



## NEW BEGINNINGS 2020 -- Our Vision & Our Plans from your Temple Emanu-El Leadership

December 2019

This year begins a new chapter in the life of Temple Emanu-El. A dynamic new Rabbi, an energetic Director of Engagement, and a recently recruited seasoned Educator join our long-standing Executive Director in charting a new course for our Temple. The coming years will see our membership ranks increasing, our congregants growing closer, and our children building their Jewish identities. We will continue to be steadfast leaders in the Birmingham faith community, and we will make significant strides in repairing the world. Our future is bright and with your support, we are excited to begin the journey.

### Our Vision:

Our search for a new rabbi required us to think deeply and thoughtfully about who we are and where we want to go. After months of introspection, we now have a clear vision of the Temple we want to be:

✧ **We want to create a deeply-engaged community** where every member feels part of an extended family. We wish every congregant in our diverse community to be valued and respected and united by their love of Judaism. Kindness, compassion, and empathy will lead us to be a rich and engaging congregation, and will allow us to experiment and be creative. And to that end, we are dedicated to providing more connections and programming to reach every congregant.

✧ **We want to make a robust Jewish education available to all our children.** We want our Discovery School to be a nexus for early Jewish childhood education in Birmingham. We recognize that when we support and invest in our preschool, we are sowing the seeds of our future. We want to create a Religious School with a cutting-edge curriculum and youth engagement programs, which will lead to high Jewish literacy rates. We want our children not only to learn the richness of our tradition inside our building, but to take their education on the road. We want our children to learn about Jewish involvement in the Civil Rights Movement while marching on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, and about the Maccabees while hiking in the Judean foothills in Israel.

✧ **We want to enhance adult Jewish education.** The depth of Jewish literature, whether the Torah, Rabbinic Literature, Jewish Philosophy, Modern Jewish Thought, Hebrew Poetry, and Jewish History embodies a living and engaging Judaism. We want Temple Emanu-El to be a sacred place for our learning and a place for our intellectual curiosities to grow.

✧ **We want to ensure that our empty nesters and legacy members have a synagogue that compliments their Jewish values.** Synagogues today are too quick to focus on programs that only relate to younger demographics. Consequently, this leads to alienation. Temple Emanu-El will remain their home too, filled with events and programs that enhance their Judaism.

✧ **We want to modernize our worship experience.** It is time to experiment with a monthly Tot Shabbat, Family Shabbat, and Potluck Shabbat. It is time to welcome the noise of children inside the sanctuary. The cries, the giggles, the banging of toys, the running between the pews, followed by the cries again must be welcomed. We must see and feel the next generation within our midst. This historic congregation will continue to grow through our children.

✧ **We want to grow our membership.** We know that we must make Reform Judaism relevant to the next generation and we are prepared to embrace new ways of meeting these members' needs. We will create a new membership category to bring in new families who are under the age of 36 for \$36 annual dues. Research tells us that millennials and Generation Zs will not join a synagogue until they have families. We need them here before this important moment in their lives. We need to hear from them. We need to learn about their passions. We need to motivate this generation so that they become our future Jewish leaders and ensure that Temple Emanu-El becomes a 200-year generational congregation.

✧ **We want Temple Emanu-El to continue to be a leading light in the Birmingham faith community.** We want the public at-large to understand our desire to make the world a better place and know our commitment to social action.

✧ **We want to continue to be supportive of our unquestionable, undisputable, and indigenous homeland, the State of Israel.** We want to advocate for our Jewish Day School, our LJCC, our Holocaust Education Center, our Collat Jewish Family Service, our Jewish Federation, our Jewish Foundation, and especially our Jewish summer camps so that our children continue to have a strong Jewish identity.

### Our Plans:

We have assembled an outstanding professional team to lead us on our journey. Rabbi Wright has youth, vigor, energy and a demonstrated ability to connect to younger members. Lynda Gutcheon hit the ground running a year ago. Her experience and wisdom have positively changed our religious school. We are also excited to have Monika Singletary on our staff in the position of Director of Engagement. She is laser focused on creating opportunities for congregants to be more involved in our Temple. And, we are committed to securing a Cantor who will make the joy of Judaism palpable and contagious.

Securing this talented team has required a significant financial investment. The position of Director of Engagement is currently being funded for this current year by several congregants who believe deeply in the value of this role. And while our Grafman Endowment Fund agreed to provide additional operating income if needed to attract a first-class rabbi – ultimately our goal is for our membership to be able to sustain this congregation for the long-term and reserve our Endowment allocations for enhancements.

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## Our Plans *continued*

We know that going forward we must raise additional operating revenue not only to maintain this outstanding staff, but to cover the normal rising expenses of operating a vibrant organization. We have developed a comprehensive plan to accomplish this task. Our plan has five components:

1. We will assemble a 25-member Development Outreach team, co-chaired by Harry Bayer and Joe Bluestein. Representatives of this group will meet individually with every member of our congregation over the next several years to determine how the Temple can play a more meaningful role in their lives. These leaders will also explain the need for additional financial support on an annual basis.
2. We will increase the number of exciting and affordable fundraising events to not only add income to our budget but to further bring congregants together in fellowship.
3. We will make a concerted effort to increase our membership by educating unaffiliated Jews in the Birmingham area about the benefit of joining Temple Emanu-El. We will convey the excitement our new Rabbi brings and explain the many opportunities we offer congregants to experience a meaningful Jewish life.
4. We will obtain additional income by renting our facility to outside groups for social events. We have had some success with this in the past, but we will now redouble our efforts.
5. Lastly, we understand that we must be good stewards of the funds with which we are entrusted. We are committed to making thoughtful financial decisions and ensuring that member's funds are spent wisely. We are also committed to communicating pertinent financial information frequently and with even greater transparency than ever before.

## Our Financial Sustainability

Etched in the walls of our Sanctuary are the words, “*My house shall be a house of prayer for all people.*” Because of you and your personal investment in our Temple, we can open our doors to share our Jewish values with all who wish to enter, regardless of their ability to pay. Voluntary contributions above and beyond sustaining dues minimums allow us to keep affiliation affordable for all and helps us sustain every aspect of our Temple – allowing us to maintain well-loved programs, explore exciting new projects and meet previously unanticipated needs of our congregation.

**New Security Assessment:** Unfortunately, with an increasingly violent world, we now are bearing additional costs to ensure the safety of every person and every child that connects with our community. To that end, while we are maintaining our minimum Sustaining Commitment levels, we are adding a new “*Security Assessment*” which will help cover the additional costs of adding a second armed officer to be present at our facilities at Shabbat services, Religious School, and any special events or meetings throughout the year. We are asking each family to contribute an additional \$100 and each individual an additional \$50 to help provide this supplementary coverage.

**Maintain Minimum levels with requested Voluntary Increase:** Based upon the approved 2019-20 budget and our current number of congregants, our “cost per member” is \$2,800 for family (two-adult household) or \$1,400 for individual. However, to keep affiliation affordable our Temple leadership has made the conscious decision this year to maintain our minimum Sustaining Commitment of \$2,500 per family and \$1,250 per individual – and invite those with financial capability to consider making any increase possible so that our Temple can continue to be a vibrant beacon of Reform Judaism.

As indicated in the column (*left*), we will begin a new process of requesting one-on-one meetings with each congregant to learn more about your involvement with Temple, and ascertain how we can provide the best experience as your spiritual home. Additionally, we hope to work with you to develop a financial plan to help provide sustainable support to meet our congregation's growing needs. We greatly appreciate this opportunity so that our Temple can be the best it can be to serve you, our cherished congregation.

On behalf of your Temple Board of Directors:

President: *Al Cohn*

President Elect: *Robert Berman*

Dues Outreach Co-chairs: *Joe Bluestein & Harry Bayer*

*Questions or additional information: contact Robin Gotlieb, Executive Director at (205)933-8037, ext 238 or [robin@ourtemple.org](mailto:robin@ourtemple.org).*



**Temple Emanu-El**  
SEEK ✦ ENGAGE ✦ TRANSFORM