



Our Community, Our Future

Visioning Our Tomorrow



Results of Community-Wide Listening Sessions
May 1, 2026

A decorative banner at the bottom of the page features a background of overlapping arrows pointing to the right, composed of dots in shades of red, orange, yellow, and blue. The text "Visioning Our Tomorrow" is written in white on the left side of the banner.

**Visioning Our
Tomorrow**

Leo Baeck Temple
Our Community,
Our Future

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Visioning Our Tomorrow



RESULTS OF COMMUNITY-WIDE LISTENING SESSIONS

After nearly 25 years under the leadership of Rabbi Ken Chasen, Leo Baeck Temple stands at a significant and meaningful threshold. In the past few months, we did something relatively rare in congregational life: we stopped, listened deeply, and asked ourselves who we are and who we want to become.

A Moment That Called for Reflection

HONORING WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE WE CHOOSE WHERE WE'RE GOING

Leadership transitions of this magnitude are rare. Rabbi Ken Chasen has served as our Senior Rabbi for nearly 25 years, longer than many of our members have been part of this community, and longer than all of our youngest members have been alive. His departure marks not only a personal transition, but a generational one for Leo Baeck Temple.

In preparing for this moment, our LBT Board leadership sought counsel. Lay leadership conducted extensive research examining how other congregations navigated senior rabbinic transitions, and through conversations with leaders across the Reform movement, a clear principle emerged. Before we could ask who our next rabbi should be, we needed to answer a more fundamental question: who are we?

The answer to that question and the process of discovering it together is the strong foundation for everything that follows.

25 Years of Leadership · A Generational Transition · Community-Wide Reflection · Know Ourselves First

Why We Listened Before We Searched

OUR VALUES MUST SHAPE OUR SEARCH, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND

The instinct to launch a search or appoint a successor immediately is understandable. But it gets the order wrong. If we don't know who we are and what we need, we cannot recognize the right candidate when we meet them. And if our next rabbi doesn't have a clear and honest picture of who we are, we cannot set them up to thrive.

Our Visioning Our Tomorrow Committee designed our listening campaign with these principles in mind. By engaging our community in a structured, thoughtful conversation about our identity, our values, and our aspirations, we did two things simultaneously: we gave ourselves the knowledge we needed to conduct an effective search, and we created a portrait of our community that will serve as an essential orientation for whoever leads us next.

The materials that emerged from this process, our Community Values Profile, our Vision for the Future, and our Senior Rabbi Profile, together serve as a guide for us as we embark on our search and as a gift for our next senior rabbi. They represent the distilled wisdom of a large portion of our membership, people who care deeply about this community and took the time to say so.

**Identity before search · Know Ourselves to Choose Well · A Gift for Our Next Senior Rabbi
260+ Voices, One Portrait**

“Before we can choose who leads us, we must understand who we are. The two questions are inseparable.”

A Four-Part Transition, Thoughtfully Designed

EACH STEP BUILDS ON THE LAST

Our transition process was designed with intentionality and care. It unfolds in four distinct steps, each essential to the one that follows.

The first step, and the one this report represents, was to take stock: to understand who we are, what we cherish about our community, and how we hope to grow. The second step is to identify and hire the ideal Sacred Partner to lead us forward, using everything we learned in step one as our guide. The third step is to say goodbye well: to honor Rabbi Ken Chasen’s extraordinary legacy and to give him the farewell he deserves, celebrating all that we have built and accomplished together. And the fourth step is to welcome our new Sacred Partner with the warmth, preparation, and communal commitment that will give them every opportunity to flourish.

We are currently at the threshold between the first and second steps. What you are reading is the culmination of step one, the product of hundreds of conversations, dozens of sessions, and the collective wisdom of a community that knows itself well.

**Step 1: Visioning Our Tomorrow · Step 2: Seeking Our Sacred Partner
Step 3: Celebrating Our Journey · Step 4: Walking Our Path**

Who Showed Up

260+ PEOPLE SPANNING 87 YEARS OF AGE AND EVERY CORNER OF OUR CONGREGATION

From October 2025 through March 2026, more than 260 Leo Baeck Temple congregants participated in 38 facilitated listening groups across 26 separate sessions. What made this effort remarkable was not just the number of participants, but their breadth.

They came from every corner of our congregation: newer members and those who have belonged for decades; highly active congregants and those who engage more quietly; people who have lived through one or even two prior rabbinic transitions at Leo Baeck Temple, and people for whom Rabbi Chasen has been the only Senior Rabbi they have ever known. Many sessions were intergenerational, bringing together people of genuinely different ages and life stages who discovered how much they share.

We held dedicated sessions for teens in our religious school, for college-aged students, and for young adults in their 20s and 30s, all of whom represent the future of our community. Every voice was welcomed. Every perspective was valued.

Our youngest participant was 16 years old. Our oldest was 103. Between them, they carried lifetimes of experience at Leo Baeck Temple and they showed up to share it.

**260+ Participants · 38 Listening Groups · 26 Sessions · Ages 16 to 103 ·
Every Corner of Our Community · Intergenerational by Design**

“Our youngest participant was 16. Our oldest was 103. And they had more in common than either might have expected.”

How We Listened

INTIMATE CIRCLES, HONEST STORIES, SHARED THEMES

Each session followed the same carefully designed format. Participants gathered in circles of 6 to 10 people, small enough for real conversation, large enough for genuine diversity of perspective. Our Visioning Committee consisted of trained facilitators who posed questions designed to draw out our stories: the moments, memories, and experiences that reveal what Leo Baeck Temple actually means to the people who belong to it.

After those intimate small-group conversations, participants came together as a larger group to describe the themes that had emerged. While a diverse set of stories and experiences were shared, there were striking similarities in the themes that emerged. The similarities were captured on whiteboards that, by the end of each session, were filled with the values, characteristics, and aspirations that define our community.

Across all 26 sessions, across participants of wildly different ages, backgrounds, and levels of engagement, the whiteboards looked remarkably similar.

**Circles of 6-10 People · Story-Based Questions · Small Group, Then Large Group ·
Whiteboard Synthesis · Consistent Themes Across All Sessions**

★ What This Work Produced ★

A synthesis of what our community told us follows.

- **Our Community Values Profile** — a portrait of who we are today: the values, characteristics, and qualities that define Leo Baeck Temple as its members experience it.
- **Our Vision for the Future** — a synthesis of what our community hopes to build: the aspirations, ideas, and directions our members want to pursue in the years ahead.
- **Our Senior Rabbi Profile** — a description of the leader our community is seeking: the qualities, skills, and character traits our members want to see in Leo Baeck Temple's fourth Senior Rabbi.
- **Together, these three sections** form both a foundation for our search and a gift to our next sacred partner, an honest, loving portrait of the community they will be privileged to lead.

Who We Are

Our Community Values Profile



What emerged from these discussions is a portrait of a community that is warm, intellectually alive, spiritually serious, and deeply committed to one another and the larger community, a place people choose intentionally, and a place that not only is shaped by its members but also shapes those who belong to it. What follows synthesizes those voices into a description of who we are.

We Are a Community of Deep, Lasting Connections

THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING ELSE

At the heart of our community is a trait that was repeatedly cited by our participants: genuine, enduring relationships. Members described bonds that have developed over years and even decades, close friendships, people who show up for each other in sickness and in health, in celebration and in grief. This is not a congregation where people nod politely in the parking lot; it is a community where people know each other's stories, a place where we truly see each other.

That depth of connection is tangible in the way our community rallies around one another. Meal trains, shivas, and collective support during hard times were mentioned repeatedly as expressions of who we are. Bubble Up groups and other Covid-era programming were cited several times as providing a lifeline during the pandemic. Several members pointed to shared experiences such as congregational trips abroad, religious school retreats, social justice travel, and intimate small-group gatherings, as well as programs like Achim, Minyan, Keshet Circles, Women's Group gatherings, Men's Group activities, and Adult B'nai Mitzvah as some of the most powerful vehicles for forming close connection within our larger community.

Decades-long Friendships · Showing Up for Each Other · Deep Connections

We Are Warm and Welcoming

PEOPLE FEEL IT FROM THE VERY FIRST MOMENT

Member after member recalled the experience of walking through our doors for the first time and being noticed, greeted, and made to feel at home. That welcome is not accidental; it is a cultural value, something our community actively practices and takes pride in.

Our clergy are described as friendly and genuinely open. Families and children are made to feel comfortable and at home. And when disagreements arise as they do in any community, there is a prevailing culture of civility and kindness that holds.

**Greeted at the Door · Friendly Clergy · Families Feel at Home
Culture of Kindness · Civility in Disagreement**

People Are Here Because They Choose to Be Here

INTENTIONAL BELONGING, NOT CONVENIENCE

For the vast majority of our members, this is not the nearest synagogue or the most convenient option. Belonging here is a conscious decision. Members acknowledged that they drive past other congregations, cross city boundaries, and make real sacrifices of time and commitment because they find something here that they cannot find elsewhere.

That spirit of intentional choice infuses the whole community with a particular energy. The people here want to be here and that makes all the difference.

Intentional Choice · Not a Neighborhood Temple · Members Seek Us Out

Our Kids Are Engaged and Want to Be Here Too

A RELIGIOUS SCHOOL THAT IS A PRIORITY, NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT

One of the things our community takes genuine pride in is that our engagement doesn't end at B'nai Mitzvah. A large percentage of our young people choose to continue in our religious school through high school, participating in confirmation and post-confirmation programs, and maintain meaningful relationships with our clergy entirely independent of their parents' own relationships.

LBT helps our children embrace their Jewish identities, internalize Jewish values, and feel that being Jewish is something worth claiming. The religious school is a focal point of community life, not an obligation to be completed and moved past.

**Stay Past B'nai Mitzvah · Confirmation Programs · Kids Know Our Clergy
Jewish Identity Formation · Religious School Is Central**

“This is not a neighborhood temple. People are here because they choose to be here.”

We Experience Exceptional Pastoral Care

OUR CLERGY SHOW UP WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

Time and again, members described moments of profound personal difficulty, such as illness, loss, grief, and the LA fires, and the way our clergy showed up for them and supported them.

Our clergy are described as truly accessible: not just figures on the bimah, but people you can call, people who know your name and your story, people you can speak with about regular life and not just matters of faith. Our clergy are there for us in times of need and help us through our challenging moments.

**Clergy Show Up in Crisis · Support During Illness & Loss · Accessible outside the Bimah
Personal Relationships with Clergy · Accompanied through Hard Times**

Music Is Central to Our Spiritual Life

IT BINDS US TOGETHER AND ELEVATES OUR WORSHIP

Music is not background here, it is foreground. Our community described musicality as a defining feature of our spiritual practice, something that lifts services from the routine to the transcendent and creates a shared emotional experience that binds us together across differences of belief, background, and age.

Whether in the sanctuary, at a retreat, or around a campfire on a trip, music is the thread that runs through our communal life and gives it texture and soul.

**Musicality as Spiritual Practice · Binds Us Together
Elevates Services · Runs through All Community Life**

Social Justice and Activism Are Core Values

WE WALK THE WALK, NOT JUST TALK THE TALK

Our community does not merely discuss justice, we act on it. Members described our commitment to social justice and social activism as something tangible and real: we show up, we organize, we travel, and we use our collective power to make change in the world. Tikkun Olam is not a slogan here; it is a practice.

That activist identity extends from our programming to our sermons to the way we think about our role in the broader LA community, in the Jewish world, and beyond.

**Tangible Activism · Walks the Walk · Social Justice Travel
Tikkun Olam in Practice · Engaged beyond Our Walls**

We Are Intellectually Curious and Rigorously Engaged

A COMMUNITY THAT QUESTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND KEEPS LEARNING

Our congregation has an appetite for intellectual depth. Members expressed that they value sermons and programming that make them think, that challenge assumptions, and that bring Jewish wisdom into honest dialogue with the complexity of modern life. Our clergy are described

as people who are unafraid to push us into uncomfortable territory and our community respects them for it.

That intellectual energy extends throughout community life. Torah Study, Women's Torah Study, Yom Limmud, Community of Engagement (COE) programs, Keshet Circles/Bubble-Up Groups, Adult B'nai Mitzvah, and many other offerings were identified as reflecting a community that genuinely loves to learn together, across generations, and with an openness to questioning everything.

[Intellectual Rigor](#) · [Sermons that Challenge](#) · [Torah Study](#) · [Yom Limmud](#) · [Love of Learning](#)

“We are welcome to and encouraged to question everything.”



We Are Non-Judgmental, Tolerant, Genuine, and Inclusive

COME AS YOU ARE. YOU BELONG HERE

Perhaps the most consistent thread in our community's self-description is this: you do not need to earn your place here. You do not need the right clothes, the right car, the right theological position, or the right level of Jewish observance. You come as you are, and you are accepted as you are.

Our community is open to diverse beliefs about the role of God. There is a sense of spirituality here that is not narrowly defined or rigidly policed. People with different religious viewpoints find a home. Interfaith families find acceptance and belonging. There is not only tolerance for difference, but genuine encouragement of it. Diversity of viewpoints is not just accepted; it is seen as a source of strength.

Members also noted that there is an authenticity to our community life that they find rare and precious.

[Come As You Are](#) · [Authentic & Genuine](#) · [Open to Diverse Beliefs](#) · [Spirituality Not Rigidly Defined](#) · [Egalitarian](#) · [Down to Earth](#)



We Are Not Top-Down: We Are Participatory and Lay-Led

IDEAS FLOW FROM THE COMMUNITY UP

Our congregation operates with a genuinely participatory ethos. The community is not managed from above; instead, congregants' ideas and needs drive new programs and opportunities for engagement. Lay leadership is not ceremonial here. It is real, and it is valued. Clergy supports and empowers lay-led initiatives rather than controlling them.

This bottom-up culture means that members feel genuine ownership over the life of the community. What we offer reflects who we are and what we need.

[Lay-led Programming](#) · [Bottom-up Culture](#) · [Congregant Ideas Matter](#) · [Clergy as Partners](#)

We Feel Safe Here, Physically and Emotionally

A PLACE TO TRUST, OPEN UP, AND EVEN DISAGREE

Our members described LBT as a place where they feel genuinely safe, not only in the physical sense, but emotionally. This is a community where people feel they can open up, confide in one another, and be vulnerable without fear of judgment or consequence.

Several members noted that it is possible here to disagree with our clergy, hold different views, and still feel completely safe and accepted. That kind of trust, the trust that comes when you know your belonging is unconditional, is one of our community's most distinctive gifts.

Physically Safe · Emotionally Safe · Trust Among Members · Safe to Disagree · Unconditional Belonging

“A safe space to disagree with our clergy and each other.”

This Is a Place of Personal and Communal Growth

WE COME HERE TO BECOME BETTER VERSIONS OF OURSELVES

Members described LBT as a place where growth is expected, supported, and celebrated for individuals and for the community as a whole. It is a place to develop leadership through real lay leadership opportunities, a place to deepen Jewish knowledge at any age, and a place where curiosity is met with resources and community. We heard many stories in which participants described the personal growth they experienced as a result of their involvement here.

Our congregation also takes pride in the role we play in developing the next generation of Jewish leaders through our rabbinic internship program and beyond. We do not just benefit from great clergy; we help create them.

**Grow as Individuals · Lay Leadership Development · Rabbinic Internship Program
Supports Clergy & Staff Growth · Learning at Every Age**

Our Campus Is a Place of Peace and Beauty

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IS PART OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Our setting is not incidental to our communal experience. Members described the campus as a genuine source of peace, beauty, openness, and connection to nature, a physical environment that supports the spiritual and emotional work of community life.

Place of Peace & Beauty · Connected to Nature · Openness & Light · Campus Enhances Spiritual Life

We Are Well-Run, Collaborative, and Respectful

STRONG GOVERNANCE BUILT ON MUTUAL TRUST

Our community is not just warm, it is also well-organized. Members expressed genuine pride in the strength of our administrative staff, the collaborative culture of our trustees and officers, and the mutual respect between clergy, lay leaders, and professional staff.

The partnership between lay leadership, professional staff, and clergy is described as genuinely cooperative, not a hierarchy where one group controls another, but a working relationship built on shared values and mutual respect.

**Strong Administrative Staff · Collaborative Leadership · Clergy-Lay Partnership
Mutual Respect · Institutional Competence**

We Are an Intergenerational Community

SOMETHING REAL FOR EVERY STAGE OF LIFE

From toddlers in our religious school to seniors who have been members for decades, our community has something genuine to offer at every stage of life. This intergenerational character is not just a demographic fact, it is a source of richness. Our congregation thrives in the connections shared between our different age groups. This is something members named with real pride.

**Meaningful at Every Age · Multigenerational Programming
Older & Younger Members Connect · A Place for Life's Whole Arc**

We Have a Sense of Humor and a Genuine Sense of Joy

SERIOUS ABOUT WHAT MATTERS, NEVER ABOUT OURSELVES

Our community takes Jewish life, justice, and learning seriously. But we do not take ourselves too seriously. Members described a culture that knows how to have fun, laugh at itself, and find delight in the rhythms of communal life. Humor is not in spite of our values. It is an expression of them.

Joy, simcha, is present here in real ways: in the music, in the celebrations, in the way people greet each other, and in the sense that being Jewish is something to be celebrated, not just observed.

Sense of Humor · Joy & Simcha · Doesn't Take Itself Too Seriously · Celebration Is Part of Our Culture

Our Vision for the Future

What Our Community Hopes to Build Together



As part of our rabbinic transition process, more than 260 members of our congregation were asked to share their vision for our future. Their responses reflect both a deep pride in who we already are and a genuine excitement about what we can become. What follows is a synthesis of that collective imagination: the aspirations, ideas, and hopes our community is carrying into this next chapter.

Increased Engagement

EXPANDING WHO WE ENGAGE AND HOW

The most consistent theme across all the visioning sessions was a desire for deeper and broader engagement. While our members see how well served the religious school families and Community of Engagement are, there is a desire to increase programming and engagement for other demographics in our community, including teens, young adults in their 20s and 30s, preschool families, and those in the empty-nester stage of life.

Older members who face challenges getting to the temple were also named as a group deserving more intentional outreach and connection, as were those who live at a distance or outside areas with strong Jewish communities, for whom digital and decentralized engagement could be a genuine lifeline.

Our community also wants to ask our younger generations what would actually bring them here. The desire is to listen, and to co-create programming.

Teens · Young Adults (20s/30s) · Young Families · Empty Nesters
Older Members with Mobility Challenges · Non-Local Members

Expanded or Modified Programming

MORE ENTRY POINTS INTO OUR COMMUNITY LIFE

Related to the desire for increased engagement was the desire for more or different programming, which was viewed as a portal for people to enter our community or to enter new parts of our community.

Much rich programming takes place on weekday mornings and afternoons when working members simply cannot attend. A desire was expressed that more of our programming be scheduled at times when more people can attend. A suggestion was to coordinate adult and children's programming to run concurrently (Sunday mornings during religious school was a frequently mentioned example) so that parents can participate.

Citing the difficulties of getting to the temple due to traffic, opportunities for less-centralized, community-led experiences outside the temple were suggested. Ideas included oneg Shabbats and Shabbat gatherings in people's homes, as well as Havdalah services in parks and at the beach.

There was an abundant range of additional programming ideas: Chavurahs and small-group connection experiences; themed Shabbats; social activities like Mah-jongg, tennis, pickleball, hikes, dinners, and concerts; facilitated conversations on controversial topics following services; and a return of beloved traditions like the blessings of the pets.

The common thread was continuing and expanding programming that builds relationships and helps LBT become an inspiring home for in-person connection and community life.

Chavurahs · Accessible Scheduling · Concurrent Adult & Kids Programming · Themed Shabbats · Social Activities · De-centralized Experiences Outside the Temple Walls

Bring Different Parts of Our Community Together

BREAKING DOWN THE SILOS WITHIN OUR WALLS

Several members observed that our congregation, rich and multifaceted as it is, sometimes functions as a collection of overlapping but separate groups, such as the religious school families, the social justice activists, the Community of Engagement. Each group has a strong identity, but there is a desire here for more cross-pollination.

The community yearns for more intentional intergenerational programming and more opportunities for people in different committees and cohorts to encounter one another.

Even something as simple as committee chairs meeting regularly to connect and find points of collaboration was raised as a meaningful step.

**Break Down Silos · Intergenerational Programming · Cross-committee Connection
Many Groups, One Community · Shared Experiences**

“There are different silos in our congregation that don't get to see or know each other. We want to change that.”

Deepen Our Roots in the Greater Los Angeles Community

MAKING AN IMPACT IN OUR COMMUNITY

Our community sees itself as having a role to play beyond its own walls in the broader LA Jewish community and in the city at large.

Specific ideas included tapping into the richness of what Los Angeles offers, forging partnerships with local institutions like UCLA, the Getty, and the VA; continuing to engage non-Jewish communities and interfaith partners in sustained relationships; and taking on a visible leadership role within and beyond the Jewish community. Members want this congregation to be a force for good in Los Angeles that is well recognized, respected, and present.

**Partnerships with LA Institutions · Non-Jewish Community Ties · Interfaith Relationships
Civic Leadership Role · LA Jewish Community Presence**

Continue and Expand Our Commitment to Social Justice

HANDS-ON, MULTI-GENERATIONAL, AND EVER-WIDENING

Social justice and activism are already central to our identity, and the community's vision is to deepen that commitment. Members suggested more hands-on social action, more partnerships with service organizations, and more opportunities to work alongside people of different faiths and backgrounds.

It was also suggested that both interfaith and social justice fieldtrips, and immersive learning, begin at younger ages to introduce our children and teens to other faith communities, not as visitors, but as genuine partners in shared work. The goal is to build the next generation of Jewish activists who know how to work in coalition.

**Expanded Hands-on Action · More Service Partnerships · Interfaith Social Justice Trips
Youth Activism · Political Engagement · Coalition Building**

Communicate Better — Inside and Outside Our Walls

TELL OUR STORY MORE EFFECTIVELY; KEEP OUR OWN PEOPLE IN THE LOOP

Our community acknowledged that we are not always our own best advocates. There is a vision here for significantly improved communication emanating from LBT, both outward-facing marketing and internal connectivity. The goal outward is to reach prospective members, re-engage lapsed ones, and ensure that people in the broader community know who we are and what we offer. The goal inward is to ensure that our own members are aware of the full richness of what is happening across our congregation.

A better and more active social media presence was mentioned by some, particularly in relation to reaching young adults in their 20s and 30s and college students. There is a sense that we have a compelling story to tell and that we are not yet telling it as well as we could.

**Better Social Media · Marketing to Young Adults · Internal Communication
College Student Outreach · Tell Our Story · Re-engage Lapsed Members**

“We have a compelling story to tell. We need to tell it better.”



Expand and Evolve Our Educational Offerings

JUDAISM THAT IS PRACTICAL, PERSONAL, AND LIFELONG

Education is already a strength of our community, and the vision is to build on that foundation in new directions. Members want Jewish learning that is more practical and connected to everyday life, not just textual study, but guidance on how to live Jewishly in the modern world. Judaism 101 and more accessible entry points for those earlier in their Jewish journey were frequently mentioned.

There was also a strong desire to tap into the expertise and talents of our own members to create learning experiences where the teacher is someone in our community. This peer-to-peer model of education honors the depth of our congregation and creates new points of relationship. The annual D'var Torah given at Shabbat Shuvah services by our congregant, Richard Marks, was noted as an example of that type of engagement. Creating opportunities for our congregants to mentor each other was also suggested.

Two specific challenges were named: equipping our college students to navigate the difficult campus climate around Jewish identity, and keeping our kids actively engaged after their formal religious school ends.

[Judaism 101](#) · [Practical Jewish Living](#) · [Member-led Learning](#) · [College Student Support](#)
[Post-religious school Engagement](#) · [Adult Learning](#) · [Youth Learning](#)



Become a More Diverse and Inclusive Community

WIDEN THE CIRCLE

Our community's vision for diversity goes beyond demographics, though demographics matter. Members named specific groups they hope to welcome more fully: Jews of color, LGBTQ+, singles, young adults without children, and people with a wider range of political perspectives.

Several members spoke about celebrating the cultural backgrounds of members from different parts of the Jewish diaspora and the world, such as incorporating Sephardic traditions, Lunar New Year celebrations, and musical traditions from Jewish communities across the globe. This is a vision of a Jewish community that reflects the full breadth of what Jewish identity looks like in the 21st century.

Related to this is creating genuine safe spaces for conversations about current events, facilitating dialogue across political and ideological divides, and actively embracing minority viewpoints.

[Diversity](#) · [Celebration of Different Cultural Backgrounds](#) · [Global Jewish Music](#) · [Cross-Divide Dialogue](#)

Make Greater Use of Our Beautiful Campus

OUR SPACE HAS MUCH TO OFFER

Our campus is already recognized as a source of peace, beauty, and spiritual resonance. The vision is to use it more fully for our campus to feel active, welcoming, and alive throughout the week.

Activate the Campus More Often · A Living Resource, Not Just a Venue

Prioritize In-Person Connection Over Digital Convenience

ZOOM HAS ITS PLACE, BUT IT CANNOT REPLACE BEING TOGETHER

Our community is clear-eyed about something that the pandemic accelerated: digital convenience can come at the cost of genuine relationship. While virtual options have genuine value for accessibility, especially for members who cannot easily travel, the community's vision leans strongly toward in-person presence as the default, particularly for experiences meant to build community.

Several members specifically noted that fewer on-line options for religious school would serve our kids better. In-person programming builds the bonds, the memories, and the sense of belonging that on-line meetings cannot replicate. The future we are building is one where people want to be in the room together.

**In-person as the Default · Reduce Zoom for Religious School
Real Presence Builds Real Bonds · Digital Access for Those Who Need It**

Strengthen Bonds In Our Religious School

MORE CONNECTION

Our religious school is well-loved and respected. The comments that we heard dealt more with deepening relationships than about curriculum. Several specific ideas were offered that share a common theme: creating more organic opportunities for students, parents, and teachers to get to know one another in a more meaningful way.

These included weekly Sunday morning bagels before religious school, a 9th–12th grade retreat to deepen bonds among our older teens, re-introduction of a home-grown Purim carnival, and re-energizing Sunday morning Tefillah with combined grades so younger students can be inspired by older ones.

Comments related specifically to the post-confirmation program revealed a genuine appreciation for the program, with many wanting these classes to happen more frequently. Other suggestions were that post-confirmation students be consulted in the scheduling of the classes and the topics of discussion, and that they include unstructured time for students simply to connect with one another.

Sunday Morning Bagels · 9th-12th Grade Retreat · Re-energize Tefillah · Post-confirmation Expansion · Student Input on Topics · Organic Connection Time · Keep Kids Engaged Past Confirmation

“Make changes gradually and not too much all at once. Continue to be adaptable and experiment with new things.”

Additional Ideas from Our Community

SOME ADDITIONAL SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

Beyond the major themes, our community offered a rich assortment of specific ideas that deserve attention. Several related to making our services more vibrant and accessible, such as name tags at High Holy Day services and more participatory singing that invites the whole congregation into the music.

Other ideas dealt with ways to honor our social justice values, such as finding creative ways to use our campus to assist the homeless. Tapping into our congregants' professions and connections was also suggested, to providing mentoring and professional guidance to our young adult members. Others expressed a desire to bring back an arts festival, in which our congregants' works of art can be shared with our community.

Financial accessibility was raised as a genuine concern. Membership costs and participation fees can be a barrier for young families, and there is a desire to find creative solutions so that financial capacity is never what keeps someone from belonging. This connects to the broader egalitarian values our community already holds.

Several members also called for more lay involvement and more opportunities for congregants to take active ownership of community life. And there was a note of wisdom in the room that deserves to be heard: make changes gradually. This is a community that values its heritage and its culture. The vision for the future is not to become something unrecognizable, but to become a fuller, deeper, more vibrant version of what we already are.

**Name Tags at High Holy Days · Participatory Singing · Financial Relief for Young Families
Arts Festival · More Lay Involvement · Gradual, Thoughtful Change**

Our Next Senior Rabbi

A Portrait in the Words of Our Community



In asking our participants what they hope to see in our next Senior Rabbi, what emerged is a richly consistent picture of a deeply human leader: learned and warm, courageous and humble, rooted in Jewish tradition yet genuinely present in the world around us. What follows synthesizes those voices into a portrait of the rabbi our community is seeking.

Warmth, Accessibility & Genuine Connection

THE MOST-MENTIONED QUALITY ACROSS ALL GROUPS

More than any other quality, our community wants a rabbi who is warm, approachable, and genuinely present.

People want a rabbi who not only remembers names and personal stories, but also who is truly connected to our lives. We desire a rabbi who is accessible, and who can make a congregant feel seen in a crowd of hundreds. Words like “caring,” “kind,” “genuine,” “mensch,” and “non-judgmental” appeared again and again. Several people specifically hoped the rabbi’s family would participate in community life, a signal that they want a leader who is truly integrated with us.

**Warm & Welcoming · Approachable · Remembers Names · Non-judgmental
Genuine · Low Ego · Family in the Community · Wants to Be Here Long-term**

Pastoral Excellence & Emotional Intelligence

SHOWING UP IN LIFE'S MOST SACRED MOMENTS

Our community deeply values a rabbi who will continue the Leo Baeck Temple tradition of lifting lifecycle events: births, b’nai mitzvah, weddings, illnesses, and losses, with some expressing a desire for a rabbi willing to officiate interfaith marriages. But pastoral care means more than showing up for milestones. It means being a skilled listener, an empathetic presence, and someone with the emotional intelligence to meet people exactly where they are.

High Emotional Quotient (EQ) was a phrase that came up explicitly. Members want a rabbi who is sensitive in managing people, who leads with heart rather than authority, and who provides genuine comfort and support, not just religious ceremony.

**Expert at Lifecycle Events · Active listener · Empathetic
High EQ · Nurturing · Compassionate · Soulful**

“Be a part of the community and not just a leader, someone on the journey with us.”

Scholarship, Intellect & Jewish Knowledge

LEARNED AND ABLE TO BRING LEARNING TO LIFE

Our congregation wants someone who is deeply learned in Jewish tradition, a Torah scholar with a broad knowledge of history, liturgy, and Jewish thought. But scholarship alone is not the goal. Members repeatedly paired intellectual depth with the ability to make Judaism accessible and relevant.

They want a rabbi who brings wisdom to everyday life, who can take ancient texts and help congregants see themselves in them, and who remains intellectually curious, always reading, growing, and looking to learn. This is not a community seeking a rigid authority; they want a scholar who remains a student.

**Torah Scholar · Well-versed in History · Intellectually Curious
Makes Judaism Accessible · Identifies Jewish Values · Depth & Substance**

Preaching & Communication

POWERFUL FROM THE BIMAH; CLEAR IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The community expects powerful, inspiring sermons delivered with gravitas and charisma, but always tempered with humility. Many specifically mentioned wanting a rabbi who speaks from the heart, who is willing to tackle difficult topics, and who can hold the room's attention without grandstanding.

At the same time, communication means more than the High Holy Day sermon. Members want someone who is an effective communicator across all formats, written and spoken, in large groups and one-on-one.

**Powerful Sermons · Speaks from the Heart
Gravitas with Humility · Tackles Difficult Topics · Good Writer**

Education & Religious Life

A TRUE TEACHER FOR EVERY AGE

Education emerged as a top priority. The congregation wants a rabbi who is a passionate, skilled educator who can teach across generations from young children, to teens, to adults, to seniors. Our community desires educational programming that is stimulating, innovative, and forward-thinking.

**Passion for Education · Excellent Religious School · Good with B'nai Mitzvah
Respectful to Kids · Innovative Programming · Stimulating & Inspiring**



Connecting Across Generations

A BRIDGE BETWEEN YOUNG AND OLD

The ability to connect with all age groups was one of the most consistently expressed desires. Our congregants want a rabbi who can speak authentically to and connect with people of all ages from young children to our oldest congregants.

Particular emphasis was placed on attracting and retaining young families and young adults (teens, 20s, 30s), while simultaneously honoring the wisdom and presence of longer-tenured members. The rabbi should have youthful energy without alienating those who have called this congregation home for decades.

**Relates to All Ages · Connects with Young Adults · Good with Children
Attracts Young Families · Bridges Generations · Youthful Energy**

“Charismatic, but with humility. Leads with love.”



Social Justice & Tikkun Olam

JEWISH VALUES IN ACTION, BEYOND THE SYNAGOGUE WALLS

A strong, recurring theme was the desire for our rabbi to possess a genuine passion for social justice and equality, someone who sees Tikkun Olam not as a program, but as a core expression of Jewish identity. Members want a rabbi who encourages the congregation to engage with the larger community on issues of justice, who has personal experience in community organizing, and who models the values they preach.

This extends beyond the Jewish community. Several participants specifically noted a desire for engagement with the broader LA community, interfaith organizations, and the wider Jewish world, a rabbi who is a recognized leader not just within our walls, but in the city and region.

**Passion for Social Justice · Community Organizing ·
Interfaith Engagement · Broader LA Community · Jewish Values in Action**



Israel: Nuance, Safety & Multiple Perspectives

HOLD THE COMPLEXITY, HOLD THE SPACE

Israel emerged as a topic requiring particular care and skill. Our community is not monolithic on this issue, and respondents reflected that diversity, from those who stated that believing in Israel’s right to exist is a baseline requirement, to those who asked for openness to anti-Zionist perspectives, to many who simply want a rabbi who can hold space for difficult, respectful dialogue without alienating any part of the congregation.

The clearest throughline: our community wants a rabbi who can navigate Israel thoughtfully, engage congregants with different views, facilitate honest conversation, and provide a safe environment for people to wrestle with complex questions rather than shutting them down or taking rigid sides.

**Multiple Perspectives Respected · Facilitates Honest Dialogue · Knowledge of Israel
Politically Humble · Safe Space for Discussion · Courageous**

Leadership, Vision & Courage

BOLD ENOUGH TO LEAD; WISE ENOUGH TO LISTEN

Our community wants a rabbi with vision, someone who thinks about where this congregation is going, not just where it has been. They want a leader who is willing to take risks, innovate, try new things, and foster meaningful change while also respecting the DNA and culture of a community that many have called home for decades.

Courage came up repeatedly: the courage to speak their mind on hard topics, the courage to challenge the congregation as well as comfort it, and the courage to lead on issues of justice, even when it's uncomfortable. Yet this courage must be paired with humility, low ego, the ability to hear and understand other voices, and a genuine spirit of collaboration with lay leaders, staff, and the broader congregation.

**Visionary · Courageous · Risk-taker · Respects our Heritage
Collaborative · Inspires Lay Leadership · Optimistic & Hopeful**

Music, Spirit & Sense of Joy

OUR COMMUNITY'S SOUL NEEDS A MUSICAL HEART

Music was mentioned with striking frequency and feeling. This congregation has a deep relationship with musical worship, and members want a rabbi who appreciates and actively values music as integral to spiritual life, not as a backdrop, but as a core part of what makes services meaningful. Several respondents specifically asked that musical programming be preserved and expanded.

More broadly, the community wants a rabbi who brings joy, humor, and a sense of fun to their role. "Not too serious," "sense of humor," "fun to be with," and "able to be silly" all appeared. One described this as "a rabbi willing to go into the dunk tank at our Purim carnival." Spiritual gravitas and a light touch are not opposites. Our next rabbi should be capable of both.

Appreciates Music · Sense of Humor · Sense of Joy · Fun to Be Around · Spiritual Presence

With Gratitude

The People Who Made This Possible



A listening campaign of this depth and reach does not happen by itself. It takes people who believe that the work matters and who are willing to give their time, their creativity, and their care to make it real. We are fortunate to be a community with no shortage of such people.

Our LBT Staff

THE QUIET, ESSENTIAL WORK THAT HELD EVERYTHING TOGETHER

None of this would have been possible without the dedication of our LBT staff. They coordinated communications, managed the calendaring across 26 sessions, ensured that every gathering had what it needed, and handled countless behind-the-scenes details that are invisible precisely because they were done so well.

Their work was the infrastructure on which everything else was built. We are grateful for their commitment, their professionalism, and their genuine investment in the success of this process.

With special gratitude to our incomparable Executive Director

Abigail Goldberg Spiegel

Logistics & Communications · Behind-the-Scenes Excellence · Quietly Indispensable

Our Visioning Our Tomorrow Committee

SIX MONTHS OF IMAGINATION, DESIGN, FACILITATION, AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

The work of the Visioning Our Tomorrow Committee began long before the first listening session convened. Over the course of six months, a devoted group of lay volunteers gave their time and their minds to imagining what this process should look like, and then doing the painstaking work of bringing that vision to life.

They designed the format of each session, crafted the questions that drew out the stories and experiences at the heart of this work, trained as facilitators, attended session after session, took

copious notes, and encouraged fellow congregants to participate. They were the architects of this process and the people who carried it forward every step of the way.

Our community owes them an enormous debt of gratitude.

**Lee Broekman · Scott Greenberg · Linda Levine · Debbie Llewelyn
Richard Marks · Laurie Sobelman · Eric Stockel · Marc Vermut**

“They were the architects of this process and the people who carried it forward every step of the way.”

Our Congregants

YOU SHOWED UP AND WHAT YOU SHARED WILL SHAPE OUR FUTURE

And then there’s you: the more than 260 members of our congregation who came to these sessions and gave us something invaluable. You shared your stories. You named what you love about this community. You were honest about what you hope we can become. You trusted us with your experiences, your memories, and your vision and you did it with enthusiasm and openness that moved everyone in the room.

The compilation of information in this report is a reflection of what you told us. It will now go to work on your behalf, guiding our search for Leo Baeck Temple’s next Senior Rabbi and welcoming that person into the community you have so eloquently described.

We left every session feeling proud to be a part of this incredible community.

**260+ Voices Heard · Stories Shared with Trust · A Portrait of Who We Are
The Foundation for What Comes Next**

“We left every session feeling proud to be part of this incredible community.”

With appreciation and gratitude,

Todd Bloomfield

President, Leo Baeck Temple

Iris Weinmann & Lewis Wilkenfeld

Co-Chairs, Our Community, Our Future: Visioning Our Tomorrow