



Senior Rabbi Application



Dear Rabbi,

We're excited to share our application for Senior Rabbi of Temple Isaiah. We hope it conveys the qualities of our congregation of which we are so proud. Temple Isaiah is a welcoming and inclusive community with a rich history. We are committed to lifelong learning, growth, and action inspired by the principles of Jewish Living. We hope that our next Senior Rabbi — in partnership with our exceptional clergy, staff, and lay leadership — will guide us in continuing to fulfill our Sh'ma: Deepening lives, inspiring purpose — together. Our congregation is ready to move into the future under new leadership, and we look forward to what lies ahead.

You may be aware that we conducted a search last year and, having not found our next settled senior rabbi, chose to hire an interim rabbi instead. This was one of the most difficult decisions we've made as a congregation. While some may call it a failure, we call it a first step. In that decision, we hope you see that we are discerning, unafraid to make a tough call, and willing to learn. With staff and clergy transitions as well as finalizing our Vision, we now feel more prepared and excited to welcome our new senior rabbi. We hope you agree that it makes Temple Isaiah a more attractive destination for your consideration.

We are excited to learn more about you, and we thank you for your interest in our community.

L'shalom,

Temple Isaiah Rabbinic Search Committee:

Gil Benghiat

Gary Fallick

Ruth Fleischmann

Sharon Grossman

Jane Heifetz

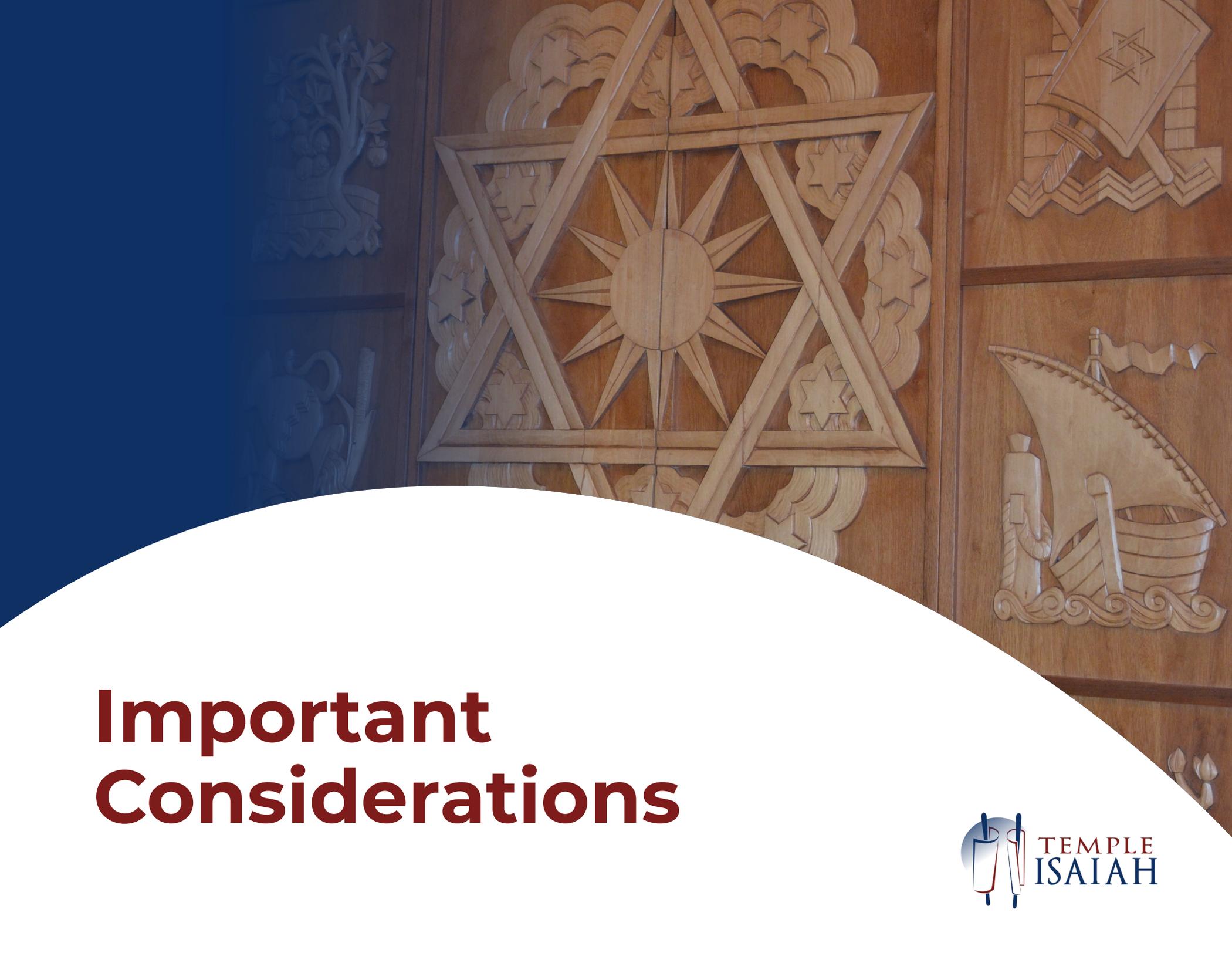
Meryl Junik, Co-Chair

Wendy Liebow

Dan Ostrower

Jason Schneider

Sam Zales, Co-Chair



Important Considerations



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What three qualities are most important to your congregation in your new rabbi?

We have learned that a senior rabbi, by example, can help us be both better people and a better community. We believe that a senior rabbi can set the tone and culture of the community, inspire us to embrace Jewish values, and keep us moving towards a shared vision of our future community. The qualities we seek in our new senior rabbi derive from these beliefs.

Compassionate and empathetic personality.

We treasure the warmth of our community, a warmth that has been cultivated and instilled in our congregation by our beloved senior rabbi of twenty-two years. This includes welcoming and accepting our diverse membership — a membership that will become increasingly diverse in the coming years. Congregants describe this warmth saying, “the rabbi knows me and my family,” “the rabbi provides warm and thoughtful support to congregants,” “the rabbi promotes a culture of kindness in our community.”

We believe in and practice “audacious hospitality.” We actively reach out to the newcomer, seeking ways to integrate new

members and those who struggle to find connection. Our senior rabbi will set that tone by knowing congregants personally and collaborating with staff and lay leaders to help all feel welcome. Our congregants give Temple Isaiah high marks for how well we help people feel part of the community. We treasure this aspect of our culture.

This idea of inclusion should be reflected in the pastoral care offered by our senior rabbi as it is by our entire clergy team. In moments of need and vulnerability, our senior rabbi must respond with the care that best fits each individual — care that reflects strong personal connection.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What three qualities are most important to your congregation in your new rabbi? (cont.)

An agent of change.

We seek a senior rabbi who will help our community bring to life the Vision we recently created for Temple Isaiah. Advances in technology, a changing Jewish population, and new ways of affiliating with synagogues are all affecting our future. Our next senior rabbi will need to shepherd us through change — change that will keep our community fresh, vital and a magnet for the next generation of Jews and Jewish families. We expect our rabbi to have experience in leading change, enthusiasm for bringing the community through change, and the ability to help shape the way our Vision is implemented.

To accomplish this, a successful senior rabbi will lead with both conviction and humility. They must be able to motivate, help the team see the future and hold colleagues accountable. At the same time, they will listen, bring out the best in others, and be willing to adjust personal beliefs in order to lift up others and knit together a team. While the bulk of congregational matters are handled by our administrative team, we look to our senior rabbi to lead

and develop our clergy, collaborate in sacred partnership with staff and lay leaders, and seek ways to connect the various segments of our community in a shared embrace of change.

Inspire congregants to think and to act.

Temple Isaiah's congregants are highly educated, intellectually sophisticated, and socially and politically engaged. Members want to be challenged to think deeply about issues, invited to wrestle with complex ideas, and inspired to action. Our Vision reflects a need for our clergy to connect Torah to daily life so that people can lead more thoughtful Jewish lives. Congregants speak of a desire to have worship that inspires and that is infused with more spirituality. They value sermons that are thought-provoking, relevant, and memorable. They expect a rabbi who is a strong educator in every sense of the word for all generations — intellectually and spiritually challenging while remaining warm and accessible.

We seek a rabbi who will lead the change that brings to life the Vision we have created for Temple Isaiah.





IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What should the three most important priorities of our rabbi be?

The URJ has helped Reform congregations understand that incremental change is insufficient for synagogues that want to thrive in coming years. At Temple Isaiah, we are working to be a congregation that moves beyond incremental change to transformation. Through our Shaping Our Future initiative, we are working to move our powerful, healthy community into a changed Jewish world. The priorities below reflect our commitment to both maintain our core values and continue to be a modern, adaptive community. We seek a senior rabbi who will lead us into the future.

Enable a smooth transition.

As a community that has had the same senior rabbi for more than 20 years, we must move forward while maintaining our own identity and style. The congregation clearly shares in the responsibility for a successful transition. While the work of our Interim Senior Rabbi will help lay a strong foundation, our new spiritual leader will play a key role in helping us keep what is best about Isaiah and guide us to the next part of our story.

Work with our community to bring Temple Isaiah's Vision to life.

Our congregation has invested heavily in creating a new Vision for our Temple and we are beginning the process of planning its implementation. However, our ability to realize our Vision will depend in significant measure on our senior rabbi embracing this Vision, shaping it, and inspiring our community to create change. We seek a senior rabbi who will bring experience with change, innovation and ideas as to how we can make our vision a reality.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What should the three most important priorities of our rabbi be? (cont.)

Implementing our Vision will require the full commitment of our community, including staff and clergy. This is a specific place in which our senior rabbi's leadership as a motivator and team builder will be critical to our community.

Broaden our embrace.

We draw our congregants primarily from Lexington and contiguous communities. Our congregation understands the importance of rabbinic engagement in our communities. We have a strong footprint in Lexington's civic and interfaith activities. However, Lexington is changing. There is a demographic shift toward non-Jewish families. Some of our older congregants will be leaving Lexington as they make lifestyle changes. Lexington is now unaffordable to many young families — regardless of their

religion or backgrounds. Increasingly, so are abutting communities. We wish to continue to attract new congregants of all ages, including the many interfaith families in our area. This means we must reach more deeply into other communities. To attract such members and continue our community engagement, we will need to be innovative in our offerings, engagement models and outreach, as well as in how we finance our community. We expect our new rabbi to bring fresh ideas and energy to this changing situation and to work with lay leaders and staff to expand our reach.

Our ability to realize our Vision will depend in significant measure on our senior rabbi not only embracing this vision, but shaping it and helping us become the community we want to be.



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What is the single most important thing a rabbi needs to know about our congregation?

Lexington, Arlington, Belmont, Bedford — the base of most of our congregants — are sophisticated, intellectual and giving communities.

Our congregation is heavily comprised of professionals in high tech, at colleges and universities, and in health care. We have many entrepreneurs and innovators. So it is no surprise that learning, social justice, education for our children, and connection to the bigger world are core values. We are not a community whose members, “lead with their money.” Our simchas are more likely to be modest, not showy; we don’t wear or drive our wealth. Instead, we are generous philanthropists. We value substance over packaging. This distinguishes us from many typical suburban congregations and is core to our values. We strive to live our Sh’ma statement, continuously aiming to make a difference in the world.

Our communities are diverse in every respect — as is Temple Isaiah. We therefore contribute a wide range of skills and abilities, styles and beliefs to all aspects of temple life. We volunteer extensively to achieve all we do, and every way of contributing is valued.

Temple Isaiah recently completed a fundraising campaign in honor of Rabbi Jaffe’s legacy. We raised over \$10M in less than a year, and over 40% of our congregation participated. The funds raised include \$550K over 5 years for the senior rabbi to use at their discretion.

Ours are communities that are diverse in every respect — as is Temple Isaiah.



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What are the three primary goals of your congregation?

OUR PRIMARY GOALS ARE
ROOTED IN OUR SH'MA:

DEEPENING LIVES
INSPIRING PURPOSE
TOGETHER

– AND HOW OUR VISION
BRINGS OUR SH'MA TO LIFE.



Truly welcome all to our community.

Welcoming and inclusiveness are the beating heart of Temple Isaiah's culture. Our congregants love that Isaiah is warm, inviting and comfortable. To continue to strengthen our community, however, we will need to be even more welcoming and inclusive, no matter the Jewish identify, home address, able bodiedness, sexual orientation or any variety of other factors and life experiences. With younger generations more skeptical of organized religion, we must put special emphasis on the experience at being at Isaiah even if you have little or no experience with Judaism. We have to remove the roadblocks. Make it easy. Make it comfortable. Make ourselves welcoming to all.

Inspire our congregants to lead meaningful Jewish lives.

Increasingly, our community wants to not only feel Judaism in our hearts and minds, but also to live it in the real world. Congregants want to embrace the Jewish values that can guide our actions. People are looking to live fuller, more meaningful, more purposeful lives, and Judaism is a pathway to doing so. That means we must infuse our spiritual practices,

traditions, education and relationship-building with Jewish values. These activities should inspire and shape how we live, act, treat each other, and repair the world. Tradition and study are integral to who we are, but they are more than ends in themselves. We must make Jewish values real, relevant and animated. We have exciting opportunities to connect worship, learning and tikkun olam, creating holistic experiences that bring deep meaning and change to our lives.

Put relationship building at the center of all we do.

We live in a world where deep community, a sense of belonging and connection is becoming rarer and rarer. Social media is driving people apart, not together. Temple Isaiah congregants are hungry for connection, a sense of belonging and meaningful relationships. And relationships are how Judaism can remain meaningful in a modern world. Our goal is to put relationship building at the center of everything that happens at Isaiah. While already a priority, we must challenge ourselves by asking, "How might we put relationship building at the heart of our religious school, worship, tikkun olam, adult education, and everything else we offer?"

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Please provide your congregation's Mission Statement.

SH'MA STATEMENT...

is our purpose. It is why Temple Isaiah exists. Our Vision must fulfill our Sh'ma.

OUR VISION...

is an audacious goal for the future of Temple Isaiah, built on a foundation of what makes us great today. It describes a future state we aim to fully achieve.

OUR PILLARS...

make the Vision real. They describe what the Temple Isaiah experience will be like for individuals, once we achieve our Vision. They illuminate the responsibilities of both the individual and the institution to our sacred community.

Deepening Lives, Inspiring Purpose — Together

Our Vision is to be a vibrant, inclusive and deeply-connected community, brought together by our shared connections to Judaism. Together, we will animate, modernize and personalize Jewish tradition and values, drawing inspiration to live fuller, more meaningful lives as 21st century individuals.

Welcoming

Diversity strengthens our community. Each moment of individual engagement will feel warm, inviting and seamless. We include all, make each feel comfortable to participate, and celebrate what we each uniquely bring to our community.

Personalization

Modern Judaism is personal, not monolithic. We will guide each other on journeys to seek, craft and live our own, individual Jewish experiences: experiences that are right for us, still rooted in tradition, and appropriate to the times in which we live.

Relationships

Judaism comes to life through community and shared experience. We will foster deep, lasting relationships that comfort and support, galvanize us to embrace Jewish values, and bring joy to our lives.

Inspiration

Practicing Jewish values brings meaning to life, makes us better, and repairs the world. Through spiritual practice, adult learning, and conversation we inspire one another to make Torah and Jewish values real and active in our lives and the world.

Passing Down

Judaism should endure. We ignite the next generation's embrace of Jewish identity and peoplehood through joyful and compelling Jewish learning and experiences, so we can be secure in the knowledge that Judaism will thrive after we are gone.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What are the three most important issues to confront in your congregation in the next five years?

We must differentiate ourselves from other congregations and meet the needs of many constituencies.

We are multi-generational, embracing both interfaith and interracial families. We represent varied Jewish upbringings and personal beliefs. Expectations are high and varied. Hence our congregants give high marks to the extensive offerings available to the community, yet many simultaneously note that we lack focus. Our ongoing challenge will be getting that balance right. We must allocate our resources appropriately given these disparate priorities while serving the needs of all.

We must adapt to the changing reasons and ways that Jews affiliate with congregations and the Jewish religion in general.

If we are to transform, we will have to think outside the box — the box of our building. Innovation will happen at 55 Lincoln Street, and it will have to happen outside our four walls. That raises questions. How can Temple Isaiah retain its soul and continue to build community while also living in a world of remote connection or in programming off-property?

What are the right “neighborhoods” for our reach? We should be able to continue to attract young families, but there are relatively few young single Jews in our traditional catchment area. We also know that younger people wait longer to affiliate with a synagogue than a generation ago. And they may not stay as long (although we have had an enviable record in retaining families beyond B’nai Mitzvah and even high school graduation). How do we remain a vital and meaningful part of people’s lives when the



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What are the three most important issues to confront in your congregation in the next five years? (cont.)

We have the human and financial wherewithal to tackle issues — we need the spirit and leadership to do so.

traditional approach to synagogue affiliation is evaporating? We have the human and financial wherewithal to tackle these issues — and we need the spirit and leadership to do so. How do we continue to be meaningful in the lives of our congregants when the very notion of what it means to be Jewish is changing?

As time constraints limit the ability of congregant volunteers to support staff capability, we will need to decide if we expand staff or reduce offerings. Addressing this issue over time, with care and wisdom, is important if we are to maintain the overall financial health of the community while achieving our mission.

We must make access to a thriving Jewish community affordable for all — particularly young people and families with school aged children.

Though we are blessed to have a strong financial base, we are not blind to the long-term economic challenges we face. Our current annual financial commitment levels are not affordable to an increasing number of current and prospective members. In fact, the traditional approach to funding synagogues is obsolete. We are beginning to reimagine how to address the multiple facets of sound financial management — expense management, strategic investment, appropriate expectations of members' financial contributions. We are fortunate to be able to address this without being in the throes of financial exigency. Though financial management is not the daily concern of a senior rabbi, we look to our next rabbi to bring ideas to the discussion, to be a strong steward of resources, to be comfortable and effective as a fundraiser, and to inspire our community to make Temple Isaiah a top giving priority.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

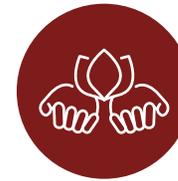
What are your congregation's core values?



Building congregants' connection to Judaism through worship



Community — building relationships and belonging



Humility



Inclusivity — being a haven for all



Embracing the fundamentals of Reform Judaism and enabling members to advance their personal Jewish journeys



Transparency and consensus-building



Highest quality lifelong learning that reflects intellectual depth



Connection and commitment to Lexington and contiguous communities



Menschlichkeit



Commitment to social justice



Integrity



L'Dor V'Dor

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What are your congregation's strengths?

We are a warm, welcoming and inclusive community.

Congregants speak often of the inviting tone set by our clergy and particularly our beloved senior rabbi of the past 22 years. The result of this is a community that reaches out to newcomers, and actively seeks ways to involve members with diverse Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds. Visitors of all faiths feel comfortable at simchas and worship. To underscore our commitment to building a strong community, we have a Director of Congregational Engagement and we work to build partnerships with organizations that reflect these values. We are a congregational partner of the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project and a part the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) campaign to reduce and eliminate the stigma of living with mental illness.

Our school educates children who have a wide range of learning needs and commits staff resources to inclusion. In every aspect of Temple life, we find ways to include rather than exclude. Innumerable congregants

have built their core personal relationships at Temple Isaiah — relationships that endure for decades. Relationships are the fiber that weaves Temple Isaiah together. And these relationships endure and grow. Our Vision reinforces that the opportunity for such connection is a key reason to affiliate with a community like ours.

Our congregants bring extraordinary skills and abilities to our community.

We have a robust cadre of volunteers with extensive personal and professional skills and abilities. Our congregants are smart and interesting, committed to our community and to living Jewish lives. And yet, we don't take ourselves too seriously. We are people who are self-reflective by nature. We know we can always improve, and we want to do so, even when we don't know how.

This is part of the very fiber of Temple Isaiah — relationships among congregants that endure and grow.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What are your congregation's strengths? (cont.)

We embrace excellence in life-long learning.

Our adult learners have access to a tremendous range of programs led by clergy, other congregants, community experts and speakers from around the world. We are very proud of the range and quality of learning opportunities available to our members. Because there are so many offerings elsewhere in the Boston area, we know that our programs must be of the highest quality.

We are not afraid to innovate.

In our school we embrace new learning modules. We have continuously changed and improved our approach to philanthropy. We have made important changes to our organizational structure. And of course, we have embraced new technology for communication, worship and learning.

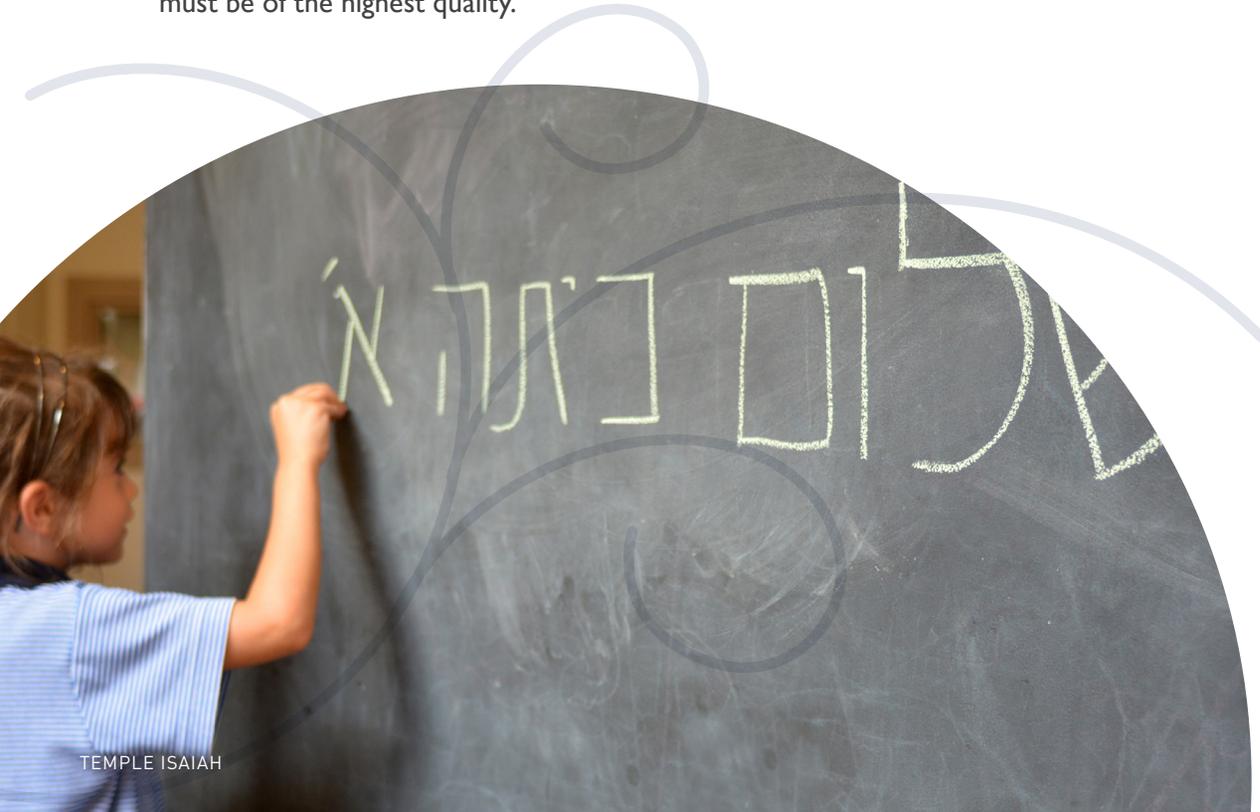
Our pulpit clergy team — Rabbi Jordi Schuster Battis and Cantor Lisa Doob —and senior staff — Rabbi Amy Hertz, Rabbi Jodi Seewald Smith, Betsy Marantz, and Judy Shapiro — collaborate closely with each other and our Interim Senior Rabbi Darryl Crystal.

Our staff, both new and those of long-standing, are dedicated to our temple and consistently go above and beyond. We are fortunate to have a particularly strong lay leadership team. Our President serves for two years and we have had outstanding leadership from our lay leaders term after term.

We have been blessed with excellent rabbis since our founding.

They have been different in style and approach to the rabbinate. Temple Isaiah has grown and adapted with each change of rabbi. We are not looking for the rabbi we've had, but for the right rabbi to take us into the future. We will evolve with our new spiritual leader.

We are looking for the right rabbi to take us into the future.



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What are your congregation's greatest challenges?

Transitions.

Temple Isaiah is navigating both a short and a long-term transition. In the short term, we are welcoming a new Associate Rabbi and transitioning from a beloved Senior Rabbi who led the congregation for 22 years. Our Interim Senior Rabbi, Rabbi Darryl Crystal, will help with this transition over the next year. But like many temples, we are also undergoing a long-term transition as we adapt to changes in the Jewish community and a post-COVID reality. The first few years of our next settled senior rabbi's terms will be pivotal in both these transitions.

Modernizing the operations.

Keeping any organization at the leading edge of business practices is hard. Our Temple is no exception. For at least a decade, we were under-staffed in technology, human resources, and best practice administrative processes. Under new administrative leadership, we are aiming to be as modern in our operations as we are in our thinking about our worship, programs, social activities, commitment to social justice and learning. There is much to

do, and changes in operations will affect congregants, staff and clergy alike. This will be a process. We look for a senior rabbi to partner in these changes and be at the leading edge of administrative and technical areas where they touch worship, pastoral care and other key areas of clergy duties.

Balancing aspiration and resources.

Our members' ages span more than 90 years. We can't be everything to every congregant. Yet despite our diversity, we strive to keep each person knitted into our community. That is a core responsibility of our Director of Congregational Engagement. Our resources, though substantial, are not infinite. We will be continually asking hard questions. How will we choose what to do? What do we start, stop, continue? How do we engage the parents of school-aged children, who are often the ones most stretched for time and resources? How





IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What are your congregation's greatest challenges? (cont.)

significant events that take place in the temple. We will remain a voice for justice, equality, anti-racism and inclusion, accepting that this increases risk for our community. And as the supervisor of the clergy team, we look for a senior rabbi who will embrace modern and effective leadership practices as an example for the entire institution.

Refreshing our governance structure.

Temple governance is a challenge by its very nature, but we believe we have opportunity for improvement. In the coming years we expect to address this challenge by refining our governance structure. We expect our next senior rabbi to partner in this process by bringing fresh thinking and helping our community navigate the delicate path to change.

do we help our congregants understand our shared choices? We expect that our vision work is preparing our community for these choices — yet we know that choices inevitably can lead to both excitement and disappointment. Our challenge is to help everyone find their place so their connections to each other, to Temple Isaiah, and to their Jewish journeys continue to endure.

The increasing polarization of our society in general and rising anti-semitism.

External threats are real. They have necessitated our investment in security for religious school, worship and other

Our challenge is to help everyone find their place so their connections to each other, to Temple Isaiah, and to their Jewish journeys continue to endure.



General Information



GENERAL INFORMATION

Please provide a history of your congregation

In the mid 1950's, Congregation B'nai Jacob in Lexington (once Orthodox, at that time Conservative) merged with the Arlington Jewish Center, a social and cultural organization, to form the Arlington-Lexington-Bedford Jewish Community Center. In 1959, a decision was made to engage a full-time rabbi, and the board voted to offer the position to Rabbi Bernard Bloom, a graduate of HUC-JIR. Some members of the board preferred a Conservative rabbi, and insisted that the decision be brought to the entire membership, which voted to engage a Conservative rabbi, and rescind the offer to Rabbi Bloom. A group of 40 households who preferred a liberal congregation, and wanted to honor the offer to Rabbi Bloom, formed a new congregation, which they named Temple Isaiah, a reflection of their core commitment to social justice. The group that chose to engage a Conservative rabbi became Temple Emunah, and the two congregations enjoy an unusually close relationship to this day.

Temple Isaiah and its school met in two local churches until 1963, when it completed its building on Lincoln Street. That same year saw the arrival of Rabbi Haskell Bernat, under whose leadership Temple Isaiah became known for its innovative and creative worship and programming. When Rabbi Bernat took a position as a UAHC regional director in 1971, Rabbi Cary Yales became the rabbi of Temple Isaiah.

Building upon the foundation established during Rabbi Bernat's tenure, Rabbi Yales led Temple Isaiah with distinction for twenty-eight years, until his untimely death in 1999. During that time, Temple Isaiah grew substantially. Under Rabbi Yales' leadership, Temple Isaiah introduced and/or piloted numerous new programs and innovative approaches to



GENERAL INFORMATION

Please provide a history of your congregation if it is not located on your website (cont.)

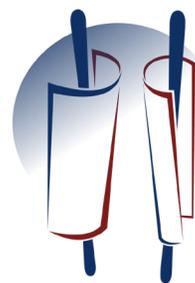
education, programming, and worship, including family education, the Meah adult learning program, and full-time Renaissance and Youth Educator positions. Numerous musicians who went on to distinction in the Reform movement worked at Temple Isaiah during these years, including Jeff Klepper, Benjie-Ellen Schiller, Julie Silver, and Peri Smilow, who served as our cantorial soloist for six years.

In 2000, Rabbi Howard Jaffe became senior rabbi. His tenure has seen a reorganization of the board structure, the creation of our Yom Shabbat and award winning Achim programs, a new vision statement for Temple Isaiah, the development of alternative worship services for youth and adults, and co-founding of the Greater Boston Synagogue Organizing Project. Responding to his call for Temple Isaiah to appoint a full-time cantor, the congregation engaged Robbie Solomon in 2005 (previously, Cantor Leon Sher had been with us on a part-time basis for one year). Following Cantor Solomon, Cantor Lisa Doob joined Isaiah in 2008.

Rabbi Jaffe retired in June 2022 and is now Rabbi Emeritus. We welcomed Rabbi Darryl Crystal as our interim senior rabbi in July 2022.

> [Click Here to Read our Congregation's Bylaws](#)





TEMPLE
ISAAIAH

Lexington, Massachusetts