



Community Conversation Summary

April 2023

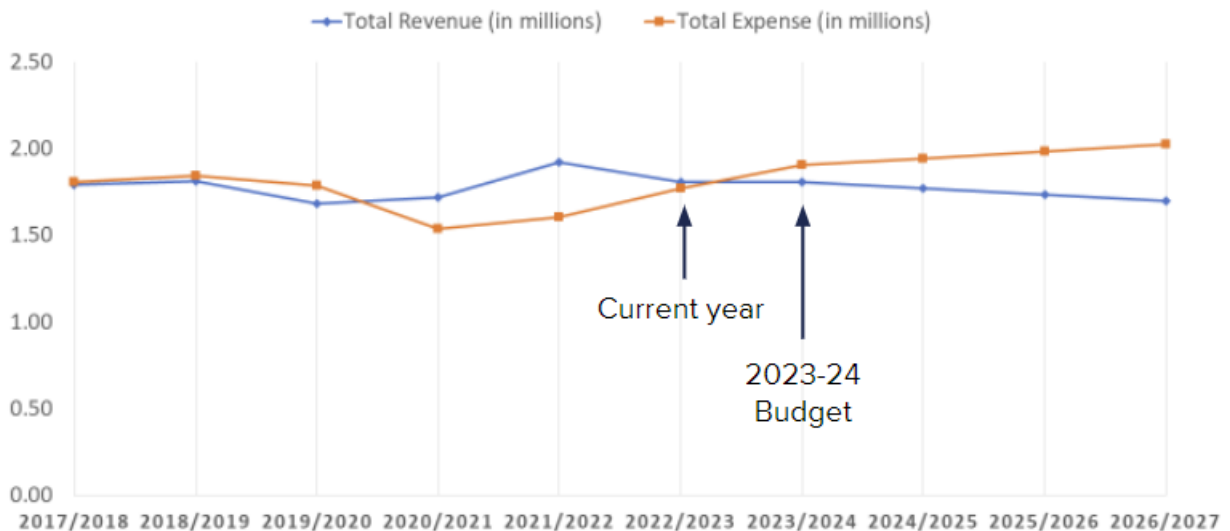
On April 20, 2023, Temple Emanuel held a Community Conversation to take stock of the current status of Temple Emanuel, share an update on the change process to develop a future model for Temple, and relay insight into what we’ve heard from the congregation so far. The following is a summary of the Community Conversation.

We are a congregation in transition

Our membership is evolving just as the broader community is, too. In the past five years, roughly 100 new families have joined Temple Emanuel. These families tend to be more diverse than in the past, including a significant share of interfaith and LGBTQ+ families. However, overall membership has been declining. Over the same time frame, approximately 150 families are no longer members. Similar demographic trends and patterns in religious institution membership exist across Allegheny County and nationally.

At the same time, we are in a budget position to act now to ensure sustainability into the future. The graph below shows revenue versus expenses over time. Beginning in the next budget year (2023-24) we are projected to have a widening deficit between revenue and expenses. However, the surplus we’ve enjoyed over the past several years, in part due to the PPP loans we received in 2020 and 2021, means that we have the resources now to proactively act to plan and institute changes that can interrupt the predicted budget trajectory and secure our viability and financial health into the future.

Revenue/Expenses Over Time



These converging factors have created an opportunity to work with Outside Angle to envision the future of Temple Emanuel. Temple continues to be a valued centerpiece of the Jewish community in the South Hills -- and it is at a crossroads. Proactively coming together as a congregation now to envision a vibrant future and undertake change will ensure Temple continues to provide the relevant, vital services we all as congregants value.

We are early on the path to change

At Temple, we are making progressive changes even as we engage in a more comprehensive change effort.

- Adjusting to the realities of the pandemic forced us to shift offering in a way that is more accessible and multi-access.
- Creating a new Program and Volunteer Coordinator role has already resulted in a renewed vibrancy of programming.
- Partnering with Outside Angle has launched a comprehensive, long-term change process including
 1. a diligence effort to collect data on our community and the broader national trends in Reform Judaism (summer/fall 2022) and
 2. community listening and visioning sessions to understand the specific needs and desires of our community (winter/spring 2023).

The longer-term change effort will require a significant investment not only in resources but also in time and collaboration across our community. The change process is designed to be community-based and collaborative. It has and will continue to include multiple opportunities for congregant input and updates. It's being guided collaboratively by the Board of Trustees and a Steering Committee of Temple congregants who are working directly with Outside Angle. Beyond time and commitment, long-term sustainability will require a financial investment over time. In addition to the cost of the effort to envision and design a future model for Temple, there will also be transition costs associated with implementation that could include facilities, staff positions, and communication and marketing, among others.

All of this is with a goal to envision and build a vibrant and sustainable new model for Temple Emanuel.

We are undertaking this change effort to position Temple Emanuel as the leader within the South Hills in meeting the needs of the Jewish community, thereby sustaining Temple's relevance and viability for years to come.

A new model is gradually coming into focus

To many of you, the change process may feel slow and that is understandable. In fact, the process has been gradual and deliberate because it is community-based. At the current stage of the change process, the future of Temple Emanuel is only just beginning to come into focus, leaving more questions still than answers. This is a feature of a process that is steeped in community and committed to inclusive input - no one person holds the answers and so there is space for all to contribute.

The recent community listening and visioning sessions provided a forum for the Temple community to provide specific feedback and share their big ideas. Between January 10 and February 25, 2023, Temple Emanuel held five community listening and visioning sessions, open to all. Roughly 120 individuals participated. Most were members skewing towards those who have been with Temple for ten or more years, and others included several nonmembers who are associated with Temple in some way (such as through ECDC) and more than a dozen were teens participating in the high school program.

Overall, participants were largely aligned in the feedback they shared. However, they often differed in the specifics as the conversations dug deeper. This phenomenon is an opportunity - it represents overarching alignment and commonality that creates the common bonds of community while also providing a variety of options and pathways for offerings that serve varied needs and preferences.

The themes that emerged from the community listening and visioning sessions converge to establish the initial building blocks upon which a model for the future can be built. Those building blocks, or design pillars as we call them, can be thought of as the following:

- **Learning** - cultivating personal and dynamic connections to Jewish traditions and identity through intergenerational and interfaith learning. Learning is a point of entry from which to continuously enrich and deepen one's experience of life and community.

- **Values** - providing community outlets for expression of Jewish values through social activism and cultural/religious practices. Values serve as the connective tissue within a community and provide a launch point for individuals to pursue varied paths of Jewish expression while still remaining rooted in their community.
- **Jewish Journey** - supporting individual relationships with Judaism by offering spiritual provocation, life cycle support, and religious activities. Guidance through the Jewish Journey must continue to evolve in a way that maintains space for individual paths and is relevant to the current time.

These pillars may sound familiar, as they are rooted in Temple’s history and identity. At the same time, they include room for evolution based on the needs shared in the listening and visioning sessions. Specifically, many participants shared that they don’t see a specific pathway to connect with Temple Emanuel. In order to respond to that, our effort in the next phase of work will be to develop a handful of possible models to do a better job of creating a community where everyone can find a way to participate that feels open and welcoming to them regardless of how they relate to the broader Jewish community.

Next steps in the process will bring ever-increasing clarity

The following graphic lays out the five phases of our change process. Phase III, which we are just now entering, will bring greater clarity on a new model design. The phase will include the development of potential business models, potential initial strategies to bring the three pillars discussed above to life, and, as always throughout this process, continued communication and engagement with the congregation.



Our roadmap forward will take time, but will yield the best possible outcome for our congregation today and the one we hope to cultivate in the future. Looking ahead, here is what you can expect as part of the change process:

- Over the next quarter, Outside Angle will help us to distill the business model that will allow us to make the changes we want in a way that makes us fiscally sustainable in the long term.
- When the detailed model, which will include not only a business model but also a model for programming and congregational engagement, is ready we will share it and solicit input and feedback before adopting a final version.

- This fall, we will begin to implement the new model, and expect full implementation to require a year or so to complete.

As has been true throughout the process and will continue to be the case, anyone in the Temple community is encouraged to share their thoughts, ideas, concerns, or questions about the future. The best way to do so is by emailing ideas@outsideangle.com or scanning the QR code below.

