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## ***MINUTES***

**February 22, 2022 21 Adar I 5782 7pm**

### **I. Welcome/ Remarks/Points of Information**

- Please remember:
  - Tzedekah – <https://www.shirami.org/>
  - Items for food bank
  - Shabbat greeter/ B mitzvah /D'var signup sheets -sign up!
  - Contact clergy when hear of any congregant who is sick or in need
  - Purim Events & Baskets -Purim Carnival, traditional Megillah reading, Purim Spiel; all Board members should participate in fundraiser.
- Reviewed the location of panic buttons in synagogue in sanctuary, shalom hall, classrooms and other areas. Active Shooter training video coming
- Being a Warm and Welcoming Community Workshop by JLV –March 8 7 pm, April 7, 7 pm – let Ellie know if can sign up by March 1
- Reports on ShirBoard drive under 2021-22 Gatherings –Building & Grounds, RS/LLL, WoSA, Tikkun Olam, Finance/Budget, Budget Meeting Schedule, URJ Benchmark Info, Rabbi Briskin, Rethinking Membership Engagement, Dir of Operations, ELC, SHAFTY  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/u/2/folders/1xYNTbP0xwu9JYOs\\_zOHUKtnO-zHHJcg](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/2/folders/1xYNTbP0xwu9JYOs_zOHUKtnO-zHHJcg)

### **I. WoSA update – Nancy Axler, Becky Markowitz**

Reviewed history of Sisterhood, WoSA, both locally and nationally.  
Encouraged membership and attendance and March 31 event.

### **II. Brainstorming how to recruit volunteers and avoid STP (same ten people)**

Find where people's interests and talents are, publicize committees and opportunities to volunteer

### **III. Discussion of *The Relational Judaism Handbook***

Rabbi to discuss next steps for small groups with Engagement

### **IV. Maximize existing space, e.g., pavilion?**

Discussion about the possibility of adding a pavilion at the far end of the parking lot to provide covered location for services, meals and other outdoor activities. Led to discussion about grants received during the pandemic and best ways to spend the money, including ensuring that the ELC receives their wish list. Phil to follow up by email.

**V. Pursue exclusive caterer?**

Borsch Belt is opening local restaurant. They are still interested in being a Shir Ami exclusive caterer but are no longer offering to update our kitchen for that opportunity. Consensus among board members that we do NOT pursue an exclusive relationship with them.

**Respectfully submitted,  
Ellen Rawicz  
Secretary**

# **MONTHLY BOARD REPORT**

**NAME:** Ken Standig

**DATE:** 2-21-2022

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE:** Buildings & Grounds

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you and/or your committee have been up to since the last meeting. Bullet points are fine.**

- Zoomed with Phil to discuss B&G action items.
- Met with Phil and Marc to discuss options for additional space for the food pantry.
- Zoomed with Phil and Arcadia Development to discuss their proposed pathway directed to Shir Ami wooded property. With Ellie's concurrence, Phil declined their offer.
- Reviewed 2014 videos of sewer line inspections with Larry Schorr to determine possible causes of driveway sinkholes.
- Contacted Secure Community Network regarding Safety Awareness Training for congregants and staff, waiting for reply.

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

- Scheduled meeting with Ellie and Phil to finalize draft of EAP document.

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

- None.

**If you have any documents that you would like to include with your report, please email them with this form.**

- None.

## Shir Ami Budget Prep and Committee Meetings 2022-2023

### **Budget Committee Meetings 7pm**

March 24, ELC, Camp, Enrichment

March 30, Youth and Education

April 6, Ritual, Philanthropy and Engagement

April 13, Admin, Maintenance, Affiliation

April 19 if necessary

April 26, BOD meeting

May 2, If necessary

May 9 Annual Congregational Meeting

## Director of Operations Report 2.22.2022

Submitted by: Phil Nordlinger

Total paid membership vs last yr & 3 yrs ago (or whatever historical info you can find)

Total paid by year (includes payments for all dues sources including preschool families and TS and these numbers include all payments through today without regards to what fiscal year the payment came in):

FY18-19 – 814,677.37

FY19-20 – 780,683.63

FY20-21 – 685,012.39

FY21-22 – 468,540.38 518,012.80 567,934 597,648

Membership Numbers:

FY18-19 – 586

FY19-20 – 548

FY20-21 – 544

FY21-22 – 513 515 514 513

CoG and all other giving totals:

Circle of Giving (Payments by fiscal year received, not based on pledge dates):

FY18-19: 98,037.01

FY19-20: 140,050.78

FY20-21: 142,868.98

FY21-22: 70,359.14 116,823 168,188.42 181,874

Other Donations:

FY18-19: 93,592.45

FY19-20: 185,791.45

FY20-21: 78,185.80

FY21-22: 64,544.85 69,990 104,238.59 105,903

ELC enrollment 162 162

New members since 1.22.2022

Freyer, Gene and Iris

Resigned members since 2.22.2022

Singer, Adrienne and Steven

Gerzon, Alla

Actions and Goals

Completed Expense Forecasting for fy '22 budget

Hired AG laboratories to spray classrooms on a quarterly basis with anti-viral solution

Began conversations about investing the Shir Ami Endowment fund

Selected carpeting for the bimah refurbishment project



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FY18-19: 93,592.45

FY19-20: 185,791.45

FY20-21: 78,185.80

FY21-22: 64,544.85 69,990 104,238.59 105,903 137,107

ELC enrollment 162 162 162

New members since 1.22.2022

Weissman, Jaclyn (22-23)

Schechter, Lindsay and Jason

Resigned members since 2.22.2022

Actions and Goals

Completed preliminary 22-23 Budget

Awarded \$7500 JEPP security grant (\$10,000 program cost, \$2500 Shir Ami co-pay)

Carpeting installed on bimah 3/21-3/22

Bimah chairs reupholstered and will be installed on 3/24

Installed 3 new water fountains/water cooling stations

Purim Celebration!

Met with playground company to get quote on sun shades for the preschool playground

Met with sign company to redo outdoor signage

Installed air purifiers in all classrooms and offices

Began discussions about backing up our network to a cloud based system

Replaced all 8' tables with new lightweight tables and will be replacing all round tables

Finalized initial review of the Emergency Action Plan





# **FEBRUARY BOARD REPORT**

**NAME: Shari Beck-Nahman**

**DATE: 2/23/22**

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE: ELC Director**

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you and/or your committee have been up to since the last meeting. Bullet points are fine.**

- **Registration Total = 136 + 8 Infants (IC full / 2's have 1 spot left for T,Th)**
- **Mitzvah of the Month is Derech Eretz (Respecting Others). Tzedakah money will go to the Jewish Abilities Alliance to coincide with Jewish Disabilities Awareness and Inclusion Month.**
- **Paula Shavell started JDAIM lessons with Kindergarten and 3 year old children. The children were very engaged with lots of visuals. It was a wonderful experience.**
- **100<sup>th</sup> Day of School Celebration in Kindergarten was full of games, scavenger hunts, arts and crafts and literacy activities.**

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

- **3/1, 3/14,3/15,3/28,3/29 – Music Specialist**
- **3/2 - Dr. Seuss Celebration**
- **3/3 – Teacher Inservice**
- **3/11 – Purim Shabbat with all clergy**
- **3/16 – Purim Celebration**
- **3/22 – Chick Eggs arrive**
- **3/24 – Favorite Pet Day**
- **3/25 – Shir Sprouts**
- **3/30 – National Take A Walk in the Park Day (or a nature walk around the building)**

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

**If you have any documents that you would like to include with your report, please email them with this form.**

# FEBRUARY BOARD REPORT

**NAME:** Michael Smolen / Robin Firestone

**DATE:** 2/22/22

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE:** Finance and Budget

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you and/or your committee have been up to since the last meeting. Bullet points are fine.**

- Developed schedule of meetings for review of department budgets
- Started working with Philanthropy to assess alternatives and guidelines for how to invest the endowment

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

- Begin hosting budget meetings
- Continue assessing alternatives and guidelines for how to invest the endowment, as well as establishing guidelines for operating and money market account balances
- Assess current affiliation fee schedule against projected operating needs and known fees of other local congregations
- Begin working with URJ on completing their Financial and Operating Data Benchmark tool

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

- All board members are **strongly encouraged** 😊 to participate in upcoming budget meetings, particularly if you are a committee member supporting a department being discussed
- Any board member who chairs (or co-chairs) a committee is expected to attend the meeting for the department they support

**If you have any documents that you would like to include with your report, please email them with this form.**

Attachments include:

- Schedule of budget meetings and departments being reviewed
- Information on the URJ Financial and Operating Data benchmark tool

## **BOARD REPORT- CLERGY/STAFF**

**NAME: Rabbi Chuck Briskin**

**DATE: Feb. 21, 2022**

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE: Clergy Report**

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you have been up to since the last meeting. Please include an update on your goals when relevant or indicate activity pertaining to your goals. Bullet points are fine.**

- a. Sent CoG solicitation letter to all past members of Shir Ami (an experiment to see if we could generate additional gifts). Letter went out last week; not sure of results. Unfortunately some annoyed/angry responses. Will follow up when I return to the office this week.**
- b. Led first discussion on Relational Judaism; second part will be at the board meeting tonight. (Heads up—we will break into groups and focus on some of the “takeaways” that Wolfson describes.**
- c. Working with a couple of subcommittees of RAC-PA as we continue our work.**
- d. Officiated at two funerals since last meeting**
- e. 2 b.mitzvah since last meeting. Preparing for a very busy spring. Regular outreach to those on the CRM list including check ins/correspondence after Sheloshim and Yartzheit.**
- f. “Sunday in the Park with Rabbi” program in December attracted more than 20 people, including RS families, and new families. February’s gathering attracted just 10 people on a cold and snowy Sunday morning including three people who don’t participate regularly (1 new member family).**

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

- a. Planning for Adult Only Purim (Sat. March 19); coordinating spiel with Rabbi Eric and Michael Smolen.**
- b. Coordinating the actual night of Purim with Cantor Rachel (Wed. March 16)**
- c. Coordinating next speaker series with Dr. Steven Windmueller from HUC-JIR LA who will speak about “The New Anti-Semitism” on Thurs. March 17 (via Zoom)**
- d. Working with Janis Bader and Harriet Paley on next Racial Reads (scheduled for March 24) on the book “How the Word is Passed”**
- e. Participating in work with clergy and lay leaders of POWER (including Arthur Krauss). Trying to still determine if there is a place for POWER formally within Shir Ami. Nevertheless, Janis Bader, Arthur Krauss, Andee Losben and I are engaged. Convening a small group of board members to begin exploring how to plan for a small groups launch for fall of 2022.**
- f. Working with Rabbi David Strauss on promoting Polyphony, an Israeli orchestra whose members are Jews and Arabs and whose mission is to bring about greater peace and understanding among different peoples through a shared love of**

music. Polyphony will be performing at Carnegie Hall on Friday, March 18 and I am looking into taking a group for the afternoon rehearsal followed by services at Central Synagogue. Details should be finalized by the end of this week. There is interest from at least a dozen people. They will also be performing with a local Phila group called ARTolerance (with members of the Phila. Symphony Orchestra) on Wed. March 23 at Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church.

- g. Beginning this week 13 of the next 15 weeks have b.mitzvah (including 4 partnered services)
- h. In communication with Nefesh Mountain to find a date for fall/winter 2022-2023 for the concert originally scheduled for April 2020.

Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.

- a. No.

If you have any documents that you would like to include with your report, please email them with this form.

**COPY OF LETTER SENT TO PAST MEMBERS:**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I love being a rabbi for many reasons. I love helping to make Judaism a central part of people's lives through teaching Torah and connecting its lessons and values to our everyday lives. It is for me a sacred honor to be with our families at the most important moments of their lives, be it in times of celebration or sorrow. I am humbled to lead Shir Ami towards a bright future.

I know that you once benefited directly from membership at Shir Ami and I want to thank you for your contributions to our community. I understand that presently, you have chosen a different path, but please know that Shir Ami continues to be an essential part of the lives of our families, as it once was for yours.

A lesson from our tradition teaches, "Without wheat there is no Torah; without Torah there is no wheat." This teaches that physical sustenance and spiritual sustenance are dependent on one another. Wheat is also a metaphor for financial support. Without the "dough" that supports our congregation, we cannot provide Torah. Without Torah, we wouldn't be Shir Ami, a central part of the Bucks County Jewish community.

**That is why I am asking for your support.**

**Please help sustain Shir Ami with a gift to our Circle of Giving campaign which supports essential programs and services on which our community depends. Your gift will enable us to fund the Shir Ami Food Bank, which collects and distributes several thousand pounds of food to needy residents of Bucks County every month. Your gift will also enable us to provide Shabbat and festival worship services via Livestream, and visiting scholars, classes, and programs in person and online that are open to all. Please know you are welcome to join us at any time.**

**I hope that you will consider a gift in any amount to the Shir Ami Circle of Giving. A Tzedakah gift (less than an annual dues commitment) can support our Jewish community and will maintain your connection to Shir Ami. Please follow this link to make your contribution today and if you cannot do so online please see the attached flyer.**

**I am available to chat on the phone with you at 215-968-3400 ext. 102 or meet with you in person if you'd like to learn more about today's Shir Ami.**

**May the light of Torah and our community continue to shine brightly in your lives. Thank you in advance for your generosity and support.**

**L'shalom,**

**Rabbi Chuck Briskin**

# Rethinking Member Engagement – Shifting from Filling Positions to Nurturing a Culture of Engagement

Notes from Beth Steinhorn, President of VQ Volunteer Strategies, for URJ workshop:

Engagement = Relationships + Action

Where do demographics and interests of members overlap with organizational needs and priorities?

Staff need to consider what needs can be addressed by volunteers; what can be piloted. Staff have new roles, as facilitators

Key Points:

- Convince volunteers that their time will be well spent volunteering.
- Give people titles that are resume-worthy; position descriptions are important. Include the title, key responsibilities, qualifications, training and support, impact and outcomes
- Motivation to volunteer – to be social and productive
- Leverage peoples' networks and social media to enlist others.
- Begging or guilt aren't good recruitment strategies
- Have a volunteer training program. e.g., to teach how to help lead minyans or for pastoral visits/calls, tech consultants
- Have virtual volunteer opportunities, e.g. pastoral phone calls
- Members' occupations, skills and interests should be in synagogue database
- Do you need a committee or a taskforce? View that a committee is a life sentence vs a taskforce, whose responsibilities end with the task
- For reluctant committee chairs, negotiate – create co-chairs
- New roles for volunteers, e.g. consultants, researchers, program leaders, boomers can be b mitzvah mentors – help with social action activities





## **BOARD REPORT- CLERGY/STAFF**

**NAME:** Eric Goldberg

**DATE:** Board Meeting 2/22

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE:** Rabbi/Director of Education

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you have been up to since the last meeting. Please include an update on your goals when relevant or indicate activity pertaining to your goals. Bullet points are fine.**

### **Religious School Update**

1. Religious School was in session continuously from the last board meeting to the current board meeting. Classes were held in person with the exception of Sunday January 30th due to weather. On the 30th, classes were virtual. All sessions were well attended, including our virtual Sunday classes.
2. February was the month of 'love' in Religious School, as well as a month in which we focused on lessons and values connected to Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion. From songs we sang at Tefillah (i.e. Dan Nichol's 'B'tzelem Elohim') to readings at our intergenerational Shabbat to art projects to learning about stories in the Torah based on these ideas, our month was chock full of important lessons.
3. Beginning Wednesday February 8th, we resumed our 6th-10th grade Wednesday 5:30-7:30p schedule. Given the change in Shir Ami COVID protocols, we are now able to serve pizza dinner. The past two weeks we have eaten dinner outside and plan to do so any time that the weather allows between now and the end of the Religious School year.
4. A continued 'todah rabbah' to our amazing Religious School families for their calls, emails, and texts letting me know about the health of their family and their desire to follow all of our protocols. I have not received one complaint or negative response to our protocols and, to my knowledge, parents have overwhelmingly been in touch regarding any possible COVID related situation.
5. In the month between board meetings, Religious School has been made aware of less than 5 cases of COVID. Families have been notified and, to my knowledge, there has been no Shir Ami family spread.
6. I continue to work with our tour company and the insurance company to recover deposits from last year's postponed Israel trip. Due to a delay from the insurance company, parents will be made aware of final steps of this process the day of our board meeting (Tues. 2/22). Parents are being offered three options: a. We return the money to them, b. Shir Ami applies the funds to any outstanding balance they may have for 2021-2022 or c. Shir Ami applies the funds to the upcoming Israel Tiyyul.
7. Speaking of Israel, we have begun planning our 2022-2023 Teen Israel Tiyyul!
8. Tentative dates are Dec 24-Jan 4. Students would miss 2 days maximum of school, which is always a concern for our parents.
9. Tiyyul will be open to all 2022-2023 8th-11th graders.

10. Based on the number of travelers, we will determine the number of chaperones needed from Shir Ami.
11. I spoke with Kayla Ship, our point person from Keshet (the tour company) late last week and our plan is to have a meeting on Wednesday April 6th at 7pm to gauge interest from parents. Kayla will be able to join us in person and answer any questions, etc.
12. Also looking ahead, we are planning in many ways for Purim, including our 8th and 9th graders creating, developing and implementing our Kids Purim Shpiel, which will take place on Sunday March 13th. Our teens are creating the spiel in coordination with their teacher (Staci Kincus) and myself.
13. Our plan for Sunday 3/13 is to have Religious School from 9-10, Shpiel and MusicFest from 10-11 and the Purim Carnival (run by SHAFTY) from 11-1. I am coordinating with Ferne, as well as Larry/Eve Lefkowitz, Risa Kane (WoSA) and Donna DeSantis/Natalie Cohen to make sure everything runs smoothly, that everyone has the space they need for hamantaschen making, mishloach manot basket compiling and Purim carnival set up. We met last week and have a plan in place.
14. The Religious School committee met on Monday February 7th to discuss the 6th/7th grade 'Mitzvah Project' plan for the remainder of this school year and beyond. Please let me know if you would like to discuss details. One important note: we look forward to promoting and being part of 'For Pete's Sake's, Walk!' event taking place at Citizens Bank Park on Sunday May 1st. To learn more, click here: <https://takeabreakfromcancer.org/fpswalk22/>

### **Lifelong Learning (LLL) Update**

1. We have had several LLL events since our last meeting. A special 'todah rabbah' to Rabbi, Cantor and our Shir Ami community for making each of these events a success! The response that I have received is overwhelmingly positive. Here are a few highlights:
  - On January 26th, Rabbi Briskin and our Racial Justice Book Group met to discuss 'The New Jim Crow' by Michelle Alexander.
  - On February 3rd, Cantor Kohlbrenner led the READS series review and discussion of 'The Orchard' by David Hopen.
  - On February 8th, 60+ people joined the Shir Ami Record Club's 'Billy the Kid,' led by Brett Cohen. To my knowledge, this was our best attended (in terms of numbers) Lifelong Learning event of 2021-2022.
  - Our 'Basic Hebrew' classes are underway and receiving a lot of interest.
  - Looking ahead, we have Shir Ami Record Club (March 3), Speaker Series (March 17th), Racial Justice Book Group (March 23) and Lunch and Learn 'My Israeli Story' (March 29th) events in the month ahead.
  - **A special note about the March 29th event:** Our speakers will be Yishai Gelb and Kobi Assaf, co-founder and CEO of MyTree, an organization in Israel that we will be partnering with for several reasons (including fundraising for the Tiylul Fund) once the Mishloach Manot fundraiser has concluded. To learn more about MyTree, please click here: <https://www.mytree.org.il> . I spoke with Jon Stevens and Meryl Reis earlier this month to discuss all of the details and am happy to discuss them at any time with any member fo the board.

### **Additional Items**

1. We had a wonderful Intergenerational Service on February 4th, centered on Ahavah (Love). Todah Rabbah to Rabbi, Cantor and Michael Smolen for bringing the service to life with music and readings. Todah Rabbah as well to our February birthday and anniversary participants who helped lead the service.
2. I continue to make daily birthday and anniversary calls.
3. Continued pastoral care calls, emails and texts
4. 'Car Line Pastoral Care' continues as car line at Religious School is one of the places I learn most about what is going on in people's lives. We would be happy to have board members join us car line any day we have Religious School and thank you to those who have done so already.

As always, do not hesitate to be in touch should you have any questions or want to know more. I can best be reached via phone/text (856-359-5758) and/or email ([egoldberg@shiramipa.org](mailto:egoldberg@shiramipa.org))

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

Please see the Religious School Purim happenings and Lifelong Learning upcoming events above.

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

Nothing specific, but please know that we would love to see board members any time at Religious School!

# **FEBRUARY BOARD REPORT**

**NAME: Ferne Lev**

**DATE:2/22/22**

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE: Youth Group**

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you and/or your committee have been up to since the last meeting. Bullet points are fine.**

**Feb 6: 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade Snowtubing, 42 students 6 chaperones**

**Feb 7: Superbowl Fundraiser, made \$1200**

**Feb 12: 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade Shafty Color Me Mine, 9 students**

**Feb 26: 8<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> grade Speed Raceway, 10 students (as of today)**

**Feb 27: K2 Club Family Bowling, 13 families (as of today)**

**Feb 27: Sr. SHAFTY Brunch and Bonding**

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

**March 13<sup>th</sup>: PURIM Carnival!!!! As of today, we have 50 teen volunteers. Looking forward to seeing our new carnival model.**

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

**If you have any documents that you would like to include with your report, please email them with this form.**

## **FEBRUARY BOARD REPORT**

**NAME: Essie Cherkin  
Barbara Roth**

**DATE: 2/20/22**

**COMMITTEE:**

**Tikkun Olam**

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you and/or your committee have been up to since the last meeting. Bullet points are fine.**

**. Food collections continue under Marc Luber's efforts.**

**. An excellent discussion around The New Jim Crow led by Janis Bader and Harriet Paley was well attended, with participants eager to continue the discussion.**

**The next book we'll discuss is How the Word is Passed**

**. Following the coat collection for Bethany (Kate Woodward. representative) to support new Afghan refugees, we were left with a large number of toddler coats which the JFCS happily gathered for the families they care for. We appreciate the efforts of Stan and Shelly Cohen to coordinate these activities.**

**. Arthur Krauss continues to be vigilant and keep us informed about voting rights and how we can support efforts of RAC and POWER to assure each person's right to vote.**

**. We are concerned about the reality of antisemitism around us and the acts of hate that continue. These realities brought us to a program on security training for congregations. We need to consider next steps.**

**-We will be looking into a speaker on the topic of BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions)movement.**

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

**How should the security concerns be addressed?**

## URJ Benchmarking and Assessment Project Information Sheet 2021-2022

Now is the time for congregations to think about how to move themselves and their people into the future. How do we adapt to a world that is changing faster than we ever imagined? What does our community need not just to sustain, but to thrive?

The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) has developed a system of congregational assessment. Through the utilization of different assessment tools, each congregation can take an inward look at itself every few years and use this information to assess its strength and areas for advancement as well as help set the congregation's agenda and priorities for its development in the coming years.

This project piloted in 2016 and since that time, hundreds of URJ congregations have benefitted from the data and the information they have acquired in order to make change, to communicate with congregants more effectively, to understand their members and to ensure that the congregation is a place their members value and cherish.

We are also in the process of expanding the many different opportunities for a congregation to take that inward look.

### URJ Benchmarking & Assessment Core Suite of Tools

The URJ is proud to work with Measuring Success, consultants that are pioneers in providing cutting edge data solutions for nonprofits, both in the Jewish world and across the non-profit spectrum. Together we have developed three tools which have proven to be of great use to Reform congregations. **Follow the links to see PDF samples of the tools.**

- **Congregational Survey:** This tool will be electronically sent via URJ/Measuring Success using member's emails provided by each synagogue. This survey will be limited to approximately 7 minutes in length for the average congregant to complete.  
**Sample:** <https://www.yammer.com/thetent/#/files/709802385408>
- **Financial/Operating Data Benchmarking Tool:** High level information on congregational demographics and key financial markers of both expenses and revenues.  
**Sample:** <https://www.yammer.com/thetent/#/files/709796634624>
- **Board Self-Assessment Reflection:** This tool is focused on leadership, governance, and mission/vision.  
**Sample:** <https://www.yammer.com/thetent/#/files/709805776896>



These tools will form the basis for future modules of assessment to enable congregations to really look deeper into specific issues as well as training modules to assist congregations in their continued development.

Over 155 congregations of various sizes have utilized one or more of these tools , including 20 large congregations (1000+ member units) who participated in a project utilizing the financial and operating data tool.

***We have also launched a 3 question add-on module for congregations anticipating a clergy transition in the near future. If you are interested in exploring adding this module, please let us know.***

In June 2020 we administered a “mini survey” for congregants focused on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. 47 URJ congregations participated in this mini-survey.

In the Fall of 2020 we administered a “pulse” survey to assess changes in key congregational statistics from 2019 to 2020. 290 congregations participated in this survey.

We are in the process of recruiting congregations. The project is designed so that congregations can participate in the project at their pace and on schedules that work best for them.

### **What is the benefit to my congregation?**

- Learn about your congregation: You will have the chance to compare yourself to other congregations and work with the URJ to help set future goals and priorities both for your congregation and for this work. Congregations who participate in this assessment will get to share in the discussion of the results through both group and individual consultations. You will be assigned a mentor to help you understand the results culled from the tools and will help you set action steps and priorities to move forward.
- Network with other URJ congregations to compare trends, share ideas and learn best principles from each other.

### **What do congregations need to do?**

- Assemble a Congregational Team: The Team should be comprised of **at least** two people who are actively engaged at your congregation. This team should include a member of the professional leadership team (e.g. Executive Director, clergy member) and a lay leader who will have primary responsibility for shepherding this project. If your congregation does not have a staff member devoted to this area of work, two lay leaders who are involved and invested in this topic may participate.



- **Buy In From Stakeholders:** It is critical that even if they are not part of the immediate congregational team, that the Board and Clergy are apprised of this project and invested in its success. This should be confirmed prior to committing to the project.
- **Use the Tools:** Working with representatives of the URJ and the Measuring Success Team, you will be guided through a process of engaging with the three abovementioned tools.
- **Engage in a mentoring process** to help the congregation understand the analyzed data, help set priorities based on that data and to help the congregation in resources that can further the congregation's goals. The mentoring process includes meeting (either in person or remotely) with the mentor and the congregational team shepherding the Assessment project at the synagogue and a presentation and interactive meeting with the Board and other leadership of the congregation.
- **Share key findings and learnings** with the greater membership of your congregation.

### Core Suite of Tools Rollout Timeline

Estimated Timing	Key Activity/Deliverable	Synagogue Responsibility
Minimum of 8 weeks prior to congregation's launch date	Congregation commits to participation in Assessment Project	<p>--Participate in informational webinar or watch recording</p> <p>--Get buy-in from other leaders in your congregation: Share information with congregational board, including Brit, so leadership will understand expectations and timeline.</p> <p>--Internally set dates for work on the project (i.e. when board will meet to complete board self assessment)</p> <p>--Commit to participation in the project, specifying which tools congregation will use. Sign and submit brit</p> <p>--Set and confirm launch date for tools and survey</p>
Minimum of 4 weeks to congregation's launch date	Lists and Email Templates for Survey	Provide lists of names and emails of people to be surveyed.





Estimated Timing	Key Activity/Deliverable	Synagogue Responsibility
		<p>Provide survey cover letter text and/or edits.</p> <p>Correspond with congregation using prepared templates to inform them about the survey.</p> <p>Market survey to congregation using prepared templates</p>
Launch Date	<p>Congregation Receives:</p> <p>--Link to Financial Tool</p> <p>--Link to Board Assessment</p>	Prep and complete tools within time frame
Launch Date	Congregant Survey goes LIVE	<p>Use prepared templates and creative communication to encourage maximal participation.</p> <p>You will receive weekly updates on response rates</p>
3 weeks after Launch	Survey Closes	Continued work and completion on Financial and Operating Data Benchmarking Tool and Board Self Assessment
3 Weeks After Launch	Assignment of Mentor	<p>--Initial Conversation</p> <p>--Get to know your mentor</p> <p>--Provide background information</p> <p>--Conversation with congregational team</p>
<p align="center"><b>Schedule for Submission of Tools</b> <i>(Financial &amp; Operating Data Tool and/or Board Self-Assessment),</i> <b>Closing of Congregant Survey</b> <b>And Publishing of Results</b></p>		
<b>If Survey Closes and Tools Are Submitted By*</b>		<b>Results Will Be Published</b>
November 16, 2021		December 20, 2021
April 1, 2022		May 16, 2022
July 13, 2022		August 23, 2022
December 8, 2022		January 12, 2023



Estimated Timing	Key Activity/Deliverable	Synagogue Responsibility
<b>Consultations With Mentor</b>		
At a minimum, the following meetings need to take place with the assigned mentor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Initial conversation (see above)</li> <li>○ Consultation with Leadership Team of Congregation and Mentor</li> <li>○ One on one consultation with Rabbi and Mentor</li> <li>○ Presentation of Data to Congregational Board and Key Stakeholders</li> <li>○ Identification of next steps</li> </ul>		
Within 3 weeks after Board Presentation	Congregational Evaluation	Congregation to complete online evaluation form

### Thank You

Thank you for taking this journey with us. We think your congregation will benefit greatly from the exercise of looking inward and strengthening itself. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact one of us at [benchmarking@urj.org](mailto:benchmarking@urj.org).

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Maxie Kalish, Analyst, [mkalish@urj.org](mailto:mkalish@urj.org)



## **FEBRUARY BOARD REPORT**

**NAME: Risa Kane**

**DATE: 2/20/2022**

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE: President, WoSA**

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you and/or your committee have been up to since the last meeting. Bullet points are fine.**

**In general, we have been working to get more people involved. We have been trying to come up with ideas that appeal to people. In addition, we've been focusing on our membership appreciation event. We've been sending cards to people for birthdays and in sympathy and have joined forces with Shir Ami's "Chesed" committee.**

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

**As I'm writing this, I'm awaiting the start of our quilling event. Next week starts our yoga series.**

**We will be handling the food aspect of the Purim Carnival.**

**Rabbi Eric will be leading a virtual cooking event for us in March.**

**Our Membership Appreciation event is March 31. We will be collecting feminine products to donate; we always support the food bank.**

**We've gotten permission to have the gift shop open on Fridays leading up to Shabbat.**

**We are planning for April and May, as well as compiling ideas of events for the future.**

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

**No, thank you. But thank you for your support!**

**If you have any documents that you would like to include with your report, please email them with this form.**