

Dear Temple Member:

A group of Temple members has been studying an alternative to our current dues structure. This concept is called the **Sustainable Commitment** (SC). We hope it will replace our current age-based, multi-level dues system.

We believe SC substantively addresses concerns identified in the recent congregational survey. It is an opportunity for our community to reframe and reinvigorate members' relationship with our Temple. SC is first and foremost an effort to change the dynamic between the Temple and its members by changing the concept of dues. Instead of a "them billing us" age-based system, we seek to change the relationship towards tzedakah, where members make a personal, committed contribution to the sacred community that is our Temple.

SC works by replacing the current "age-based" membership categories to with just two. Instead of seven categories based on age, SC provides for simply two categories: one-adult households and two-adult households. SC asks each member household to determine its maximum charitable contribution to sustain the Temple. To help members arrive at that decision, the Temple provides a suggested sustaining amount. This dollar figure reflects the funds needed to sustain the Temple, exclusive of other donations, tuitions, fees and other revenue sources. Members choose either the suggested sustaining amount or an amount they are comfortable with. Only the Temple's administrative staff will be aware of a member's commitment amount.

Just as fundamental to this concept, and in our view a very real plus, is that there is no abatement system. Congregants will decide privately, for themselves, what they can maximally contribute to sustain the Temple. People will be welcomed into this community as full members, regardless of commitment level and will be encouraged, without being judged, to make their maximum possible charitable commitment each year.

Our research on Sustainable Commitment has involved lots of research, interviews and discussions with people from other synagogues who have implemented or who are also investigating the Sustainable Commitment model. Our very own Debbie Astor, a past president of Temple Israel of Natick and former executive director of Temple Israel of Sharon, has been a pioneer in the SC movement.

Over the past six months, we've spoken with more than 110 Temple members at various focus groups and educational meetings. As we continue the research process, we'll want to hear from more members. We'll reach out to the Temple by holding more educational meetings. We also plan to conduct an anonymous data-collection survey so as to gather members' current estimates of their potential sustainable commitment.

Numerous anecdotal reports tell us that where the plan has been adopted, the results have been substantive and positive. A "dynamic shift" has taken hold that has encouraged other changes including increased membership, increased levels of financial support, even among those previously abated, and the return of some members who had resigned. We believe

enthusiastically that adopting the Sustainable Commitment model will provide a similar, successful change of climate and circumstances here at Temple Israel of Natick.

In order to determine if this program will work for Temple Israel, we are asking members to complete a survey. It is anonymous and it will ask, among a few other questions, how much you could commit to the synagogue if we were to go forward with the SC model. If the survey results are favorable, we will continue to explore options for moving forward.

Your input and honesty is important to the survey. We need the input and feedback from our members so we can all achieve the same goal. The success of the SC program rests with the idea that Temple membership means belonging to and making a commitment to a community. A sustainable congregation provides a place to daven, to build friendships and life-long relationships, to teach our children and to learn together, and to enjoy our life cycle events. We need to hear from you.

If you have any questions or comments, please email the committee at [SustainTempleIsrael@gmail.com](mailto:SustainTempleIsrael@gmail.com).

Sincerely,  
The Sustainable Commitment Committee

Art Finstein  
Carol Cohen  
Steve Flammey

Dave Duncan  
Jonathan Gilvarg  
Avi Finder

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#### Instructions for completing the survey.

- 1) Each household should answer only one survey.
- 2) Please read the accompanying Frequently Asked Questions prior to answering the survey.
- 3) Fill out the online survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SC-Survey-2014>