

# **A HISTORY OF TEMPLE SINAI**

**DAVID H. GREENBERG**

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by David H. Greenberg

As the fortieth anniversary of the founding of Temple Sinai approaches, it is appropriate to review the Temple's history. One might not consider forty years to be a substantial historical period, however, much has occurred in the congregation's improbable struggle to establish Reform Judaism in Vermont. The purpose of this written history is to provide an understanding of the Temple's past so that it can better plan its future. This history will touch on the individual history of the Temple as well as its history as part of the greater Jewish community.

At the outset, this historical narrative is "a history" of the Temple as experienced by the writer and gleaned from others' recollections. It may not be the complete story of the Temple to date. Additionally, no one should feel slighted if he or she is not mentioned below. An attempt has been made to name as few of the individuals responsible for the various events as possible. Since the Temple is generally an organization run by volunteers, hundreds of individuals have made contributions to the growth and success of Temple Sinai.

Temple Sinai was organized on Shavuot June 22, 1966. There were many reasons for the creation of a new Temple (e.g. spiritual and social). Nevertheless, the principal reason for the establishment of Temple was the absence of any Reform Jewish congregation in the State of Vermont. Virginia Greenblott (Ginny) and Arthur Greenblott had married and resettled in Art's birthplace in Burlington, after Virginia had completed her conversion to Judaism with a Reform Rabbi in Springfield, Massachusetts. Although they initially joined the Conservative Synagogue, the Greenblotts felt more comfortable with the Reform philosophy.

Ginny's Rabbi from Springfield contacted her and asked if she would be interested in establishing a Reform Jewish Congregation in her community. Ginny accepted the challenge and sought out others who shared her vision. Eleven families from various

towns in Chittenden County signed the Articles of Association for a non-profit corporation officially known as The Congregation of Temple Sinai, Inc.<sup>1</sup> The founders selected the name because Ginny's former Springfield Congregation was named Sinai Temple. Additionally, the name of the Temple had to be modified to distinguish it from the local Masonic Lodge known as Temple Sinai. Nevertheless, for many years it was not uncommon for non-members to confuse the new religious organization with the Masonic Lodge. This confusion made fund raising interesting.

One of the stated purposes of the Temple as set out in the original Articles of Incorporation filed with the Vermont Secretary of State was:

“To organize, conduct and maintain a Congregation, School and all other necessary services and/or institutions necessary or desirable for the worship of God in accordance with the faith of Judaism in the liberal tradition under affiliation with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.”

The original Articles stated that membership “shall be available to all persons twenty-one (21) years of age or over professing to be of the Jewish faith or desiring to be associated with Judaism.”

From the beginning, the Temple was distinguished by its egalitarian principles. Men and women were actively and equally involved in religious services and the administration of the Temple. Both men and women read from the Torah and had aliyas on the Bimah. Both men and women have served on the board and as officers, with the first female President installed in 1984. All children of the congregation were encouraged to attend religious school, become Bar or Bat Mitzvah, and complete Confirmation.

The initial by-laws of the Temple made it clear that seating for religious services was to be “non-segregated” and unassigned. The Temple never engaged in the practice

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix for the names of the founders in the order in which they signed the Articles

of selling specific seats for High Holiday Services. Everyone paid the same dues regardless of his or her economic standing or age. This egalitarian philosophy eliminated practices that some found objectionable in other congregations. At the same time, it has made it more difficult to support the congregation through its dues. For many years the board has discussed payment of dues on a fair share basis but to date this method of payment remains optional with members. The Temple has always made provisions, however, for abating dues of those unable to pay them. Throughout the history of the Temple, the abatement rate has remained constant at approximately 13% of the total dues.

Another characteristic of Temple Sinai from the beginning was the presence of music in services. The Temple has always had an organ and singing during services. There has been a succession of organs in the sanctuary beginning with small and used ones to the present more professional model. One constant has been Cantor Mark Leopold who has led the congregation in song from the time he was fourteen years old to the present.

In its first 20 years the Temple was a very mobile congregation. It held services in congregant's homes, schools and hotel conference rooms. The Chamberlin school in South Burlington and the Hotel Vermont in Burlington were a few of the temporary homes for services. Volunteerism was essential to the existence of the Temple. Congregants often led services as there was no full time Rabbi until 1978. Several student Rabbis came from great distances to assist whenever possible. For approximately 5 years Rabbi David Powell came to the area twice per month to provide Rabbinic services.

The amateur nature of the congregation has been at the same time a weakness and a great strength. The congregation could not function without active participation of its volunteers. Without a permanent location, the congregation did not accumulate many possessions. At each service members carried a small portable Ark, Shabbat candles, prayer books and a few religious articles from one place to another. Some members look

back fondly on the first Ark made out of inexpensive faux wood paneling.

In 1974, the Faith Methodist Church on Dorset Street in South Burlington graciously permitted Temple Sinai to move into its building on a shared basis. This was intended to be a temporary situation until the Temple was able to find a permanent home. The sharing of the church building appealed to members of both organizations as an example of ecumenical spirit and a reflection of the accepting Vermont nature.

The Temple's home in a church was a unique experience. On each Sabbath and holiday, Temple members came early to create the Temple atmosphere. A long yellow curtain was hung in front of the 15 foot high wooden cross at the front of the sanctuary; brass candle holders and a kiddush cup were cleaned and set on the pulpit. Prayer books were brought into the sanctuary on a metal bookshelf with wheels. Two men carried in the new finished wood portable Ark with brass handles. At the conclusion of services, congregants helped put all the Temple's possessions back into the storage room and there remained no other evidence of the Temple's presence. There was something very special and quaint about this whole procedure.

The Temple's leadership began to plan for the future. The board members engaged in a debate as to whether building a Temple or hiring a full time Rabbi would best lead to congregational growth. Wisely, the board concluded that having a Rabbi was the essential first step in attaining legitimacy and thereby attracting new members.

Although the Union of American Hebrew Congregations has always been supportive of the Temple, it has always remained skeptical of the "grandiose" plans of Temple Sinai. The Union viewed the Burlington area (and Vermont in general) as an isolated outpost of the Reform movement with limited ability for growth. The Orthodox and then Conservative movements had long dominated the small Jewish community. Many of the members of the existing congregations had lived in the area for generations. Accordingly, the Union advised the congregation that Temple Sinai would not be able to afford the financial commitment to a Rabbi. The Temple board did not heed this advice and in 1978 hired its first full time Rabbi for the congregation of 47 families.

Interestingly, it has turned out that most of the congregation's growth did not come from members of other local congregations. Rather, the majority of new families to the Temple were unaffiliated or new to Vermont.

The hiring process of the Rabbi reflected the amateur status of the congregation. The congregation could not afford to interview many candidates or to bring them to Burlington. There were few interested candidates partially because the committee began the search too late in the Rabbinical School year. In deciding to hire the first Rabbi the search committee relied heavily upon the recommendation of a representative of the Rabbinical college in Cincinnati. The representative gave the highest praise for the candidate and expressed surprise that he was considering Temple Sinai for employment. The candidate was at the top of his class. Unfortunately, there were two Rabbis graduating from the Rabbinical college that year with the same name. The Temple hired "the other candidate" without realizing it had done so.

The hiring of a Rabbi led to excitement in the Jewish community and new members. However, the Rabbi's tenure was problematic as he held religious views which were different than those generally accepted in mainstream Reform Judaism. Controversy soon arose over the definition of a member. The congregation then amended its by-laws to define a member as "any person of the Jewish faith, or any person seeking the Jewish faith, and wishing to follow the forms, practices and usages of the liberal interpretation of Judaism." When the Rabbi solicited some members to start a competing congregation, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations sent representatives to Burlington to mediate an amicable separation of Temple Sinai and its first full time Rabbi.

Toward the end of the first Rabbi's tenure, another crisis arose. After church officials witnessed a large and festive (some might say raucous) Purim Carnival taking place in their church, they suggested that the day had come for the Temple to "leave the nest" and find its own home. They also pointed out that the Temple did not appear to have taken any steps to secure its future. The church asked for a firm date by which its

temporary guest would move. The Temple's President, after meeting with the board, proposed remaining in the church for no more than five years. Surprisingly, the church found this extended stay satisfactory. The five year deadline gave great motivation to the Temple's leadership to find a new home. It also gave the board a powerful argument to make in support of a building project: "The Temple was losing its home." Great things often come out of a crisis.

The members of the Temple learned from their first experience in hiring a Rabbi. An accomplished professor and scholar agreed to chair a search committee for a new Rabbi. The committee completed a survey of congregants seeking information on their preferences for the type of candidate to hire. Due to the Temple's limited funds, a former Temple president, between connecting flights on a trip from Florida, interviewed Rabbi James Glazier in the Atlanta airport. The committee then rated each applicant in multiple categories. The committee members unanimously selected Rabbi Glazier.

In June of 1981, Rabbi Glazier began serving as the Rabbi of Temple Sinai. The Rabbi came from a large Reform congregation in Birmingham, Alabama where he was an Assistant Rabbi. When the Rabbi arrived in Burlington, there were about 67 families in the Temple and 24 children in its religious school. Again membership increased.

Rabbi Glazier attempted to adjust to the fact that he was the only Reform Rabbi in the entire state of Vermont. His ability to exchange ideas (in the pre-internet era) with colleagues was limited. The Rabbi got along well with the minister of the Faith Methodist Church with whom he shared a religious facility. The Rabbi's office was also a classroom for the church. Board meetings were held in that office with a picture of Jesus prominently displayed on the wall. As the congregation grew however, it became clear that the sharing of the church was not an ideal situation. Since the Rabbi's shared office space contained Christian symbols, pictures and books, it was not an ideal place for the Rabbi to provide education or counseling to congregants. Similarly, the shared classrooms and the sanctuary contained non-Jewish symbols. Each Christmas church members decorated the building for the holiday. The "ideal" sharing situation presented



many mixed messages for Jewish children.

Shortly after arriving, therefore, Rabbi Glazier began urging the congregants to take steps to find a permanent home. The president appointed a building committee chairman and publicized the appointment in the congregation. A building committee then began searching for land or a building to purchase. Committee members again sought advice from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations which concluded that Temple Sinai was too small to undertake a building program. This advice did not deter the congregation.

The building committee considered many existing buildings in Chittenden County including old school buildings in Winooski and Colchester, an office building on Shelburne Road in Burlington and the old Orthodox Synagogue in the north end of Burlington. None of the buildings met the Temple's needs. The committee determined that South Burlington was the geographic center for its congregants who lived in towns from St. Albans to Stowe. The committee also concluded that it was best to purchase undeveloped land on which to construct a Temple. The committee hoped that the purchase of land would inspire members to contribute to a building project

In 1983 the Temple entered into a contract to purchase several acres of land on Spear Street in South Burlington. The land had spectacular views of both the Adirondacks and the Green Mountains. The land was also prime residential real estate. After neighbors began voicing opposition to the construction of a Temple in the neighborhood, the seller of the property, without the right to do so, terminated the contract with Temple Sinai.

The South Burlington City Planner then suggested that the Temple look into purchasing the property at the corner of Dorset and Swift streets which was approximately a quarter of a mile to the south of the Faith Methodist Church. The corner property's best attributes, aside from its central location, were that no one else wanted it and there were no neighbors to oppose a building project. In short, it was practically a swamp, as the bullrushes around the property today provide evidence. The land was low

lying and very wet. It would take hundreds of yards of fill to build on it. It was a portion of an old farm owned by an elderly Vermont farmer, Isadore Myers, and his wife, Frances. When he became elderly, Mr. Myers began selling portions of his farm. He had decided not to sell to developers. He sold one parcel to the Faith Methodist Church (the Temple's temporary home), another to the Archdiocese of Vermont, and another to the Mormon Church. He said that he was "covering all bases" before he died. In a meeting in his home, Mr. Myers expressed a desire to sell to a Temple but he was concerned that the Archdiocese had recently resold its parcel to a condominium developer. He at first insisted on a covenant in the deed prohibiting any use of the property he was selling to the Temple for anything other than a Temple or Church. His attorney, who was Jewish, understood the difficulty of starting a building project for a small congregation. Finally Mr. Myers agreed to a promise from the committee that it would build a Temple if it raised sufficient funds. On December 6, 1983, the Temple then purchased the approximately 4 acre parcel of land for \$15,000.00 an acre. This purchase depleted nearly the entire building fund to which members had contributed for years in yearly building fund assessments. Several members were concerned that the committee had over paid for the acreage. In hindsight, the Temple had made a prudent purchase as property values near the Temple soon soared.

The committee then set out to design a building. After interviewing several design/builders, the committee concluded that it would be best to hire an architect to design the project and provide the estimated costs. The Temple could then use the plans to raise funds, obtain bids, and inspire the Congregation. The architect would enable the Temple to control costs.

The architect estimated that the cost for the building project would be in excess of \$500,000.00. He designed a building which was very simple with a sanctuary, 3 classrooms, a social hall, kitchen and Rabbi's office. The architect believed that the most inexpensive shape for the building was a simple wooden "cheese wedge". He then designed two such wedges to be placed next to each other. The sanctuary together with

the adjoining social hall were meant to accommodate 300 persons for high holiday services.

No one on the committee had experience with fund raising. The committee therefore, had a professional fund raiser for Jewish causes come to Vermont to propose a plan. The fund raiser was of the opinion that raising funds for a six hundred thousand dollar project would be quite easy. He outlined a plan to obtain a single donation in the \$250,000.00 range, a few in the \$100,000.00 range and several other large donations between \$25,000.00 and \$50,000.00. The committee members concluded that the fund raiser was overly optimistic about the prospect of obtaining donations from northern Vermonters for a Temple.

The committee decided not to hire a fund raiser but to proceed only with volunteers. Fortunately, an experienced fund raiser for the YMCA, who was not a Temple member, agreed to volunteer his time to organize and train Temple members in the fund raising effort. The committee sought donations from every member, relatives and friends of members, foundations, other Temples and other Jews in the area. The committee sent hundreds of letters soliciting funds. As the committee feared, there were no contributions above \$25,000.00 and only a few above \$20,000.00. There was also little interest in contributing to the Temple project except from those who would benefit most from it: the members themselves. To their credit almost all members contributed some amount.

The building committee only raised about \$250,000.00. The contributions were typically between \$500.00 and \$5000.00 each. Fortunately, a contractor, who was neither Jewish nor a member, became the largest contributor. He was friendly with a few Temple members and gave several gifts when he saw that the fund raising was floundering. Given the deadline for moving from the Church, the Temple decided to proceed with the project even though the plan had been to raise 100% of the necessary

funds. The decision was not without risk since the committee had determined that it needed a congregation of approximately 225 families to operate satisfactorily a building and its programming. The congregation had nearly half that many families. Nevertheless, a local bank agreed to lend the Temple \$260,000.00 with a pledge of the land and all the building fund pledges.

Construction began in the spring of 1985. The ground breaking was an exciting occasion which was covered on a local television newscast. From the beginning, the committee had to find ways to cut costs as there was not enough money to complete the building as planned. Due to the wetness of the site it was not possible to have a basement in the building. It was necessary, however, to raise the height of the center of the property so that the water on the site would remain on the perimeter. The Temple received, at no cost to it, tons of fill primarily from the Radisson Hotel construction project in downtown Burlington. There was not sufficient fill to complete the parking lot which was planned to extend north of the current one. Rather than purchase more fill, the committee eliminated 20 parking spaces, leaving less spaces than the zoning ordinance required. This problem presented another opportunity for ecumenicalism. Committee members reached an agreement with the neighboring Mormon Church to share parking lots. This sharing arrangement satisfied zoning requirements. The Church cut a hole in its fence, and the Temple installed a path between the two properties. The arrangement was convenient for both organizations as the Temple's greatest traffic flow generally occurred on Friday nights and Saturdays while the Church's occurred on Sundays.

As a result of the shortage of funds, the committee deleted from the project the kitchen appliances and cabinets, all furniture, the Ark, the parking lot blacktop and the wall dividing the social hall from the sanctuary. The committee persisted in the belief that "if you build it, they will come". The strategy was successful. A local furniture store provided chairs for the bimah. After seeing that the Temple had no furniture the contractor who had provided the largest donation gave a donation sufficient to purchase 150 chairs. A year later, because of the deplorable state of the dirt and stone parking lot,

he also sent a crew to the property to blacktop it. A group of congregants met at the Temple one day and spread the grass seed needed for the grounds. The furnishing of the Temple reflected the resourcefulness of the small Vermont congregation. Several men purchased and transported to the Temple 150 more chairs for high holiday use. One family member donated all the used cabinets (bright yellow) and appliances from his kitchen. Over the years the Temple members crafted the Ark, the two podiums, the bookshelves and the Torah cover holder. A man doing community service as part of a criminal sentence made and installed wooden coat pegs and molding for the school. A member wove a curtain for the Ark. A church in Winooski contributed two old seven armed menorahs which the Church had stored in its attic. Champlain College allowed the Temple to take its old school desks to furnish the new classrooms. A doctor who purchased an old school allowed the Temple to take the hundred year old chalk boards for use in the classrooms. A member donated the existing eternal light which she found hanging in the foyer of a house in Queens, New York. Finally, members of the congregation helped design each of the stained glass windows installed over the years.

The only added expense which the committee authorized concerned the construction of the alcove and sky light on the south side of the sanctuary. At the commencement of construction, one committee member who was a contractor warned the committee that the planned wedge shape of the building would leave the sanctuary with a lengthy monotonous row of small plain windows, and little style. The change in plan required additional windows, a steel beam for support and a protruding foundation. The unique shape of the sanctuary wall and the view of the sky were important for creating a more interesting sanctuary.

As the summer of 1985 came to an end, the modestly furnished building was ready for occupation. The Church was about to lose its temporary guest of twelve years. On September 15, 1985, Erev Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Glazier and about 30 Temple members and children left the Faith Methodist Church with the Temple's two Torahs and proudly walked a quarter of a mile along Dorset Street to the Temple's new permanent home.

There were no sidewalks on Dorset Street at that time so the parade proceeded in the south bound lane. The Torah-carrying congregants must have been a curiosity to the people driving their automobiles slowly past the procession. Some congregants consider this occasion one of the most poignant and significant events in the Temple's history. A photograph of the parade appeared in Reform Jewish magazine and the Burlington Free Press. Temple Sinai had achieved a goal which had seemed so implausible to many. No longer would congregants have to carry a portable Ark for services.

On November 17, 1985 Temple Sinai held a dedication ceremony attended by hundreds of guests. At that time, there were approximately 125 families belonging to the Temple, far short of the number needed to support it financially. An honored guest and speaker at the ceremony was Governor Madeline Kunin, the first Jewish governor of the state. She would not be the last governor to attend a service and speak at the Temple. Both Governor Howard Dean and Governor James Douglas subsequently have spoken from the Bimah.

A month after the opening, the Temple experienced the joys of "home ownership". After the first snow storm of the year, water backed up under the ice on the roof and leaked into the building. The ceilings in the kitchen, a classroom and the coat room caved in. Shortly after this catastrophe, all the pipes in the building froze. An investigation determined that these events were results of faulty design. The congregation, with the assistance of an attorney member, reached an out-of-court settlement with the contractor who made some adjustments to the building.

By 1989, the Temple had reduced its mortgage to \$160,000.00. A campaign to retire the entire mortgage only reduced it in half. The congregation continued to increase in size but nevertheless operated with a deficit budget. The shortfall was made up by fund raising events, donations, and the use of building fund assessments to pay the mortgage loan. Over the years the practice of using the building fund to pay for the mortgage and/or operating costs spawned heated debates at Temple board meetings. At first the board agreed to treat any amounts it took from the building fund as loans which

it would pay back with interest. Soon the Temple ceased charging itself interest. Finally, the Temple stopped repaying anything to the building fund. Although many board members were uncomfortable depleting the building fund, it was a practice born of necessity.

The Temple's longstanding practice of operating with a budget deficit has made it difficult to establish an endowment or to set aside funds for unbudgeted items. For example without the generosity of a contractor, the Temple would not have been able to replace the defective clapboards which the original contractor installed on the building. After nearly forty years the Temple has recently made a commitment to paying off its mortgage, establishing an endowment and promoting gifting to the Temple through estates, life insurance or other means.

Another financial issue which led to heated debate over the years concerned whether the expenses of the religious school should be the responsibility of the Temple or the parents of students. Previous boards reached various compromises ranging from an equal sharing between the congregation and parents to a 70/30 split with the parents bearing the greater share. Currently, the religious school parents pay for approximately 80% of the non-administrative expenses for the religious school.

Completion of the building was a substantial event for the congregation but it highlighted another problem. For years the Temple had not paid the full dues owed to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Since the Union had advised the congregation that it was too small to support a building project, it became concerned that the congregation nevertheless proceeded with the project, ran a deficit and neglected its dues responsibility to the Union. With the threat of losing the Temple's membership in the Union, shortly before 1990, an attorney member of the Temple traveled to Boston and negotiated a five year plan to gradually increase the Temple's dues payments until it met the full responsibility assessed for congregations of its size. The Union also agreed to waive the Temple's entire arrearage in dues.

Under Rabbi Glazier's leadership the Temple has taken steps to make all members feel accepted. Firstly, the Temple began using gender neutral prayer books to replace the more traditional books (mostly donated from other congregations), the congregation had used for years. Since the Temple did not have the funds to purchase new high holiday books, congregants had to purchase their own books to bring to worship. Gradually, the Temple purchased prayer books for guests. Secondly, the Temple changed its position as to what comprised a family for membership purposes. The Temple began to include the spouse of a member as part of a family membership regardless of the spouse's religious affiliation or lack of involvement in Temple activities or worship.

As the Temple grew and members wanted more programming the administrative expenses increased substantially. It was not until about 1990 that the Temple compensated the Cantor with anything other than free membership. The religious school director position, established in 1993 remained a part time position until 1998. Similarly, at about the same time the secretarial position changed from part-time to full-time.

In its early years, the Temple purchased cemetery plots for use by its members. The plots were located in an area of Burlington's Lake View Cemetery on North Avenue. It was necessary to have a separate Reform cemetery because other Jewish congregations had rules for burial that precluded the burial of non-Jewish spouses or people who had converted pursuant to practices of Reform Judaism. Although, the Temple purchased another adjoining section of plots there are today only 8 plots remaining. The current board will have to begin planning to locate a new area for burials.

By 1998 the Temple had grown to approximately 225 families, the goal set many years before. Although, the congregation was still operating with a deficit budget, there was a great need for increased building facilities. Classrooms were overcrowded, the small social hall could not accommodate anything more than a small function, and the poorly designed kitchen was not functional. On December 12, 1998 the Temple dedicated the second stage of the building. That project doubled the size of the social hall, increased and professionally equipped the kitchen area, and beautified the sanctuary



with new light fixtures, carpeting and wood paneling native to Vermont. The Temple conducted the fund raising for the second phase of the building in a more organized and professional manner under the supervision of a paid fund raiser. Although the goal was to raise nearly a million dollars for the project, there still remains a mortgage loan in the approximate amount of \$260,000.00.

The Temple has had an influence far beyond the congregation itself. Rabbi Glazier's efforts led to the issuance of the first U.S. Postal Stamp commemorating Chanukah. For years congregants have contributed time and funds to local charities, and Jewish causes around the world. In the 1990s under the supervision of Rabbi Glazier, the congregation brought 26 Russian Jewish immigrants to the Burlington area. The congregation and the Rabbi helped find housing, furniture and jobs for the Russian families, most of whom have now moved to other parts of the country to carry on with their lives. To many of these families of Jewish background, Temple Sinai was their first exposure to Judaism and freedom of religion. Some of the other Jewish sects were reluctant to support this resettlement effort based upon a belief that the families should instead immigrate to Israel. One only had to meet at the airport a Russian family carrying all its possessions in a few suitcases to appreciate the significance of the immigration program.

At about the same time, the Rabbi, with the board's approval, participated in a successful federal lawsuit with other non-Jewish clergy brought to prohibit the placement of religious symbols on public property. Interestingly, the event that led to the controversy was the placing of a large Chanukah menorah in Burlington City Hall Park.

In 1983 a Czech Torah arrived at the Temple with little fanfare. This Torah, however, represents a most important tie to our Jewish ancestors and traditions. It may be the single most significant possession of the congregation. The Torah, from the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, is one of the few vestiges of the Jewish community of the Moravian town of Trest. Trest was a silver mining town with a Jewish presence from at least 1240. At the time the Torah arrived here Trest and South Burlington had about the same size

population. In the late 1930s there were still about 64 Jews and a Synagogue in Trest. During the Holocaust the Nazis destroyed that community, along with most of the members of the Jewish community of the former Czechoslovakian Republic who were brought to Theresienstadt and then Auschwitz. During World War II Hitler had a plan to create in Prague the Central Museum of the Defunct Jewish Race. As part of the plan, the Nazis seized Torahs and Jewish religious articles from the Synagogues in Czechoslovakia and brought them for storage to the beautiful Spanish Synagogue in Prague. These religious articles remained in storage in Prague until 1964. In fact, the Communists did turn the Spanish Synagogue into a museum, even though they let it fall into disrepair. A Jewish philanthropist paid to have 1564 of the stored Torahs brought to the Westminster Synagogue in Great Britain. Over the years those Torahs that were not damaged were placed with Synagogues throughout the world. The organization responsible for the Torahs even found placements for many of those that were too damaged for use in religious services. The Temple's Czech Torah is one of those. Recently, the Temple sisterhood commissioned the construction of a beautiful case to display and preserve the Torah. It now rests on the wall of the religious school lobby.<sup>2</sup> It is opened to the portion of the Torah containing the ten commandments. Temple Sinai now carries on the legacy of the destroyed Jewish community of Trest.

Temple Sinai's membership has now grown to approximately 240 families. The religious school has swelled to over 150 children. Nevertheless, in 2005 the Temple finds itself in a slow growth period. Although many new members join each year almost as many move away or cease membership, particularly when their children complete religious school. It does not appear that the Temple can depend on increased membership to resolve longstanding financial issues.

The congregation should be proud of its short history in which so much has been accomplished. Reform Judaism has taken deep root in northern Vermont despite the

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<sup>2</sup> See cover for photograph of Czech Torah display.

doubts of the experts. Since its creation the congregation has been willing to take financial risks to create a Temple providing facilities and programming for the community. Each year, however, many of the same financial problems arise. Somehow the Temple has always found a way to meet the congregation's needs. With the solid base established in its first 40 years, perhaps the time has come to plan for the long term financial and spiritual health of Temple Sinai.

## **APPENDIX**

Robert Rosenberg, Jr.

Arthur Greenblott

Carl K. Mack

Harry Rieders

Ellen J. Lipson

Jules J. Leopold

Gail P. Paymer

Judith B. Potts

Richard L. Lipson, M.D.

Daniel L. Potts

Paul Wasserman

Carol Wasserman

Virginia Greenblott

Suzanne S. Grief

Edwin Grief

Morton Kaufman