

Fanny Mann

MERGER PROGRESS REPORT  
APRIL 25, 1995

TO: Zolen Lazer, President  
Congregation Tree of Life  
and Board of Directors

From: Wolford Swimmer  
Chairman, Merger Committee

see the persons  
May 3, 8:00 PM

Last July (1994) Temple Israel and Tree of Life initiated discussions to determine whether a merger was feasible and could be accomplished. Since that time approximately seven meetings between representatives of both organizations have taken place. While other members have participated from time to time, the final working committees have been: Leonard Freeman, Dave Goodman and Scott Pollack, Chairman for Temple Israel; Wolford Swimmer, Chairman, Sarah Goodstein and Harold Cohen for Congregation Tree of Life.

These overall principles of a merger were established to guide the work of the committee:

1. All members of the greater Jewish Community would be best served by belonging to one congregation.
2. This congregation should serve the religious needs of all the Jewish people in the area, in one facility and with one spiritual leader.
3. Timeliness is important and merger of the Congregation Tree of Life and Temple Israel should be targeted to occur by July 1, 1995.
4. Strong leadership and unswerving commitment will be necessary to accomplish the merger. Compromises of procedure, but not spiritual ideals may be required. The process should be considered an opportunity, not a crisis and the goal should be one stronger United Jewish Community.

The committee dissected all the various functions and activities of both organizations to discuss and then propose the vision of the new congregation. Listed below are summaries of these discussions and proposed conclusions. Many topics will require more discussion, however it is the committee's conclusion that these discussions should take place after a merger in principle has been accomplished since many policies should be the product of joint working committees.

Problems: Declining memberships, Temple attitudes, bond faults.  
Person vs. abstract, Change to Equal board representation now fair.  
Recommendation: Consolidation  
Merge or absorb, Change to Consolidation  
Recommendation: Merge or absorb and board merge-up.



Name The new congregation should be called Tree of Life/Temple Israel Congregation.

Governance An interim Board of Directors consisting of 12 members, equally represented from the Temple and the Shul, should include each president, treasurer and four additional members from each organization to serve for one year: after which a new Board shall be elected to serve staggered terms. This interim Board will elect its own chairman and secretary. Both treasurers shall serve jointly.

By-laws A By-laws committee shall work together to incorporate both congregations' by-laws.

Rabbi A joint Rabbi search committee to obtain a Rabbi who would serve the combined organization, understanding the sensitivities of the backgrounds of the membership.

Building Temple Israel's building should be sold as quickly as possible: price is not the main factor. Any assets realized from the sale would go into the merged treasury - any liabilities before the sale would be the responsibility of the merged organization. Any special building needs of the new congregation need to be resolved. *Ofc major talk, many immediate solution needed.*

Dues, Budget, Fund raising Both treasuries should be merged: a new dues structure established based on historical fiscal practice. Budget for new congregation established by both treasurers.

Memorials All memorials from Temple Israel to be relocated to Tree of Life.

Membership Committee for retention of all current membership - outreach to non-affiliated Jews in county area.

Rituals A joint ritual committee to work out services, combining traditional with liberal - new Rabbi to be involved. Services should be evolved to "combine" rather than "separate." New prayer book may be considered. Holidays and Festivals to be observed on traditional calendar, but should encourage changes to make attractive to combined membership. Yarmulkes and Tallies to be worn in sanctuary.

Affiliation There will be no affiliation with any national religious body to start with. Future will determine new congregation's wishes.

Cemetery Two separate organizations will continue to operate cemeteries and burial societies - no combining of properties or administration.

Sisterhoods Sisterhoods should become one merged organization - Kosher kitchen to be maintained.

Torahs, other religious paraphernalia Excess should be gifted to new or needy congregations

*How many Temple members will come out? No number.*

*Count response for new year!*



School/education Currently handled by tutoring - future to evolve with new Rabbi and need of community.

The combined merger committees feel that a merger is feasible, desirable and there is sufficient common ground for a merger to be effected, even though there are many items to work out. However, these should be accomplished by joint working committees after a vote to merge or not to merge is taken. There will never be unanimity on all issues (as there is not now in each separate congregation) but if a decision is made to go forward we believe a good faith effort can make a successful merger.

The merger committees should be dissolved and the administration (President and Board of Directors) should take the next steps either to proceed and accomplish the merger, or discontinue discussions if there is not sufficient determination to successfully merge.