



## **FAQs About Community Commitment Revenue Model**

*June 1, 2021*

### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

#### **What are the benefits of this Community Commitment financial model?**

This new commitment model provides the community with a tool to align our financial practices to our vision of being built on covenantal relationships. The voluntary commitment (1) relieves financial tension for those previously needing abatements; (2) eliminates financial barriers for prospective members; (3) enables us to support one another; (4) positively reshapes the budget process; and (5) creates new opportunity to grow our community in numbers, engagement and overall strength. Everyone in the Agudas Achim community will understand the services covered by the Community Commitment and the cost of our core programs and values. Congregants identify for themselves how they can contribute to supporting the community.

#### **Why is now the right time for this change?**

As the Board and the community are establishing a new normal following the pandemic, the Financial Oversight Committee thinks this is a good time to implement this change. Coming out of the covid-19 pandemic with stable lay leadership and clergy advocating for this change; lay leadership having both the management and the financial acumen to oversee the successful transition; and the Community consistently expressing a desire to take care of one-another, this is the right time to implement this voluntary Community Commitment structure.

#### **Why is this the right financial model for our synagogue? What other models were considered?**

Over the past nine months, the Financial Oversight Committee reviewed a number of revenue models including the current dues-based model, a fair-share model, and a sustaining model. Each of these models relies on elements that do not express the values and vision of Agudas Achim. The Community Commitment structure aligns with the AAC vision of a mutually accountable community focused on elevating ourselves spiritually and taking care of one another (our traditional formula from Sinai).

#### **What's included in the Community Commitment and what is not?**

For each family, the Community Commitment is a voluntary amount which replaces each family's annual membership dues, the *Kol Nidre* Appeal, other special appeals such as the Annual Campaign, and fundraisers that support overall synagogue operations. Not included in the Community Commitment are: Religious School and Preschool tuition, *b'nai mitzvah* fees, credit card fees, charges for specific identified activities (e.g., tickets to events or offered holiday dinners, or Young Families or Shabbat Religious School class dinners), and tributes and dedications.

#### **Whom should I contact with questions?**

Please send your questions to [communitycommitment@agudasachim-va.org](mailto:communitycommitment@agudasachim-va.org) and your question will be directed to the appropriate board, committee or staff member; or call the office at 703-998-6460.

## PROCESS QUESTIONS

### **How do I make my Community Commitment?**

The Community Commitment may be submitted through an electronic form which will be emailed to congregants in July. The form links to congregants' ShulCloud accounts (account login is required to access). Feel free to use [these instructions](#) for completing the online form. For those who would like a paper form, one will be mailed. Or, congregants may email [Barry Nove](#), Executive Director, or [Glenn Mays](#), accounts receivable, or call them in the synagogue office at 703-998-6460 and they can process commitments.

### **Will payment plan options still be available?**

Yes, recurring ACH or credit card payments are accepted. Payment by check is also accepted.

### **If my circumstances change in the middle of the year, can I change my contribution amount?**

If your circumstances change, you may change your Community Commitment by emailing [Barry Nove](#), Executive Director, or [Glenn Mays](#), accounts receivable or calling them in the synagogue office at 703-998-6460.

### **What if I need help with ShulCloud?**

Office staff is happy to assist with using ShulCloud, whether it's to receive a temporary password or guide users through the online Community Commitment form.

### **What is the approval process for the Community Commitment structure? Will members be asked to approve this at the Congregational Meeting on June 22, 2021?**

The Community Commitment model has been developed and vetted by the Financial Oversight Committee and recommended by the Board and Clergy. The board has adopted this model as part of the financial package for the coming fiscal year. This plan will be briefed and discussed at two virtual town hall meetings in June prior to the annual meeting, with the opportunity for questions & answers, and will be reviewed at the annual meeting. All are welcome and encouraged to ask questions and comment.

### **By what date does a Community Commitment need to be submitted to attend High Holiday services?**

As in prior years, one-third of the Community Commitment should be paid by August 28, 2021, or recurring payments should be scheduled for the year by July 31, 2021.

## FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

### **What happens if Community Commitments do not meet the synagogue's financial needs?**

The Community Commitment model has been designed to produce at least the level of revenue the dues model generated in past years to support the expenses presented in the annual budget, but with less communal tension.

### **What happens if we don't receive sufficient contributions?**

Every year the Financial Oversight Committee oversees the financial well-being of our community. When

shortfalls occur, the committee assesses the need and recommends actions to the board (to reduce budgeted services, use reserve funds, borrow, or fundraise). This fiscal year will be managed the same way.

**What happens if contributions are greater than the overall revenue target?**

What a wonderful problem to create. Each year the budget process includes the evaluation of ALL requested programs and services and the board approves a subset. There are many worthy opportunities and unmet needs we could finance with a surplus.

**What is the meaning of increased transparency? What information will be provided to the congregation?**

Everyone in the Agudas Achim community will understand the services covered by the Community Commitment, the average expenditure per family for operations, and the cost of our core programs and values. Congregants should identify for themselves how they can contribute to supporting the community.

**Will the community continue to underwrite the expenses of Religious School?**

Yes, the congregation will continue to support the high-quality education desired for our future, our youth, obtained only through an excellent education director and a high-quality faculty.

## **FUNDRAISING**

**Will there be additional fundraisers during the year?**

No fundraising is planned to cover general operating expenses.

**Are particular cohorts allowed to undertake their own fundraising or solicit sponsorships for specific events?**

Yes, cohorts may fundraise to support specific events or causes.

**Will there be special recognition for those who choose to contribute above a certain level?**

Yes. This is under consideration. If you have ideas on how to recognize pillars of our community please contact [Barry Nove](#), Executive Director.

**How will I know how much I choose to contribute?**

Each household will determine an amount to contribute and submit it by July 30, 2021, via the online form (or hardcopy form mailed by the synagogue office).

**How do we know that everyone is contributing what they can afford? (Are there going to be freeloaders?)**

One of our community values, as expressed in the Agudas Achim Vision Statement, is to take care of one another. The covenantal nature of our relationships rests on mutual accountability. We will rely on that model for each household to do its part.

### **Is there a minimum contribution required to get a seat for High Holidays?**

There is no minimum contribution required, however, one-third of the Community Commitment must be paid by August 28, 2021, or a payment plan must be put in place by the end of July, the same as in previous years.

## **OTHER FEES THAT WILL OR WILL NOT CHANGE**

### **What fees will be bundled into the Community Commitment and what won't?**

The Community Commitment is a voluntary amount which replaces annual membership dues and unrestricted contributions, including the Kol Nidre Appeal and Annual Campaign donations.

Religious School and Preschool tuition, b'nai mitzvah fees, credit card fees, and charges for specific identified activities (e.g. tickets to events or offered holiday dinners, or Young Families or Shabbat Religious School class dinners) are not included in the Community Commitment.

### **Will I still pay tuition/fees for Religious School, preschool etc.?**

Yes. School tuitions are in addition to the Community Commitment.

### **Will I have to pay to attend various synagogue events and programs--concerts, meals, etc.? Or will these also be funded by voluntary contributions?**

For many special events, attendees will be asked to help defray the cost of the event, for example, a guest performer, materials for a special program, or food costs for a catered event. Sometimes special events are underwritten by a sponsor(s) and attendees enjoy the event for free.

### **Will there still be a member discount for preschool enrollment?**

Congregant discounts will continue to apply for Agudas Achim Preschool.

### **How does this new Community Commitment affect Religious School tuition?**

This new financial structure has no bearing on Religious School tuition. To enroll in religious school and for specific tuition or school related questions, please contact [Chaya Silver](#), Director of Religious School and Youth.

### **How does the Community Commitment relate to Legacy Giving and any future Capital Campaign?**

Legacy gifts and Capital campaigns are separate, independent activities.

## **COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIPS**

### **How can an individual add value to our community?**

Volunteering in the AAC community is a great way to meet others and to strengthen our community. Opportunities abound: help out in the office; provide rides to those in need; offer time and skills to decorate for an event; promote and advocate for AAC policies and community in other groups in which you participate (e.g. Federation, JCC, NOVA Jewish Community); and much more. Please contact [Ilana Rothberg](#), vice president of member engagement, to find a volunteer opportunity that is right for you.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **Will this voluntary contribution method attract more members to our synagogue community?**

The data from congregations which have adopted this model show increases in membership.

### **How will we measure progress?**

The Financial Oversight Committee intends to provide clear, visible charts in the building and in other communications which reflect progress (such as a fundraising goal thermometer), as well as following traditional financial management processes through the committee and the Board.