

A LADDER TO THE SKY

THE 2026 EMANUEL SYNAGOGUE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Board of Trustees established a Strategic Planning Committee to develop a strategy for Emanuel's growth and success in the next five years. The committee studied our membership's views on synagogue membership, assessed the reasons that people join our synagogue, the reasons they leave and why others opt not to affiliate in the first place. The Committee conducted an online survey and Community Conversations to gauge our members' passions and interests in synagogue life and the role the Emanuel plays in their lives. With over 200 responses to the survey and two dozen in-depth conversations, we learned that we have many highly engaged members who value the guidance and leadership of our Clergy and Director of Youth and Family Learning, and that our adult education programs are well received.

We also learned that the cost of membership is a major consideration for those who leave or opt not to join in the first place.

The Emanuel Synagogue can be proud of its reputation for meaningful and quality religious study, spiritual support, education, ritual observance, social action, and programming developed over its hundred-year history.

Our members want diversity and inclusivity, social programming, warm welcoming of new members, and assistance with the costs of membership and other fees.

The below plan is presented to the Board of Trustees for adoption. It represents the considered assessment and input of the Strategic Planning Committee. We believe that the Synagogue has a highly qualified group of clergy, educators, and professional staff as well as a robust lay leadership. Properly organized and supported, this group can create an Emanuel Synagogue that will attract new members seeking social connections, entertainment, spirituality, ritual observance and lifelong learning, while continuing to provide the same to our existing membership.

VISION

The Emanuel Synagogue is a pathway to create a spiritual journey, nourish social connections and explore learning opportunities for all ages and stages.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Our community members have many opportunities to invest their time and resources.

Many current and former members see the synagogue as a place to educate their children so that they can become a bar or bat mitzvah but do not view the synagogue as a broader option for life-long social connections, spirituality, or learning.

The demographic studies across the Jewish community both locally and beyond indicate that affiliation with synagogues is no longer a priority in many Jewish households.

The cost of synagogue membership is perceived as high, particularly by those who do not immerse themselves in the life of the congregation.

There are a growing number of interfaith, nontraditional and special needs families amongst our members and in the broader community who seek Jewish journeys.

GOALS

A. Provide new members with incentives to join the Emanuel Synagogue

Strategy No. 1: Create a Membership and Marketing Committee.

Strategy No. 2: Develop and Implement a Marketing Plan.

Strategy No. 3: Clergy and Volunteers Engaging with Members and Beyond.

Strategy No. 4: Develop and market a new members discounted dues program.

Strategy No. 5: Create transparency in the membership

Intended Outcomes:

If the Emanuel Synagogue is successful, it will:

- Clearly communicate its welcome and warm spirit;
- Provide an easy and understandable path to membership
- Engage all of its members
- Clearly communicate the benefits and costs of membership
- Retain and grow membership
- Be The Fun Place in West Hartford for Conservative Jews, their friends and families.

B. Empower and engage all members of the Emanuel Community

Strategy No. 1: Create a Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Strategy No. 2: Develop and adopt governance policies that value members.

Strategy No. 3: Develop a resource center non-traditional and special needs families

Strategy No. 4: Develop a Quality Pre School Program to aid our Parents

Intended Outcomes:

If the Emanuel Synagogue is successful, it will:

- Be known for its diverse and inclusive membership
- Embrace all who seek to practice and affiliate with Conservative Judaism
- Provide support and resources for those in need

C. Engage parents and children in life long Jewish journeys

Strategy No 1: Engage Parents in programming, social connections and adult educational opportunities while their children are of religious school age.

Strategy No. 2: Develop a Parent Teacher's Organization to spur volunteerism and provide a means of communication between this cohort and the synagogue's lay leadership, staff and clergy.

Strategy No. 3: Make the family journey toward Bar and Bat Mitzvah a bridge to continued involvement beyond the big day.

Intended outcomes:

If the Emanuel Synagogue is successful, it will:

- Retain a higher percentage of families after their children have become bar/bat mitzvah;
- Engage more of its religious school parents in volunteerism and leadership
- Create spiritual and social connections for more of its members and prospective members.
- Create Meaningful opportunities for adults to learn through synagogue-wide programming

ULTIMATE STRATEGIC GOAL

The Emanuel Synagogue will be known as the gateway synagogue for unaffiliated and non-traditional Jews, as well as their spouses, partners and families, seeking social and spiritual connections, the fun synagogue, the place to be no matter how you arrived. The Emanuel will be known for its leadership in spirituality, entertainment, education for all ages, the arts, and for its' amazing clergy and professional staff. The Emanuel Synagogue of 2026 will be a ladder connecting its members to each other, to the almighty and to the rich traditions of Jewish life.