



MISSION STATEMENT Our Temple Circles initiative encourages our temple family to form groups that have shared interests and passions in order to **SEEK, ENGAGE, and TRANSFORM** caring and supportive relationships among themselves, with the Temple Emanu-El community, and with Judaism.

The Leader's Guide

We know that there are many demands on your time and energy, and Temple Emanu-El is honored that you will be dedicating your time to fostering an environment that will live into our Temple Circles Mission Statement.

This guide will offer some “best practices and principles” for leading a Temple Circle. **At the end of this guide is a page of RESOURCE with links to helpful documents.** If you have questions or concerns that are not answered here, do not worry. Your coach and/or the Temple Circles Advisory Council are here to support you.



Your coach and the members of your Temple Circles Advisory Council (TCAC) are happy to answer your questions, offer resources, help troubleshoot issues that may arise in your group, or simply act as a sounding board as you begin this process. You can contact Monika Singletary, Director of Congregational Engagement, by email at Monika@ourtemple.org or by phone at 205-933-8037 ext. 213 for assistance. She will be happy to help you or connect you with the appropriate person.

Do you know someone who you think would make a great TEMPLE CIRCLES leader? We believe that our Temple Circles have the potential to change the way our members relate to one another, to Temple Emanu-El, and to the greater Jewish community. However, to offer this opportunity more broadly, we need more members who are willing to lead circles. Simply put, the more leaders we have, the more groups we can offer. We provide training, one-on-one support, and user-friendly materials to all our leaders. If you know someone who would be a great leader, please let Monika Singletary know.

What does it mean to be a Temple Circle leader?

The good news is that being a great leader does NOT require you to be an expert. You are not expected to be a teacher, and you do NOT need any specialized Jewish knowledge.

Instead, as a leader we ask that you (or ask someone in your circle to):



Offer Hospitality. Create a welcoming environment for your group to meet. This can be at your own home, the home of another member, a member's office, outdoors or anywhere else where you can have a private, uninterrupted conversation or activity. If possible, refreshments can be provided by the host or participants can be asked to bring them. **



Prepare. For each session, you will prepare an outline that should be followed. (See p.4 for Tips on Structuring your Meetings.)



Bring Supplies. For each session, be sure to bring or share a copy of the Temple Circles Promise and bring any other materials that might be needed for the session.



Facilitate discussion in addition to your unique activity. Your goal is to encourage lively, meaningful discussion, in which everyone's voice is heard. (See p.5 for tips on how to do so.)

Temple Circles meet for two sessions each year



Circles can continue for both sessions, however, there will be open registration for all active and not-filled circles in August and January, so that people feel comfortable leaving and joining circles.

We strongly encourage circle members, as a group, to attend Temple Emanu-El services, celebrations, and programs, as well as support each other in both good and not so good times.

**** NOTE:** For our 2020 Fall Session, we are ENCOURGING leaders to plan for Temple Circles get-togethers online via ZOOM or outdoors, at least until the state and county rules for physical distancing have been relaxed. If you feel that your circle will only be effective indoors and in-person, we request that you limit the size of your group to 10 or less. Please speak with your coach about this if you have questions.

HOW TO BEGIN

1 CREATE A DIVERSE MEMBERSHIP

- We recommend circles of 8 to 12 people (5 min/16 max). **
- Choose the makeup of your circle: adults, parents, families, young adults or multi-generational, men, women, LGBTQ, professionals, etc.
- Reach out to one or two friends and tell them why you are starting and leading a Temple Circle and encourage them to invite others. (Temple Circles are open to members of our temple family, the wider Jewish community, or to those who have a sincere interest in Judaism.)
- Let them know when and how long the session will be and that you would like them to commit to the entire session.
- If possible, select the meeting dates with this initial group.
- Temple Emanu-El will market your circle to encourage others to register via our small groups software.

2 FIND THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE

- We recommend meeting a minimum of 6 times during the 16 week session for a couple of hours each time or however much time you think is needed.
- Choose a quiet, comfortable, inviting location appropriate for your circle's purpose and activity. (During the pandemic of 2020, we are encouraging gatherings via ZOOM, outdoors, or in groups of 10 or less.)

3 PREPARE FOR YOUR FIRST CIRCLE GATHERING

- Check out our tips for structuring your first meeting (p. 4).
- Create your first outline (agenda), share it with your coach, and send it to your members in advance.
- Include a CALL TO ACTION in your outline e.g. "Who will host next time?" or "How to do something for or with Temple" or "Come prepared to discuss a specific topic," etc.

4 CREATE A CONVERSATION-CONDUSIVE SPACE

- Set the tone for a relaxing atmosphere.
- While you enjoy dinner, sip wine or coffee, picnic in the park, or relax together after an activity, try engaging in a "deep conversation" in order to get to know each other better: questions or short stories/poems designed to spark conversation that goes beyond catching up on your daily lives. Your coach is happy to chat with you about conversation starters.
- Make sure you allocate enough time for the purpose of your circle.

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TIPS FOR STRUCTURING TEMPLE CIRCLE MEETINGS

IN ADVANCE

- **Schedule all your sessions in advance (if possible) or during your first get-together with your circle participants** - Calendars fill quickly. The key to ensuring regular attendance is to set your calendar well in advance. It is usually easiest to pick one day and time that recurs on a regular basis (e.g. every other Tuesday at 7PM).

- **Create an outline with time allocations**
 1. Nosh & Schmooze
 2. Mission, Purpose, and Ground Rules
 3. Do something Jewish
 4. Activity involving the purpose of the circle
 5. “Deep Conversation” and more Noshing
 6. Get feedback and plan for the next gathering

- **Send a reminder of the get-together, the outline, and any prep materials 2 -3 days before each session**

1 NOSH & SCHMOOZE

- Have everyone introduce themselves and announce upcoming TEE happenings. (Consider having name tags for the first few meetings.)
- Get to know each other better (more info each session).
- Share personal stories and experiences (Good & Welfare).

2 MISSION, PROMISE, AND GROUND RULES

- Post and review the Temple Circle Mission Statement at the first few meetings.
- Have all participants review and sign the Temple Circles Promise.
- Set the Ground Rules:
 - Confidentiality
 - Respect
 - Commitment
- Let everyone know that if this sort of gathering—in which participants actively share their stories and experiences with one another—is not what they had in mind, they are welcome to opt out with no judgement. Please let your coach know if this occurs.

3 DO SOMETHING JEWISH – D’var Torah, A Poem, A News Article

- Rotate responsibility for doing this.
- Connect this to your activity/purpose and, if possible, to Temple Emanu-El or the greater Jewish community.
- Your coach can help with this.

4 **ACTIVITY** (This is why everyone joined this particular Temple Circle.)

- Introduce the activity/purpose of your circle.
- Think of elements that others can lead each time you get together.

5 **“DEEP CONVERSATION” AND MORE NOSHING**

- Pick an interesting topic that may have nothing to do with the purpose of the circle.
- Keep the conversation relevant to everyone.
- Pay attention to nonverbal cues and steer the conversation accordingly. The following are some examples:
 - Facial expressions
 - Restlessness
 - Side conversations
 - Looking at phones

6 **GETTING FEEDBACK & PLANNING FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

- **GET INSTANT FEEDBACK:** What worked well? What to change for next meeting?
- **PICK COMMUNICATIONS STYLE:** Make sure everyone agrees on the best way to communicate e.g. email, text, etc.
- **CONFIRM:** Next meeting date, who will host, who will plan “Doing Something Jewish”, and who will come up with a topic for the “getting to know each other better” deeper conversation?
- **DELEGATE:** Delegate as needed e.g. Refreshments, Supplies, Communication, etc.
- **LAST, BUT NOT LEAST:** Closing words of thanks.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can I encourage people to join my circle?

- Start with two or three people who you already know.
- Find people who are newer members of Temple Emanu-El or have shown an interest in getting involved. (our Director of Congregational Engagement can help with this.)
- Ask your coach to help.
- Share stories about your circle with the temple and with other individuals.

Where can my Temple Circle meet?

- We encourage circles to meet outside the temple building, in places where you like to spend your time e.g. homes, restaurants, parks, coffee shops, office buildings, etc.
(During the Pandemic of 2020, we are encouraging online meetings via ZOOM. Your coach or their designee will help you with the technology.)
- If meeting at the temple is better suited for the purpose of your circle, contact Monika Singletary and she will see if that can be arranged.

What if I need help creating the outlines (agendas) for the meetings?

Contact your coach. If additional assistance is needed, your coach will connect you with the “right” person.

Does my circle have to meet weekly?

We encourage meeting at least twice each month in order to build deeper relationships, however, your group should decide what will work best based on its purpose.

Does Temple Emanu-El offer childcare during Temple Circle meetings?

If childcare is needed, the members of the circle will have to arrange for it.

Is there a Facebook/Instagram/Social Media Policy for Temple Circles?

- Temple Circles Facebook Groups can only be created once the group is approved. It must be set up as a **SECRET** Group.
- In addition to the Rabbi, Cantor, the Director of Congregational Engagement, the Temple Circle Advisory Council, and the circle’s coach, only members who have officially been assigned to a circle may be invited to join the **SECRET** group by the leader.
- Similar policies apply to other forms of social media.

RESOURCES

[Temple Circles Mission Statement](#)

[Temple Circles Promise](#)

[Sample Outline for Circle Get-Togethers](#)

[Sample Blessings](#)

[Introduction, Welcome, and Reminder Emails](#)

[Relationship Building Conversations](#)

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR TEMPLE CIRCLE!