional early childhood educational programming in a framework that reflects Temple Sinai's mission and values. The Nursery School serves as an important link for its families to Temple Sinai's clergy and programs, and paves the way for long-term involvement and integration into the fabric of the Temple Sinai community, where families can maintain and grow the connections forged during their children's early childhood years.

Our conversations with the TSNS staff and volunteer leadership reflected their pride in being part of Temple Sinai. The program is committed to engaging families and children with our clergy and providing opportunities for families to learn about the benefits of membership. However, in recognition of the reality that TSNS also welcomes students who are not Jewish, which also is important for enrollment and tuition revenue, this emphasis must be carried out in a manner that is sensitive to families with non-Jewish backgrounds.

What does financially sustainable mean?

We defined financially sustainable as having sufficient revenue from tuition to cover direct costs – payroll for teachers and administrative staff, supplies, security, and licensing. Grants designated for the TSNS or other TSNS fundraising could supplement revenue, but must be done in coordination with other Temple fundraising activities. However, financial sustainability, by our definition, is based solely on tuition revenue. TSNS, like all other Temple programs, does not pay for use of the Temple's building nor cover the costs of maintenance, building supplies, or technology.

Making the nursery school financially sustainable requires, among other things, increasing enrollment (which should lower per student costs). We believe adding an extended day option for families offers a way to increase enrollment. We interviewed many families who did not send their children to TSNS but would have if the extended day program had been an option. TSNS has a strong, positive reputation among TS families and non-TS families in the neighborhood that leads to a likelihood of success. Measuring the nursery school's impact on Temple finances is not only about adding up revenues and expenses. Given that about 25% of our current member families sent children to TSNS, the school clearly is a feeder for membership.

One important fact in measuring whether TSNS is covering its costs is that TSNS has always offered a substantial discount tuition to families who are members of Temple Sinai, which reduces TSNS's revenues without any credit from the Temple budget. (For example, the tuition for a morning program for three-year-olds in 2024-25 will be \$17,570 for non-members and \$15,780 for members.) In addition, the Temple has negotiated contracts with clergy that offer them *free* nursery school tuition; there are currently two clergy children in the school. This is a form of employee compensation and should be treated as such in the Temple budget.

Tuition does not currently cover TSNS costs, but the deficit has been more than offset by the money TSNS has received from the [DC Payroll Equity Fund \(PEF\)](#) for the 2024 fiscal year, and by grants and fundraising in past years. (In other words, the Temple membership dues and donations have not been covering the TSNS operating deficit.) The PEF is aimed at achieving pay parity between early childhood teachers and K-12 teachers in the District; it provides cash to early childhood programs that pay salaries at a prescribed schedule. Because TSNS (largely) already was paying at those levels, the PEF was something of a windfall to TSNS. Much of the PEF money has been saved, and the finance committee has reserved it for TSNS. The FY24 disbursement will be \$478,270; the funds are paid quarterly. Unfortunately, the PEF funds will not continue in the 2025 fiscal year. However, money already received or committed will provide a short-term cushion as we learn whether the extended day option and more aggressive marketing are successful.

What would an extended day program look like?

TSNS School has, for many years, ended at 2:30 p.m. Some of the competition offers longer days: The [Gan at Adas Israel](#) goes from 8:30 a.m. to (up to) 5:50 p.m. [Temple Shalom](#) in Chevy Chase offers 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. [Broad Branch Montessori](#) offers 8:10 a.m. to 5:50 p.m. [Bender JCC in Rockville](#) offers 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. [Ohr Kodesh](#) goes from as early as 7:30 a.m. to as late as 6 p.m. [Temple Emanuel](#) offers a 12-month program that goes from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (An exception is [Washington Hebrew](#): 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.)

We interviewed 24 Temple Sinai members who are parents of young children who did not enroll their children at TSNS. The length of the school day was the major reason. We believe that expanding the school day could increase enrollment; indeed, we believe it is the single most important way to increase enrollment and put TSNS finances on a sustainable trajectory.

Currently enrolled families chose a program that ended at 2:30 p.m. (for Threes and Pre-K) so they may not be inclined to sign up for a longer day. However, based on our interviews with families and the experience of other area congregations, we believe the extended-day option will attract families. We also recognize that it would take perhaps three years before we can know with confidence whether an expansion of the school day is working.

The TSNS leadership has outlined what it would take to offer an optional extended day through 5:30 p.m. beginning in the fall of 2025 and how that would, under various assumptions, affect the school's finances. That plan has several elements, including these:

- Any expansion of the school day should preserve the current high-quality morning program.
- As noted above, we refer to extended day as an option because not all families will choose to enroll their children in it.
- Licensing guidelines require that we pay educators staffing this program at the same rates as those working in our morning program; however staffing patterns may be adjusted as the program is implemented.
- The requirements of licensing also would require TSNS (early childhood) to provide for nap time in the afternoon even for older children; other schools, e.g. Lowell School Pre-K (a primary school) don't have the same restrictions. TSNS would offer quiet time activities for children who no longer nap.
- Expanding the school day would require some capital expenditures (e.g. lighting on the playground, blackout shades in the classrooms) and additional maintenance and security staffing.
- The TSNS plan could accommodate up to 18 extended-day children in Rooms 2 and 3 without requiring any changes in the Religious School schedule for other rooms. If enrollment exceeds 18, the Temple has some decisions to make.

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Strengthen the Temple Sinai Nursery School with an extended--day option that is responsive to the needs of a wider range of families and supports the school's ongoing financial sustainability.

1. Initiate the optional extended day program in August/September 2025. It would be year-round and last until 5:30 p.m., Monday thru Friday as outlined in the extended day proposal.

2. Within 3 to 4 years the program is projected to generate net revenue at about \$100K. Full enrollment for purposes of budget modeling assumes approximately 100 children enrolled at TSNS with 18 children participating in the extended day.
3. Ensure that TSNS tuition is competitive (not the highest) with other area extended-day Jewish programs. The Nursery School Committee and staff leadership should present an analysis of tuition annually to the Temple Sinai Finance Committee (taking into account, for example, considerations such as total enrollment, costs such as teacher salaries, member families enrolled, and tuition rates of local comparable programs including Jewish as well as non-Jewish programs).
4. The TSNS Committee, TSNS Staff Leadership, Finance Committee, and Temple Sinai Board should set mutually agreed upon milestones for TSNS to achieve over the next three to five years.
5. Ensure that TSNS budget is credited for discounted member tuition and tuition from clergy enrolled children annually as TSNS revenue.
6. **The potential for success as defined in #4 will not be realized unless the next two recommendations are fully implemented. The recommendations below are largely the responsibility of the Temple and lay leadership and not the sole responsibility of the TSNS.**

B. Improve the marketing, communication, and coordination of programming for families of young children whether they are already enrolled in the TSNS or Religious School or are prospective families.

1. Expanded external marketing to neighborhood and other external audiences, including on social media and TSNS banners on Military Road and Jennifer Street.
2. Expanded internal marketing to current TSNS families and member families who are not enrolled in the NS. Focus on web, social media, and email as well as more frequent and personal contact with the Membership Coordinator and with clergy.
3. Ensure that these efforts are not the sole responsibility of TSNS and are embraced and implemented by the Temple more broadly.
4. Consider rebranding the TSNS name to modernize it and reflect new program offerings, and to enhance marketability. Consider a shorthand name like The Gan (means garden in Hebrew) at Adas Israel. Identifying a new name should be the responsibility of TSNS staff and NS Committee.
5. Ensure that an individual responsible for programming for families with young children (ages 0-5) outside of the regularly scheduled TSNS day, is carried out by a clearly designated new part-time Temple staff role that is assigned to the TSNS with adequate resources and oversight for successful implementation.
6. Consider establishing parent ambassadors who will, for example, meet with prospective TSNS families and post on neighborhood and parenting listservs and Facebook groups.
7. Reduce barriers for prospective TSNS families to explore TSNS offerings and apply for admission.
 1. Simplify the information that goes out to prospective TSNS families about tuition and admissions process, and enhance website accessibility of this information.
 2. Consider offering a fall open house and streamline the application process.

C. Step up recruitment for membership of families (particularly TSNS families) with young children and consider lower membership rates for TSNS families

1. Establish an easy on-ramp for engagement and membership for young families which includes more proactively engaging TSNS families about Temple membership and making the process for membership clearer, simpler and less expensive for families. To this end, develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for membership recruitment of families with young children that improves coordination, communication, and defines roles and accountability between TSNS, Religious School, and Temple Sinai.
2. Organize a small group of TSNS parents who are Temple members to help with recruiting TSNS families (parent ambassadors), perhaps an informal info session or a Zoom meeting a couple of times a year. This could be assigned to a newly constituted Temple membership committee.
3. Simplify the messaging that goes to prospective members about dues.
4. Upgrade 'membership' page on the Temple website <https://templesinaidc.org/membership/>. Consider making it a separate tab at the top. Perhaps add vignettes or even videos showing the many reasons that people of all ages join the Temple, with emphasis on young families.
5. Consider alternatives to existing financial commitment categories. Lower rates for TSNS families should be modeled by the finance committee to determine the short term and long term impact if membership rates are decreased substantially for young families, generating more members, and then increased after the family "graduates" from TSNS or Kindergarten. Below are examples from other Temples:
 1. Free 'gift membership' for first year of enrollment in TSNS
 2. Automatic free membership for TSNS families for the duration of their enrollment in TSNS (with request that they contribute) or a nominal rate like \$360 per year.
 3. Lower membership rate category for young families with children 0 to 5 even if they are not enrolled in the NS. (e.g. a flat rate for families that are in K, 1st, 2nd grades as a way to keep more families engaged)

FUTURE CONSIDERATION AND POTENTIAL ACTION

1. The tuition cost for the program is still high—aligned with Adas but still in the top tier of school tuition. That is driven mainly by teacher salaries. On the other hand, we have very little teacher turnover which is an asset for the school. TSNS will continue to evaluate cost-saving opportunities; however, at this juncture, we believe the priority is to get the extended day option up and running. We note that while lowering tuition rates is a goal, doing so would likely reduce the potential net revenue generated by the program unless enrollment increased in response to a more accessible tuition model.

2. The length of the day (until 5:30 M-F) was discussed. Ideally, keeping the program open until 6pm might meet the needs of more parents but it will impact costs and staffing. This could be re-examined after the program is on sustainable footing.
3. Maintenance of licensed indoor and outdoor spaces utilized by TSNS and in some cases, shared between the NS and Religious School, will continue to be an issue, particularly as it relates to licensing requirements of an extended-day year-round early childhood program. The Director of Early Childhood Education, TSNS Operations Manager, Temple Facilities Manager, and Temple Executive Director recently developed an expanded checklist, new Policy on Facilities and Grounds Maintenance, and revised Work Order Form to ensure more consistent and ongoing attention to these issues; this will need to be closely monitored to determine if additional resources are needed in this area.
4. The ECTF proposes to convene in 6 months and 12 months to monitor the progress towards implementation of all of the recommendations.

FINAL NOTE

With regard to the extended day program and strengthening the TSNS, we decided it was important to build on the current program which has strong support among our members, 25% of whom sent their children there. Current families that we interviewed and our own task force members who send or sent their children to the school wanted to maintain the strength of the program and teachers. Revenue and expenses will need to be monitored and after 3 or 4 years, aspects of the model could be re-evaluated. For now, we firmly believe that ECTF, working very closely with the TSNS leadership, developed a good and reasonable plan and set of recommendations. The ECTF is firmly committed to recommending that Temple Sinai move forward on this path.

Appendix #1

CHARGE TO EARLY CHILDHOOD TASK FORCE

Since the founding of the Temple Sinai Nursery School in 1992, hundreds of children and families have benefitted from our nurturing, high-quality early childhood program steeped in values of Reform Judaism. Begun as a budget-neutral element of the Temple Sinai financial landscape, the Nursery School was founded without the articulation of an established vision for the ways in which it would serve the mission and strategic plan of the temple. In the Strategic Planning Committee's 2020-21 review, it was recommended that a task force be created to "1. Strengthen the Temple Sinai Nursery School for current and future families and their children. 2. Increase engagement and a sense of belonging to Temple Sinai among families with young children, whether or not they are enrolled in the Temple Sinai Nursery School. The Task Force also would develop plans for the implementation of the recommendations and advise on procedures for monitoring their implementation."

The challenges and opportunities presented by our Nursery School at this time necessitate an effective response to the recommendation from the August 2021 report. In the past several years, significant strides have been made to integrate the Nursery School within the temple structure, financially, operationally, and in other meaningful ways. The pandemic and temple renovation have posed unique challenges, and TSNS is currently operating at a deficit supported by the TS operating budget, TS fixed costs and overhead expenses, withdrawals from the Nursery School Fund, and varied early childhood stabilization grants and city programs. The financial sustainability of the current model, the timetable needed to return to a more solid financial footing, and other options to better secure the Nursery School as valued contributor to Temple Sinai's mission require exploration and study.

Among the factors bearing further review include how Temple Sinai's membership dues structure, non-Nursery School early childhood offerings, Religious School programming, and the Nursery School itself can together create a meaningful "on ramp" to membership for non-member families and a touchpoint for temple involvement. Moving forward, TS leadership has identified that a review of TSNS's current mode of operations, along with other interrelated factors, would help to ensure that as a whole the mission of TS is supported and sustainable; this will be the work of the Strategic Planning Committee.

The SPC Early Childhood Task Force will (1) review and formally articulate the mission of TSNS; and (2) consider and make recommendations about changes both within and beyond the Nursery School to enable the early childhood program to be better integrated into Temple Sinai's overall vision. If changes to TSNS's operations are recommended, the Task Force will also investigate, research, and make recommendations about alternatives. Considerations should include but not be limited to operating a program for young children (i) that serves the needs of a broad range of TS members and so attracts more current and prospective TS members (e.g., by reducing the effective cost of the program for members, offering extended hours to better meet the needs of members and potential members who work full-time) and (ii) that has a cost structure that reflects a sustainable financial model within Temple Sinai. The Task Force will look to the SPC's related Aug. 24, 2021 report and the relevant sections of the Membership Growth Committee report from January, 2023 for guidance.

