

Our Shofar

News from Our Temple Emanu-El Leadership
Birmingham, Alabama

Summer 2009

Temple Finances Remain on Solid Footing Despite Challenging Economic Environment

When we launched the Shofar Initiative three years ago to ensure financial stability for our congregation, we had no idea that today we would be facing these challenging economic times.

Now, we are enduring a prolonged recession. Many people have seen their investments decline to a less comfortable level. Religious institutions all over the country are struggling. Many are forced to cut back on their staff, programs, and services to their congregants. Yet, because of the generosity of our congregants and the foresight of our leadership, we should be able to hold our own next year. Despite the economic decline, at our Annual Congregational Meeting earlier this month we presented a balanced budget of \$1.7 million for 2009-2010. We were able to do so by:

- maintaining the compensation levels of all clergy and staff members;
- eliminating non-essential expenses;
- carefully reviewing and negotiating all of our vendor contracts including audit fees, health insurance, and property & casualty insurance; and
- reducing somewhat the amount set aside for capital improvements.


These savings -- combined with the multi-year Shofar Initiative gifts -- have provided us with the necessary funding to get us through these perilous times without having to raise our Temple dues, dismiss our staff or radically alter our services.


Should you have any questions or wish to review a copy of the 2009-2010 budget, please don't hesitate to contact Alan Pearlman, our Executive Director. In the meantime, we hope and expect that in the next year or two, our economy and our personal finances will be stronger, and we will have

a clearer view for the future. Already our Grafman Endowment Fund leadership has begun efforts to develop a good strategic plan for the years on the immediate horizon. And as we do so, we take a moment to look inward -- and ask about you.

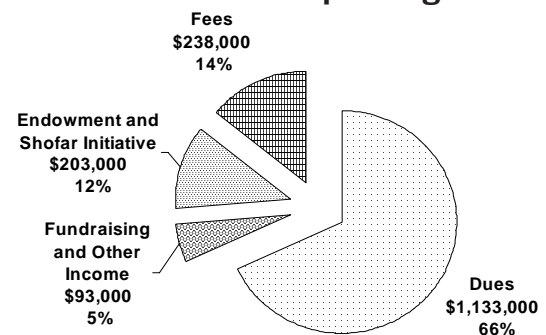
How are you faring during these difficult times? Is there any way that the Temple can be of service to you spiritually, or even in terms of the nuts and bolts of your life? We hope that you will call on your Temple family if you need some help or guidance.


Rabbi Jonathan Miller


Lynne Cohen, President
Temple Emanu-El


Joel Rotenstreich, President
Rabbi Grafman Endowment Fund

2009-10 Sources of Operating Income





Record Number of Scholarships Awarded

We are pleased to announce that in February the joint scholarship committee comprised of members from the Temple, the Sisterhood and the Endowment Fund met and awarded nearly \$38,000 in scholarships to 34 of our Temple youth, including:

- 29 children attending a Jewish summer camp -- over \$13,000 of financial assistance was provided to nine (9) of these families to make a camp experience possible, and
- Four (4) young adults attending programs in Israel.

Special thanks to **Hal & Judy Abrams, Betty Goldstein** and **Neil & Kim Roth** for establishing incentive funding for our youngsters to attend Jacobs Camp in Utica, Mississippi. And also to our *Temple Sisterhood, Brotherhood* and the *Ms. Lois Scholarship Fund*, as well as the following Grafman Endowment Funds for their scholarship funding: *Figtree Scholarship Fund, Lewy Memorial Scholarship Fund, Diana & Sidney Patterson Scholarship Fund*, and *I.E. Simon Memorial Scholarship Fund*.

Lastly, mazel tov to **Cassidy Anderson**, daughter of Julie & Steve Anderson for being selected by her classmates and teachers to receive the *Lester Seigel Scholarship Award* for exemplifying a commitment to Jewish learning and living. In honor of her award, Cassidy is receiving a full scholarship to attend Jacobs Camp this summer.

MEMBERSHIP IS FAMILY

Much has been discussed about synagogue membership this year. This is not just a Temple Emanu-El issue — it is a hot topic throughout the Reform Movement. We want a temple to be available to us when we want it and when we need it. However, are we doing all we can to insure that it is there for us?

Temple Emanu-El's membership has been relatively stable over the years — 700 families, give or take a few. While we gain approximately 40-50 new members each year, we actually lose about that many each year, as well, due to deaths, moves out of town and resignations. We are fortunate, however, as many congregations are experiencing serious declines in their memberships causing forced reductions in staff and services.

So, just how do we approach this “hot topic”? Recognize that Temple Emanu-El is like being a part of a large, extended family. It means that in order to grow our family, we must invite the unaffiliated and welcome all new members into our home as we all would like to be welcomed. In a community such as ours, it is of utmost importance that our Temple continues as the warm, caring community.

Membership is family. Membership is financial security. Membership is our Temple's future.

If you would like to volunteer to assist with our membership efforts, or should you know of a family or individual interested in joining our Temple family, please contact Alan Pearlman, Executive Director at 933-8037, ext. 238.

New Temple Emanu-El Prayer Book To Debut This Fall

We are excited to report that our new 125th Anniversary prayer book is currently being published. It should arrive and be ready to use at the end of October, 2009. The prayer book's inspirational worship services were created by our clergy team of **Rabbi Jonathan Miller, Cantor Jessica Roskin** and **Rabbi Scott Hausman-Weiss** especially for our congregation. They took special care to design a prayer book that would be easy-to-read and follow along, as well as to include several of the older, familiar prayers that our members mentioned during our Project Shofar surveys that they would enjoy using once again.

Following is an excerpt from the introduction which provides a flavor of what is in store:

*“What should we call this prayer book, this siddur, which celebrates the more than 125 years of Temple Emanu-El? We named our siddur **T’rumot HaLev, Offerings of the Heart**. Every encounter with the Divine, every prayer uttered aloud, whispered silently, or sung with beauty and enthusiasm is an expression of the heart’s offering. The t’rumot, in the book of Exodus, were the gifts the Israelites would bring to build their mishkan, their sanctuary to God. Ever since, our prayers have created a sanctuary for the Jewish soul and a place for God to dwell among us...*

We are grateful to those many generations of Jews who have come before us here at Temple Emanu-El or wherever they might have worshipped, who have offered the Holy One their hearts and their souls and have built the spiritual sanctuaries which have sustained our ancestors in their days, and which sustain us in ours, today.”



The new hard-cover prayer book, T’rumot HaLev, features breathtaking original artwork created by our own artist-in-residence, Amy Begun Saab.

Our special thanks to **Robin Berger**, who has led the clergy and volunteer team of **Lynne Cohen, Mackie Horowitz, Amy Begun Saab** and **Maggie Begun** in creating the prayer book. We also wish to thank the following members who graciously agreed to proof read *Trumot Ha’Lev* before it went to print: **Hal Abroms, Larry & Liz Bleiberg, Charles Bloom, Ellen Erdreich, Jimmie Hess** and **Jon Solomon**.

Lastly, we are so grateful to **Charles & Patsy Collat** for underwriting what will be an exquisite and easy-to-use prayer book for our congregation for many years to come. Please keep watch for further announcements about the its arrival!



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Temple Fundraisers a Huge Success...*In More Ways Than One!*

Fundraising events continue to provide a necessary revenue stream for balancing our Temple's budget. During the Project Shofar process, our consultants recommended that we could add an additional \$50,000 to our income through a variety of fundraising efforts. We are proud to have come close to this goal – especially in this challenging economy — adding over \$45,000 to our budget last year. Obviously the raising of money is very important, but the friendship and joining together of our congregants for the benefit of Temple Emanu-El was a huge added benefit.

TEMPLE TABLES was one of the events we identified to help us in achieving this goal. This was the 3rd year of offering a selection of dining experiences at different venues. In all, we involved over 300 congregants. **Candy Meyerson** and **Gail Bayer**, our Temple Tables co-chairwomen this past year, initiated the new template for this event. Having different priced evenings targeted to attract different segments of our Temple family proved to be quite successful. This insured a “something for everyone” type of event.

Another successful fundraiser was our **FOOD FAIR**, co-chaired by **Marilyn Tanner** and **Sherron Goldstein**. Opening our doors to the entire Birmingham

community has been a highlight of our year. We are pleased to report serving approximately 1,200 people throughout the day. The buzz actually began several months in advance with the smells of our traditional recipes and the voices of our volunteers echoing throughout our facility. Over 200 of our congregants of all ages gave their time and expertise to make our second annual Food Fair a success – resulting in increased profits over our inaugural year.

Be on the lookout for information forthcoming about next year's fundraisers: Temple Tables will take a break in 2009, but will be back in full force in 2010. In its place, we've added a **BINGO NIGHT** for all ages. Scheduled for early fall, it will be complete with lots of prizes and, of course, excellent food. And, our 3rd Annual Food Fair, scheduled for next Spring promises to be the best ever!

SAVE THESE DATES:

Bingo Night: October 10, 2009
Food Fair: March 7-8, 2010