

TEMPLE SHIR TIKVA
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION
JUNE 1, 2015

In an effort to improve communications and to provide congregants with more information about governance at Temple Shir Tikva, the following is a summary of the Annual Meeting:

Attendance: Approximately 210 congregants were in attendance.

President Julie Kniznik called the meeting to order at 7:39pm. She acknowledged the level of passion and engagement by attendees and asked that everyone refer to the URJ Guidelines on Jewish values on discussion throughout the meeting.

Rabbi Gold's Remarks: Rabbi Neal Gold thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and publicly recognized the hundreds of people that had reached out to him and his wife, Heidi, offering their love and support. He highlighted accomplishments from the past decade, including meaningful experiences and sharing an authentic vision of Reform Judaism, and shared that people shared life's most powerful and emotionally involved moments with him. Rabbi Gold stated that it was a privilege to have had congregants' trust in vulnerable and in joyful moments, and he expressed appreciation for sharing the intimacy of studying and learning Torah together, visiting Israel, and engaging in social action. Rabbi discussed the challenges he faced in 2012, including the economic crisis, David Passer's diagnosis, the restructuring of the education team, Rabbi Litcofsky's departure, and Cantor Schachner's sabbatical, and addressed the emotional toll that these events took on him; his carrying the emotional weight was a privilege but was difficult. However, in preparing for his departure from TST, he looked back on the past ten years with pride. He reiterated what he shared with the Board of Trustees: that he was really leaving Shir Tikva, that he was disappointed to be doing so but respected the authority of the Board, and that he and Heidi were very much excited about future. He asked that his departure from Shir Tikva be taken off the agenda for the rest of the Annual Meeting and recused himself from discussions about plans for the future. Rabbi Gold ended his remarks with teaching of Torah and the *Mi Shebeirach*, the prayer for healing.

Julie Kniznik thanked Rabbi Gold for his heartfelt remarks and shared that there would be upcoming opportunities for the congregation to celebrate Rabbi Gold. She also offered words of congratulations to Rabbi Jen Gubitz, who was promoted to Associate Rabbi. She shared that the congregation was blessed with the presence of Cantor Hollis Schachner, who had recently signed a contract for an additional 3 years.

Rabbi Gubitz's Remarks: Rabbi Gubitz shared an Education Report, sharing highlights from the religious school, including an emphasis on project-based learning, the implementation of Hebrew Through Movement and Sababa Sundays, the use of G-dly Torah Play, the development of additional opportunities for family learning, and the implementation of extended day options. She shared that the CJP invested in the visioning, learning, and building of TST's educational experiences, and she also talked about the opportunity to engage in learning opportunities through experiences with Family Promise. She stated that the role of Director of Youth Engagement had an expanded capacity through which Rachael Pass was the lead teacher for Grade 6. Rabbi Gubitz shared that planning was underway for the coming years, and she expressed gratitude and excitement about lifelong learning opportunities at TST.

Executive Director's Report: Susan Altman expressed appreciation to the TST community as she approached her one-year anniversary in her position and stated that she felt that, in coming to her role at Shir Tikva, she had come home. She noted that she had worked hard to keep the space beautiful and comfortable. Susan shared that she was thrilled to be part of the transition of the Early Learning Center (ELC) from the JCC to TST, and she underscored the exceptional commitment of the ELC Transition Task Force. She stated that she was grateful for all of the volunteers at TST, including members of the Executive Council, the Board of Trustees, committee members, and she expressed excitement about continuing to meet and work with volunteers moving forward.

***Consent Agenda:* A motion to accept the minutes of the June 2, 2014 Annual Meeting as proposed was approved.**

Interfaith By-Law Amendment: Heather Meterparel and Mary Beth Rettger, Co-Chairs of the Interfaith Working Group, which was established following Chazon, shared that at least 23% of TST families consider themselves to be interfaith, and that that percentage was even larger when extended families were taken into account. They expressed the importance of meeting the needs of interfaith families and working collaboratively to ensure that activities at TST are welcoming and accessible. The congregation received a proposed by-law amendment in advance of the meeting; that amendment would establish a Standing Interfaith Families Committee with Board-level status. Julie Kniznik recognized how hard Mary Beth and Heather had been working on these efforts.

A motion to approve the By-Law Amendment to establish the “Interfaith Families Committee” as proposed to the congregation was approved unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report: Jeff Maimon reviewed the financial packet that had been provided to congregants. He noted that TST had approximately \$4.5 million in assets, 70% of which were fixed assets, such as buildings and furnishings, and that endowment funds represented another 19% of that amount; therefore, nearly 90% of TST’s assets were not available to pay operating costs. Jeff shared that TST held \$631k in restricted cash and encouraged congregants to call him or the temple office if they wanted more detail about the restricted funds. Jeff shared that there was a balance of \$220k in accounts receivable, and he noted a dramatic slowdown in member payments. He emphasized the importance of congregants paying dues and fees in a timely manner. Jeff stated that the current mortgage is approximately \$600k and that TST is current on its payments.

In reviewing the operating budget, Jeff noted the tight controls over expenditures and shared that TST had reduced spending by nearly \$300k annually since 2012. In the current year, through April of 2015, there was a \$35k deficit, largely caused by high utility costs, unexpectedly high snow removal costs, and necessary HVAC repairs. He expressed the need to collect receivables or to face a loss of up to \$100k.

Jeff reviewed the upcoming year’s budget and shared that approximately 77% of income would come from dues and school fees; with contributions included, that amount grew to 91% of income. Jeff stated that some of the additional income comes from rental fees and encouraged people looking for space to speak to him or to Susan Altman.

He recognized that there had been no appreciable increase in dues and fees in 7 years and that there had been a net decline in membership, as well as shifts in membership categories that impacted income coming in. He also noted a reduction in Annual Fund giving over the years.

Jeff highlighted that nearly 70% of TST’s expenses came in the form of staff compensation and benefits, and that that number climbed to more than 80% when maintenance was included. Discretionary spending was small, and there was an expectation that the Early Learning Center would break even. The Finance Committee also took into consideration the upcoming change in rabbinic leadership.

Jeff stressed the importance of fundraising and cultivating a culture of giving at TST. He noted that less than 15% of families give more than 90% of Annual Fund donations, and shared that more than half of TST’s members make no voluntary contributions. He acknowledged that there may be members who are not able to contribute financially and recognized those who give generously of their time or make other in-kind donations, but he underscored the need to raise more money in order to sustain the staff and programming offered by TST.

He shared that a capital needs assessment was in process and also discussed the need to address TST’s structural deficit. Jeff stated that a building improvement program, based on feedback received through the Chazon initiative, was underway. He shared that TST would like to continue to pay down its mortgage at an accelerated pace.

Jeff closed by stating that TST needed to address some of its systemic challenges – primarily to grow our membership and to create a culture of giving – in order to continue to be an inclusive, thriving Jewish community.

A motion to approve the dues and fees for 2015-2016 as proposed by the Finance Committee was approved.

A motion to approve the operating budget for July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016 as proposed by the Treasurer was approved unanimously.

Julie Kniznik thanked Jeff and the Finance Committee for their hard work.

Nominating Committee Report: Trudy Sonis, Co-Chair of Nominating Committee, presented the proposed slate of officers. She thanked the members of the committee, including her Co-Chair, Phil Benjamin, and thanked those congregants who were completing their terms, as well as those who were continuing in their positions.

A question was posed regarding whether input from the congregation had been solicited in developing the proposed slate, and the congregation was reminded that meetings of the Board of Trustees are open to all and that the minutes are published in Hineni each month. In addition, committees are open to all members, and congregants were encouraged to get involved in TST leadership. Additional transparency about upcoming meetings was encouraged by members of the congregation.

A motion to approve the slate of nominations for officers and trustees for 2015-2016 as proposed by the Nominating Committee was approved.

Old Business: No old business was introduced.

New Business: It was noted that the minutes from the meetings of the Board of Trustees did not make evident a concern about clergy and elevated transparency was encouraged.

President's Remarks: Julie Kniznik noted that the past year had been filled with exceptional highs and lows. She shared that there had been an emphasis on developing a culture of relational Judaism, which was evident in efforts to enhance community-building. She reviewed improvements made to physical space, the implementation of inspirational programming, and new practices (such as having greeters at Kabalat Shabbat) that would ensure that anyone entering TST would feel welcome. Julie highlighted the work of Family Promise and encouraged others to get involved. She noted that the greatest accomplishment over the past year was the work of transitioning the JCC Early Learning Center (which was housed at TST) to the Temple Shir Tikva Early Learning Center, which would be made official as of July 1. She remarked on the hard work of everyone involved in the effort. Julie thanked all temple staff and volunteers for their dedication. She also commented on next steps, sharing that the goal was to ensure that all congregants would celebrate the gifts that Rabbi Gold brought to the TST community and that she was working with experts from the URJ on next steps. She also stated that the aim was to listen to membership and to continue developing a vision for building an inclusive and adaptable synagogue. Julie thanked the members of the clergy for all they do for TST. She expressed appreciation for the members of the Executive Council for their hard work and for their dedication, ethical behavior, compassion, and commitment.

Transition Update: Jay Gainsboro, Co-Chair of the Transition Committee, shared that TST's rabbinic transition was emotionally challenging for many in the TST community, and he noted the level of engagement and caring in the temple's membership. He stated that he looked forward to seeing what positivity could come out of our members working together on next steps. Jay reviewed steps that had already been taken, such as one-on-one meetings with congregants and clergy, conversations with the URJ, and the development of a preliminary transition plan. He expected four subgroups to be developed which would focus on the following: (1) a congregational healing initiative, (2) the Rabbi search process, (3) a plan for ongoing staffing, and (4) honoring and celebrating Rabbi Gold. He emphasized the importance of congregational input and involvement, stated that information about next steps would be communicated in various ways, and encouraged everyone to get involved (and had sign up sheets available at the meeting). Jay closed by sharing that he was looking forward to what the future held for TST.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:09pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Glynn
Recording Secretary