



TEMPLE ETZ CHAIM

temple-etzchaim.org

900 WASHINGTON STREET ~ FRANKLIN MA 02038 ~ 508-528-5337 ~ A REFORM CONGREGATION

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Dear Friends:

This communication reports on what we learned from the survey and focus groups and the plans to honor Rabbi Alpert. A big thank you to the 68 temple members who responded to the committee's survey and to the 29 members who participated in the four focus groups, and to others, including Religious School families, who shared their perspectives with the RTC. We are now completing the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) application using this information. The application is our "job ad" and is what potential candidates will see.

Here is a summary of what we learned from the survey and focus groups:

Rabbinic Qualities

We want our next rabbi to do everything well. That's only a slight exaggeration. Of the 29 rabbinic qualities or attributes listed in the survey, 16 were identified by over 90% of respondents as either Very Important or Important. Another 8 were identified by over 80% of respondents.

Approachable with an easy rapport with congregants of all ages (100%)

Welcoming to people of all ages, races, gender, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status (100%).

Ability to direct the religious school and implement a diverse and engaging curriculum (100%)

Ability to deliver inspirational, thought-provoking sermons rooted in Torah and Jewish values and strong Bimah presence (97%)

Strength in addressing contemporary social and cultural issues and connecting these to our Jewish faith (97%)

Willingness to explore changes to ensure the congregation's future (98%)

Managing multiple responsibilities and tasks proactively (98%).

Worship/Service Leader (72%) and Collaborator, Educator/Scholar, and Organizational Leader (37% or fewer) were the rabbinic roles identified as most important

עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה

... IT IS A TREE OF LIFE TO THOSE WHO HOLD IT FAST...



Temple Qualities

A place to spend Shabbat and gather for holiday celebrations (87%)

A place for lifecycle events (83%)

A place for youth to learn about Judaism (73%)

A place to socialize (70%)

A place that: enables social action, for adults to learn about Judaism, to explore/engage in spirituality and practice the tenets of reform Judaism (nearly 66%)

Most important strengths that our next rabbi needs to know about Etz Chaim:

An inclusive congregation that welcomes all who are interested in a connection to Jewish life (62%)

Is experiencing changing demographics; we are an aging congregation but in a neighborhood with unaffiliated Jews whom we seek to bring into our congregation (48%)

No other listed strength approached these two (17% or less).

The most important challenges confronting the temple in the next five years:

Attracting new members in all age demographics (92%)

Building a new facility that houses all our needs (73%)

Transition of next rabbi (65%)

Decreasing enrollment in the religious school (65%)

Maintenance of an aging facility (60%)

Observations from the Focus Groups and General Comments

Feedback from the five focus groups largely confirmed conclusions from the survey.

Finding the right rabbi and getting the transition right are important goals because in a small congregation such as ours, the rabbi will have multiple roles and will be connecting with everyone.

Attracting new members is very important, but it is equally important to retain current members, particularly younger families when their children complete religious education.

It is important that the rabbi be open, considerate, accepting, and empathic. The rabbi should be plain-spoken, not on pedestal, and be comfortable reaching out to families in need.

Several participants felt like there was not much interaction among the different demographic groups of the congregation except for the High Holy Days or other special events. More intergenerational events were suggested.

Planning to Honor Rabbi Alpert

We will be hosting three events to honor Rabbi Alpert and celebrate his 12 years of service to Temple Etz Chaim:

A religious school family event, to be held in May or June 2024, planned in conjunction with the Education Committee.

On June 28, 2024, we will have a special Erev Shabbat service, planned in conjunction with the Religious Activities Committee, which will be Rabbi Alpert's last Shabbat as our rabbi.

A special musical event and Havdalah service is being planned for a date to be determined in May 2024.

The work of the Rabbinic Transition Committee now shifts to preparing our CCAR application and then screening and reviewing the applications of rabbinic candidates. We remain committed to keeping you informed about the process and to engaging you when we bring final candidates to meet the congregation. As always, please feel free to reach out to any one of us with questions, concerns, or comments.

Wishing you a sweet and healthy new year,
Andrew Rubenstein, President,

Rabbinic Transition Committee
Bill Ferstenfeld and Robert Martin (co-chairs)
Wendy Bierman,
Margaret Black
Stacy Bushey
Stacey Field
Howard Heilweil
Ellen Keith
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