



Membership Pledge Model
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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- 1) Why did we look into alternative dues models? We are looking to increase membership, engagement and revenue. Our current annual dues can present a significant barrier for joining our community, particularly for young families. Although no one is ever denied membership based on an inability to pay full dues, conversations concerning personal finances are unpleasant and off-putting.
- 2) How does the Membership Pledge Model (MPM) work? Each membership unit will make an annual pledge to be a member for the upcoming fiscal year. We will encourage members to pledge the sustaining amount or more, which is the annual donation each membership unit needs to contribute to achieve a balanced budget. For fiscal year 2025-26, the sustaining amount is \$2,910. If a member is not able to pledge the sustaining amount, we encourage thoughtful and generous giving (see FAQ #13). Regardless of the amount, your contribution will be appreciated and received with gratitude.
- 3) What are the advantages of the MPM? By removing mandatory dues levels, we hope the MPM will attract new members and retain existing members. This model eliminates the process for petitioning for a dues reduction and it aligns our membership model with our sacred values of being a warm, welcoming community.
- 4) Has this been tried elsewhere? In the last decade, many conservative, reform and independent congregations in the United States have adopted this model. Many of them report increased engagement among current members and gains in new members. In fact, our Executive Director was president of her synagogue when a similar model was successfully implemented.
- 5) How would pledges be fulfilled? Each year in the spring, a pledge form will be sent to all members, indicating the sustaining amount, the amounts that will receive recognition (see FAQ #12), and a choice of payment options. In addition, there will be a checkbox to acknowledge that the members will promise to fulfill their pledge and pay an additional security fee in the amount of \$300. A building fund fee will no longer be assessed.
- 6) What if pledge cards aren't returned? Members will be billed at the same rate as the prior year (subject to FAQ #13). Members can pledge a different amount at a later date should they choose to do so. We ask that members submit their pledge forms by June 15th.
- 7) Won't everyone pledge less than they are paying now if pledge amounts are discretionary? In congregations that adopted a pledge model, some members paid less, some paid more, and some stayed the same. We hope current members will contribute either the same amount as under the current model or an increased amount. To date, the MPM Committee has already received commitments from ten current members and counting to increase their pledges to at least \$5,000.
- 8) Will membership pledges provide all our operating revenue? Unfortunately, no. The membership pledge amount would substitute for our current dues structure. We will still ask for High Holy day pledges, gift card

purchases, general fundraisers and other fundraisers. We will also still bill for Religious School and Bar/Bat Mitzvah fees.

- 9) What about the Gift Card Program? The Gift Card Program will become voluntary but is highly encouraged. There will be no assessments if you do not purchase gift cards.
- 10) Will there still be a security fee? Yes, we will still need to charge a security fee. This amount will be billed in addition to the membership pledge (see FAQ #5).
- 11) Will there be privileges for different levels of giving? No. All families who make and fulfill their pledges will enjoy all privileges of membership, including High Holy Day tickets, rabbinical services, voting, and serving on committees and the Board of Trustees.
- 12) Will there be recognition at certain pledge levels? Yes. While all pledges will be appreciated, special recognition will be given for those who pledge \$3,600 or more (Builders) and \$5,000 or more (Pillars).
- 13) Should every member pledge some amount? Yes, a pledge will be required for membership. A member who would like to pledge less than \$1,000 will have a conversation with our Executive Director, Jackie Baranoff.
- 14) How many people in my family will be members? Each membership unit will consist of up to 2 primary adult members. The primary members will receive High Holy Day (HHD) tickets and have the privileges of voting and serving on a committee and/or the Board of Trustees.
- 15) Can I purchase High Holy Day (HHD) tickets? The policy for High Holiday Tickets is under advisement and to be determined at a later date.
- 16) What if members can't fulfill their pledge? We recognize there may be unforeseen circumstances in which members are not able to fulfill the entirety of their pledge. The procedure for this situation remains the same. The member will contact our Executive Director, Jackie Baranoff, to discuss the situation. However, we anticipate a lower rate of unfulfilled pledges, since members will be choosing their pledge amount.
- 17) What would happen to dues in arrears? We acknowledge that not all members are current with their dues. We will contact you to obtain payments for obligations under the current structure prior to securing your pledge.
- 18) What won't be changing? Women's League and Men's Club will maintain their independent membership by-laws.
- 19) What might be the downsides? Although research indicates this is not likely to happen, if a significant number of our members pledge less than their current dues, then our finances would be negatively impacted. Additionally, successful adoption of the MPM necessitates community engagement, which represents a cultural shift for our temple. There will be individual conversations between lay leadership and members about the meaning and value of membership, the costs to sustain our community, and the need for generous giving. Members may have different comfort levels with these kinds of conversations. But we see community engagement as an "upside," rather than a "downside." We look forward to connecting with you!
- 20) What if I have additional questions, concerns, or feedback? Please contact us:

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