

FAQs about Community Conversations

בית יעקב
BETH JACOB
CONGREGATION



1. What will we be doing?

We'll be having authentic conversations with fellow members of the shul. We will focus on questions about Beth Jacob and our community in order to set direction and vision for the shul going into the next decade of congregational life.

2. What is the structure of the meetings?

There will be about 30 minutes of refreshments and schmoozing, followed by 90 minutes of facilitated conversation.

3. How many people will be in a conversation?

8-10 people plus a facilitator and a note taker

4. What kinds of questions will be asked?

Participants will discuss questions that will help us understand what our members appreciate about Beth Jacob where we would like the shul to go moving forward.

5. Does the committee already have a vision to move forward and this is how you're informing people, or are the listening sessions a way for Beth Jacob members to advise the committee?

These are listening sessions with the purpose of understanding our community better. The plan is first for community members to hear each other in the small groups. The next step will be for the committee to gather the information from all the small groups and report to the shul community, to the board, and to the Rabbi.

6. How will the information from these conversations be used?

The information you share will be documented by the note taker, but it will remain anonymous. The aggregated information from the meetings will be reviewed to identify themes, issues, ideas, etc. We will have the opportunity to explore the findings together late in the spring and the information will also inform the shul's strategic planning process.

7. Why are the meetings being held in homes rather than at Beth Jacob?

We wanted to hold the meetings in small, warm settings. We feel that being in homes sets a tone of community connection, even before we start talking. If transportation is an issue, we can help facilitate that as well. We will also offer a couple of meetings on Zoom.

8. What are Rabbi Tamar and Rabbi Justin's involvement?

They are both committed to this process and are in communication with the steering committee, but they are not going to be present for the conversations so that people feel free to share openly about all aspects of the shul.

9. What happens if the conversation gets off topic?

Each conversation will have a trained facilitator. It is the job of the facilitator to keep the conversations focused, and to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to participate.

10. What if I am concerned about Covid exposure?

You are always welcome to wear a mask. Some gatherings will have masks required, and some will be offered on Zoom.

11. What about that first 30 minutes at “masked required” meetings?

There will be refreshments at the start and folks are not required to wear masks then. When the conversation starts, we will ask everyone to mask and to not eat during the meeting. Short drinks of a beverage are fine as long as masks are replaced quickly. If being in a space with unmasked people is a concern for you, you can come closer to 7:30. Consider reaching out to the host or facilitator to let them know that’s your plan.

12. How many conversations can I attend?

You may attend one conversation. You will be able to get a sense of what people thought in other conversations when the aggregated data is presented later this spring.

13. Will I know who else is signed up for the conversation I’m attending?

Yes, and we hope that you might use this as an opportunity to meet and talk with some people who you don’t typically talk with.

14. What if there’s something I wanted to say and I don’t think of it until later or that I would like to really say anonymously?

You can contact the facilitator for the session you attended and they will add it to the notes from the session. You can also contact one of the committee chairs (see below).

15. Are there other ways for me to participate in the work of setting the vision and direction for the future of our community?

Absolutely! If you are interested in finding other ways to support the process, please contact the committee chairs (see below).

16. Why aren’t we just filling out surveys?

One of the goals for this process is to encourage conversation and sharing of ideas among our community members. Having the opportunity to hear other people’s ideas might also expand your own thinking.

17. Are children invited to these conversations?

These meetings are for adults and children over the age of B’mitzvah. Childcare will not be provided.

Got more questions or comments? Want to be more engaged in the process?

Please contact one of the committee chairs:

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