

Notes From Community Meeting

Wednesday December 18, 2013

Questions, Comments, Suggestions??? Please Contact Norbert Goldfield (or anyone on the Strategic Planning committee) at Kin8312011@gmail.com,

After introductions from Norbert Goldfield, Rabbi Justin David, and Rabbi Jacob Fine, Penina Glazer presented the material that the Strategic Planning Committee has collected and analyzed in the last few months. The community was then invited to offer feedback and comments as we moved forward with the planning process.

Members of the Planning Committee are: Penina Glazer, Norbert Goldfield, Morty Kamel, Carol Katz, Gillian Kendall, Stephanie Silverman, Lauren Weinsier, Rabbi Justin David, and Ben Cuperman.

- 1) We completed a fact book which drew up basic data. Some key findings were:

- Slow, declining membership over the past ten years
- Aging of our membership
- Relatively flat fund-raising

- 2) We did a congregation-wide survey. Some key findings:

- 51% of our respondents are over 60 years of age.
- 77% are married
- people continue to be members because of
 - sense of community
 - location
 - Rabbi
 - warm and welcoming feeling
 - content and conduct of services

- minority felt that we did not
 - feel like a close knit group of families
 - feel a sense of excitement
 - find opportunities for growth

52% seldom or never attend synagogue programs

Majority have high degree of satisfaction with:
Services, social events, programs, social action

Minority dissatisfied with:
Services, adult education, leadership development, Israel programs

Satisfaction with:
Location, grounds, parking, external building

Dissatisfaction with
Social hall, foyer, library

72% would enthusiastically promote synagogue to others
Same number likely to remain member in the next 5 years
18% somewhat likely to remain members

Critical issues for respondents:
Offering inspiring services
Providing strong Jewish identity for youth
Giving members vision and purpose as Jews
Attracting new members

Respondents asked for more:
Music, dance, alternative services
More accessible services
More study of Kabbalah, Hebrew, Yiddish, Talmud intellectual and historical study

If respondents could wave a magic wand, they would like:
More music, shorter services with more English,
Improved physical space
More partnerships with Five College Jewish Studies, LGA, the Yiddish Book Center, Beit Ahava, JCC, and other synagogues
Reduced dues or different dues structure

Another step in the work was an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) of CBI

Strengths: Location and Infrastructure
Existing Stability
Debt Free
Spirit of Innovation

Weaknesses: Space
Resources
Insufficient Young Families
Disconnect between vision and ability to implement new ideas

Opportunities: Other robust Jewish institutions in area
Talented Membership (arts, intellectual resources)
Changes in technology/social media

Threats: Stagnant Population
 Economic Stagnation in Western Mass
 Decline of Conservative Movement nationally
 Competition from other religious institutions
 Disengagement of some families after children complete
 Bar and Bat Mitzvah.

EMERGING THEMES FOR THE PLANNING PROCESS:

1. PROMOTE AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF JEWISH TRADITIONS
2. PROMOTE INCLUSIVENESS FOR DIVERSE CONGREGATION
3. BUILD ON EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE – ESP. FOOD SUSTAINABILITY
4. MAXIMIZE THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF OUR COMMUNITY USING ARTISTIC AND INTELLECTUAL RESOURCES
5. BUILD A JEWISH COMMUNITY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
6. BUILD AND EMPOWER LEADERSHIP

Task Forces will develop priorities in each of 6 areas, incorporating themes that have been developed. They will address issues of where we want to be in 5 years. What are key recommendations to get us there?

TASK FORCES:

Tefillah/Spirituality (Gillian Kendall planning committee liaison)
Torah/Education (Lauren Weinsier planning committee liaison)
Kehillah/Welcoming (Stephanie Silverman planning comm. liaison)
Partnerships/Community Relations (Morty Kamel liaison)
Tikkun Olam/Social Action (Norbert Goldfield liaison)
Financial Stability (Carol Katz liaison)

A spirited discussion followed, emphasizing some of the important themes.

A brief organizational meeting of several task forces followed.