

A Message from Our President ►



Herb Baer, President

The Special Congregational Meeting held on January 6

Thank you to everyone who made attended last month's congregational meeting. Despite the light snow in the morning, and the cold temperatures in the evening, we had an excellent turnout of congregants who gathered to consider and discuss changing the system by which we financially support our synagogue. With the goal of encouraging generosity and eliminating any barriers for membership, we voted overwhelmingly to adopt a new policy of giving at Temple Beth Abraham and move from a system of assessed dues according to various membership categories for congregants to a system where members make voluntary contributions to support our operations. There will be guidance for voluntary contributions based upon a "Sustaining Amount" determined by our Finance Committee.

No family will be required to give more than they are currently giving in our new system. Every family will be asked to be as generous as they can to support TBA.

As Allison Fine succinctly put it, we are now "Jews without dues," however, we are not Jews without financial needs. In the coming weeks, hopefully before the end of February, current members will receive a Pledge letter with material including:

1. information about the Temple's operational expenses,
2. the Sustainable Contribution amount recommended by the Finance Committee, and
3. the amount they contributed this year in dues (both assessed dues and voluntary Mitzvah Circle dues).

Every family will be asked to make a Pledge to support Temple operations for the 2015-2016 fiscal year which begins in July. The first donation towards the pledge will be due in July just as in our current system.

This is an important milestone for Temple Beth Abraham. As Rabbi Holtz pointed out at the meeting, the financial model sustaining synagogues has always changed after a few generations - selling aliyahs, selling pews, assessing dues - each has had their moment of addressing problems with the prior system. 2015 is the year for Temple Beth Abraham to make the change and to be at the vanguard as synagogues nationwide are reassessing the long-term viability of the dues model. We want to make the change while our balance sheet is strong and while our membership base is stable as it has been in the last couple of years, and not out of fear or diminishment. We anticipate a great advantage to being the first synagogue to have the courage of our convictions to rely on the generosity of our members outside of a dues system in Westchester County.

I do not expect that the change will be without its challenges, but I do believe that we have collectively taken the right action to ensure that Temple Beth Abraham will be a thriving center of liberal Judaism in the Rivertowns and the surrounding areas for generations to come.

Regards,

Herb Baer, President