



TEMPLE SHOLOM OF SCOTCH PLAINS BECOMES FIRST SYNAGOGUE IN UNION COUNTY TO ADOPT VOLUNTARY MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTION MODEL

Temple Sholom Launches Mishpakha Program, a Modern View of Membership

SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ – July 31, 2017 – Temple Sholom of Scotch Plains announced today that it has launched its new Mishpakha Program, becoming the first synagogue in Union County, NJ, to adopt a voluntary membership contribution model. “*Mishpakha*,” the Hebrew word for “family” signifies the importance of congregants’ responsibilities to each other within the synagogue community.

Synagogues around the world have traditionally followed a structured dues model, requesting that members contribute a specific monetary amount to maintain the congregation. Recently, select congregations across the United States have been experimenting with voluntary contributions, asking members to donate whatever amount they deem appropriate to support synagogue needs such as clergy, utilities, building maintenance, and educational programs.

The first of its kind in Union County, Temple Sholom’s Mishpakha Program features four key components:

1. Volunteerism
2. Social Activities
3. Religious Practice
4. Financial Support

Members are encouraged to touch on each of these components in the ways that make the most sense to them, with the understanding that individual members have different talents, resources and financial means to support the synagogue family.

The program is designed to ensure that all congregants are respected for and comfortable with their contributions to the Temple, which may include involvement in its religious school, or volunteering on one its 22 committees and auxiliary groups. It also opens the doors of Temple Sholom to anyone who wants to join but may have felt uncomfortable with the previous structured dues program.

“Why is money the primary criteria for joining a temple? Shouldn't it be whether you want to be a part of the community, whether you have shared values, and want to work together to deepen your Judaism and create a better world?,” said Rabbi Joel Abraham of Temple Sholom. “We always said that money should not be a barrier to joining. Now, we have obliterated that wall. The ancient sage Hillel said, 'Do not separate yourself from the community.' Now that we've removed the wall, we'd love for anyone who is interested to join our unique and welcoming community.”

Temple Sholom’s Board of Trustees spent the last year fine-tuning the program, hosting town hall meetings and reaching out to individual congregants to ensure a smooth transition from the old dues model to the new Mishpakha Program.

“The program is a transformation of how we think about sustaining our Temple community,” said Karyn Weingarten, President of Temple Sholom. “We want everyone to be a valued part of our *mishpakha* and the lack of financial means should never be an issue. By volunteering time and energy, we find that congregants feel a commitment to each other and a strong sense of community at Temple Sholom, ultimately leading to our continued success as a congregation.”

To learn more about Temple Sholom’s Mishpakha Program, please call 908-889-4900, e-mail office@sholomnj.org, or visit www.sholomnj.org.

About Temple Sholom

Founded in 1913, Temple Sholom is a Reform Jewish congregation led by Rabbi Joel N. Abraham and Cantor Darcie Sharlein. The Temple and its religious school are home to about 250 families from the greater Scotch Plains-Fanwood area. The congregation is located at 1925 Lake Avenue in Scotch Plains. Temple Sholom is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism. It has recently become the first synagogue in Union County, NJ, to offer a voluntary membership contribution model. For more information about the temple or joining the congregation, please call 908-889-4900, e-mail sholom@sholomnj.org or visit www.sholomnj.org.

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