

Congregation B'nai Amoona
Strategic Plan 2010-2015
Approved by the Board of Trustees
April 12, 2010

Mission

Congregation B'nai Amoona inspires Jews to connect with their Judaism.

Vision

B'nai Amoona must continue to connect Jews with Judaism. Just as time cannot stand still, neither can we. We must enhance and enrich what already exists by creating a vibrant and progressive Conservative Jewish atmosphere that focuses on prayer, spirituality, learning, inspiration, inclusion, celebration, warmth, friendliness, comfort, Israel, support and relevance.

The best way to articulate our vision for the Synagogue is show what the Synagogue will look like in the next 5-6 years. Below are key examples:

1. Our congregants feel more connected to Judaism.
2. We provide more spiritually rewarding and meaningful religious services through offering congregants more choices to pray.
3. Our financial situation is stabilized through predictable and growing revenue and through operational efficiencies.
4. Pardes becomes an integral part of all Synagogue Life—education becomes a bigger, deeper, more intensified commitment to lifelong education.
5. More programs and services are coordinated by trained Synagogue volunteers.
6. Congregants take more initiative in reaching out to other congregants whom they do not know, in order to create a warmer, more welcoming and inclusive congregation culture.
7. Congregants feel more integrated and part of the BA Community.
8. There are clearly defined roles for both lay and professional leaders, thereby promoting more effective communication between them in order to meet the needs of congregants.
9. Changes are made to improve the design and use of Synagogue space.
10. There is more effective two-way communication between lay and professional leadership and congregants to keep in touch with changing needs.

11. Fewer congregants leave the Synagogue and more adult children of congregants join B'nai Amoona.
12. There is more visible partnering with other St. Louis religious institutions and Jewish organizations.
13. There is continuous evaluation, critical review and questioning of current practices in order to ensure efficient and effective resource allocation.
14. Benchmark ourselves against other Synagogues [and ourselves] to become a Synagogue of Excellence.

Congregation B'nai Amoona Strategic Planning Committee Strategic Objectives

1. Create sacred experiences to better engage our congregants

Across North American Conservative Jewry, the rapidly changing values of newer generations are significantly altering the landscape of why people join and stay connected to Synagogues. Congregant alienation from the core of Synagogue functioning is happening because many of the established ways in which we have connected with congregants in the past no longer work and are no longer valued. How sacred experiences happen (within the confines of our Halachah) need to change to meet the diverse congregational needs. To achieve this goal, the Synagogue will need to do the following:

1. Create more meaningful Shabbat services for ALL congregants
 - a. Create and support multi-worship communities. For example:
 - i. Allow and encourage flexible use of Klei Kodesh presence so they can be in Family, Jr. Cong and alternative services on a regular basis, to upgrade the quality of those experiences.
 - ii. Develop Teen services within the Pardes/USY framework
2. Expand the scope of Friday night services, including using lay people
3. Experiment with new models of worship to produce more engaging and spiritually rewarding services
 - a. Appropriate and creative use of technology within and beyond the real-time service (e.g., streaming the service through our branded website and use of electronic books to update and supplement hard copies)
 - b. Give the Bnai Mitzvah participants a more Sacred experience
 - c. Triennial Torah reading

- d. Services driven primarily through music (vocal and instrumental)
 - e. Include ongoing spiritual/worship education from the daily minyan to the Shabbat AM service, especially re the structure, meaning, and relevance of prayer
 - f. Alternative Musaf services
 - i. Meditation
 - ii. Study
 - iii. Musical instrumentation
 - g. Revamp the 2nd day of Festival holidays (Passover, Sukkot, Shavuot)
4. Experiment with new venues to bring the Synagogue closer to its congregants. For example:
 - a. Parks, neighborhoods
 - b. Expand use of the pavilion for services
 - c. Create new spaces within the synagogue to meet the needs of more intimate worship
 5. Develop a food service policy that enables the Synagogue to be more inclusive
 - a. Review and possibly revise the synagogue's Kashrut rules
 - b. Encourage congregants to prepare food in Shul
 - c. Bring in Kosher food from home for consumption at Synagogue events
 - d. Create opportunities for "Kitchen Table Judaism"
 6. Publically recognize intermarried and engaged couples
 7. Analyze alternative designs for worship spaces
 8. Continue to reinforce the spiritual connection between us and the State of Israel

2. Create a more fiscally secure Synagogue

The Synagogue needs to create a long term strategy to keep itself financially viable. The focus needs to be on revenue generation from a broader group of people. Given the realities of the short term economic environment and the long term trend of diversified giving, the Synagogue can no longer rely on a few generous donors to meet our future financial needs. To a large degree this strategy is based on the assumption that more engaged congregants will be more generous with their donations. To achieve this goal, the Synagogue will need to do the following:

1. Klei Kodesh need to communicate and emphasize the link between financial commitment to BA and the Mitzvah of doing holy work
 - a. More messages about this from the Bimah and in Klei Kodesh newsletter columns
2. Revamp fundraising and donor communications

- a. Educate the congregation on the percent of operating budget that is based on fundraising compared with like Synagogues across the country
 - b. Educate congregants about donation/giving customs
 - c. Regular and meaningful information to congregants about the Synagogue's financial status, i.e. be forthcoming and honest about financial situation
3. Create alternative sources of income
 - a. Open building for use by non congregant groups for purposes other than traditionally used
 - b. Explore alternative use of the land
 - i. Rent/sale
 - c. Offer "programs for profit"—not necessarily religious or Jewish content
 - i. Rent space to outside groups
 - ii. Create a marketing plan for space utilization
 - d. Explore entering the kosher catering business
 4. Develop an annual coordinated fundraising plan
 - a. Find better ways to fundraise. For example,
 - i. Use professional event fundraisers
 - ii. Hire a Director of Fundraising/Volunteers.
 5. Critically look to what can be done by volunteers instead of hiring staff
 - a. Use Havurot to lead Synagogue projects
 6. Critically review noncore operations and programs and eliminate if not providing congregation value and/or is duplicated in the community
 7. Evaluate if ECC and Camps can be sources of greater revenue contribution
 - a. What would be the Return on Investment if we were to invest more financial resources in them?
 8. Revamp the budgeting process by creating a formal yearly planning and evaluation process that is used by the budget committee in making decisions
 9. Partner with Reform and Conservative Synagogues to reduce costs and/or generate new revenue
 10. Institute a formal donor recognition program.

3. Establish a new way of running the Synagogue

The Synagogue's current operating model is one that has relied on the professional transaction service delivery model. That is, we hire staff to do most everything for us. From a financial standpoint this model cannot be maintained. While volunteers have been a large part of the Synagogue, we need for them to take on new and expanded roles. To achieve this goal, the Synagogue will need to do the following:

1. Significantly increase the use of volunteers to support and lead Synagogue activities

- a. Reduce the overreliance on professional staff to service all congregants
2. Create the expectation that congregants on reduced dues are encouraged to provide in-kind service to the Synagogue
3. Restructure Synagogue committees and governance model
 - a. Fewer standing committees that report to Board, each reflecting mission-relevant congregational needs
 - b. Create more temporary, ad-hoc committees
 - c. All committees must have a charter that is aligned with the Synagogue's strategy, goals, objectives and professional staff organization structure
 - d. Professional staff programs, communications and agendas are aligned with Synagogue needs rather than their own personal preferences
 - e. Revise bylaws to reflect new governance model
4. Build and maintain a strong volunteer team through the use of a Volunteer Coordinator
5. Create and maintain a data base of congregant skills, experience and interests that can be tapped to support Synagogue activities
6. Improve cooperation between lay leaders and professional staff
7. Break down barriers between synagogue departments

4. Create a warmer, more welcoming and inclusive congregant culture

At the core of B'nai Amoona is the value that we are community. Our analysis has shown that we need to significantly improve how we reach our marginally involved congregants. Moreover, we need to make a better first impression on those first encountering us. To achieve this goal, the Synagogue will need to do the following:

1. Change the behavior of Synagogue congregants to be more welcoming, engaging, and socially inclusive of others
 - a. Create a standard of acceptable behavior that it is the job of everyone to be warm and welcoming to anyone in the Synagogue
 - b. All Synagogue leadership (Staff, Board and Committee Members) need to role model this in very visible ways so that the congregation starts to change
 - c. Create opportunities during services for members to introduce themselves to others they do not already know
2. Endeavor to make congregants more knowledgeable about the Synagogue operations and of opportunities to bring their ideas which will lead them to volunteer for the good of the congregation
3. Create member "in-reach" programs
 - a. e.g., Invite members home for Shabbat dinner

4. Use technology and social networking to engage congregants in new ways of interacting and communicating with each other and learning about what is going on at the Synagogue, but do not lose site of the effectiveness of personal communications
5. Create an internal Communications Director position through realignment of staff assignments or fund a new position, possibly combining with Volunteer Coordinator position or creating an internship position
6. Purchase interior and exterior signage to make the building more user-friendly, warmer, and welcoming--especially as experienced by someone newly approaching B'nai Amoona.
7. Create physical areas designed to facilitate social interaction among congregants
8. Create a more welcoming physical environment
9. Have staff wear name tags to make it easier for visitors to identify professionals and lay leaders
10. Reconfigure parking, putting congregant needs above those of professionals

5. Establish a more deliberate and conscious development process for our Synagogue leadership

Synagogue leadership (professional and lay) is a key to our future. As the environment in which we operate becomes more complex and uncertain, we need a strong and talented group of people to lead us. To achieve this goal, the Synagogue will need to do the following:

1. Develop and implement a structured Board Member orientation and development process
 - a. Hold annual Board orientation for new members
 - b. Train Board and Committees on how to function more effectively
 - c. Each Board meeting is to include an educational/developmental agenda item (in addition to D'var Torah) designed to cultivate a more professional Board. (Where members become more knowledgeable about Synagogue operations, trends, best practices, etc.)
 - d. Klei Kodesh will provide opportunities to deepen their spiritual and religious devotion to help connect what they are doing to the Traditions of Judaism
2. Create pathways for congregants to effectively progress through committees, Committee chairs, Board and executive committee positions
3. Create a structured succession plan in the bylaws, which progressively moves officers through various positions before assuming the presidency
4. Build Synagogue leadership within the Benefactors group to reinforce the link between giving and leadership
5. Create a process to identify congregants with the potential to become Synagogue leaders
6. Have professional staff participate in the leadership development process

6. Commit to a vision of an educated congregation, with Pardes (the Meyer Kranzberg Center for Jewish Living and Learning) as its core unifying Synagogue center of excellence

The Pardes model, while still in its infancy, is at the forefront of integrating education into Synagogue life. No longer will education be limited to pre B'nai Mitzvah schooling and adult education, but it will be a pervasive force bringing congregants, of all ages, closer to Judaism throughout their lifetime. To continue to strengthen this Synagogue asset we need to:

1. Continue to develop and support Pardes as a model for integrated transformative congregational education and inculcation, while collaborating closely with existing educational teams (e.g., Early Childhood Center, Religious School, Adult Education and Camps), both professional and lay.
2. Recognize and market that Pardes supports, and is part of the solution for, most all of the strategic imperatives in the plan.
3. Help Pardes facilitate the growth, development and empowerment of the entire congregation
4. Create educational programs to bring in disengaged congregants

7. Improve congregant retention and recruitment as it is critical for our survival

The demographic trends are such maintaining our current membership level over the next 5-6 years is a reasonable expectation. It is not inconceivable that stresses at other Synagogues could drive new members to consider joining B'nai Amoona. The sense, however, is that without more specific focus, our membership will likely decrease due to natural attrition. To maintain or grow, the Synagogue will need to do the following:

1. Meet the varied needs of underserved congregational groups, such as:
 - a. Empty nesters
 - b. Childless couples
 - c. Seniors
 - d. Young couples/singles
 - e. Single parents
 - f. Alternative families
2. Develop and implement a new member assimilation/ orientation process

- a. Implement a formal orientation program
- b. Link new members to existing Havurot, or help form new Havurot
- c. Educate new members on how to navigate the Synagogue
 - i. the building
 - ii. prayer services
 - iii. volunteer groups
 - iv. committees
 - v. programs
- d. Get new members involved in volunteer efforts
3. Become more inclusive for non-Jewish family members
4. Become more approachable to people seeking a better understanding of Judaism, regardless of their current religious affiliation
5. Create and implement a marketing and public relations plan

8. Integrate planning and evaluation into Synagogue operations

For B'nai Amoona to create an organization that is capable of anticipating and responding to changes in the environment, we need to become a *learning organization*. That is, one that continually learns from itself through a structured and continuous critical evaluation processes. To achieve this goal of internal growth, the Synagogue will need to do the following:

1. Create annual and 2 year plans
2. Conduct financial and operational benchmarks
3. Establish on-going evaluation processes
 - a. Personnel
 - b. Programs
 - c. Services
4. Develop key performance metrics to constitute the Synagogue's performance "dashboard"
 - a. A few major measures that will tell us how well the Synagogue is functioning
 - i. Financial
 - ii. Operational
 - iii. Programmatic
 - iv. Volunteerism
 - v. Spiritual
 1. For example, Monitor the engagement of post-Bnai Mitzvah students and their families in ongoing Shabbat prayer participation and Torah reading

9. Establish Synagogue facility needs

It is recognized that before many of these plans can be implemented to their fullest extent, significant changes in the design and use of the building may be needed. For example, if multiple and simultaneous Shabbat services are created, the current rooms we use are not designed correctly for these events. To create a warmer and more welcoming place we need to modify our physical design. To achieve this goal, the Synagogue will need to do the following:

- Match facility and land requirements to other parts of this plan
 - See Sections 1, 4 and 6
- Any design changes need to take into account accessibility issues for the physically disabled.