The Clergy Search Subcommittee has met numerous times to begin the process of finding Clergy for the new Congregation.  We have been charged with finding a Rabbi and determining whether, budget permitting, additional Clergy (in the form of an Assistant Rabbi or Cantor) would be warranted.  Our deliberations have concluded the following:

             The consolidation of the three Congregations into one will necessitate that more than one Clergy person be retained.  The community is too large for one person to handle the spiritual needs of all the members.  When life cycle events occur, such as a funeral, there must be a back-up in the event that the Rabbi is ill, on vacation, or out of town.  Furthermore, visiting the sick will become a more pressing need as the average age of the community continues to go up.

1. A Cantor would better serve the needs of the new Congregation than an Assistant Rabbi.  This is partially due to the lower salary requirements of a Cantor versus that of a Rabbi; however, it is primarily because of the differing skill sets of the two positions.  A Cantor will enrich the spiritual experience of the Shabbat and Holiday services; whereas, finding a Rabbi with the musical expertise to do so narrows the pool of available candidates significantly.
2. Part of the challenge of the consolidation will be to encourage the members of the community to join a Congregation that is unfamiliar to them.  Youngstown has not had a full time Cantor for many years and the reintroduction of an enhanced musical/spiritual experience will make the services more enjoyable and attract more people.  In addition, the percentage of unaffiliated Jews in the area is glaring and a new Congregation with interesting, exciting services might be able to attract some people that otherwise might be uninterested.
3. A Cantor will act as an educator.  One of the greatest challenges facing each Congregation at the present time is our inability to excite and engage our children about all things Judaica and the current retention rate after a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is very low.  Having two members of the Clergy focused on involving our children is essential to the continued well-being of our community.
4. We will seek to hire a Cantor with a Conservative movement background.  This will help assuage fears that some members of the Conservative congregations might have that their spiritual and ritual needs will not be met by the consolidated Congregation.

  Many of our discussions in previous Consolidation Committee meetings have centered on the inter-dependability of numerous of our decisions:  i.e. we can’t decide whether we can afford two Clergy until we know what the budget will allow/we can’t know what the budget will be until we know what our staffing requirements will be.  The Ritual Committee has concluded that we cannot go forward with the search for the best Rabbinical candidate until this loop is closed and the question of the second member of the Clergy is answered.  The presence or absence of a Cantor greatly informs what skill set we are looking for and expecting any Rabbinical candidate to possess. It is the belief of the Ritual Committee that a Cantor is a necessity to ensure the viability of the consolidated Congregation and must be budgeted for, just as heat, light, and building maintenance will be.