

Columbia Jewish Congregation
5885 Robert Oliver Place
Columbia, MD 21045
410-730-6044
robin@columbiajewish.org
ww.columbiajewish.org

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 5, 2016

For more information contact:
Robin Rosenfeld, 410-730-6044
robin@columbiajewish.org

Howard County Synagogue Changes to Voluntary Dues Structure

Since its beginning, the Columbia Jewish Congregation financed its operations as most American synagogues do: it charged annual dues. In a bold step, at its Annual Meeting on May 1, 2016, the membership voted to replace its mandatory dues and fundraising approach with a model referred to as “sustaining” and is changing the way it generates income. There are roughly 30 congregations nationwide that have adopted this model. CJC is the first congregation in Howard County to adopt this change.

This voluntary system relies on transparency. The congregation is informed about the budgeted expenses and the number of member units, from which a calculated sustaining number is derived. Each member will “pledge” at their own discretion, a voluntary financial commitment to help meet the budget and sustain the desired level of programming and staffing. This pledge will also include High Holy Days tickets and a personalized payment schedule.

This long process began with a class taught by CJC’s Rabbi Sonya Starr *The Torah of Money*, to ensure that any change would be fully informed by Jewish teaching and values, followed by a comprehensive review of the advantages and disadvantages of each of the models adopted by other congregations nationwide. The Dues Structure Committee leading this effort met with the Board of Directors, CJC past-presidents and held several parlor meetings within the congregation. These public forums helped to obtain input from congregants and learn from their reactions to various models.

The Committee considered the point of view that the current mandatory dues approach is incompatible with a spiritual community and that a voluntary/choice approach would help create a sense of shared responsibility to build and create a community based on commitment.

A major benefit reported with this new approach is the lack of need for a dues abatement process,

which can be uncomfortable for those unable to pay the assessed amount. Other benefits include an increase in the engagement of the members into the collective life of the congregation and a greater commitment by members to pay their dues. CJC will also have greater financial certainty and the elimination of the need for supplemental fundraising. Members will now be able to say, “We will get precisely the congregation we are willing to pay for.”

CJC, located in the Oakland Mills Interfaith Center in Columbia, is a welcoming, egalitarian community affiliated with the Jewish Reconstructionist movement. It was founded in the late 1960’s by early Columbia, Maryland residents who brought an experimental spirit and desire to create a more personal Jewish community than the synagogue life of their youths. The new financial system will be implemented in June 2017. For more information on membership at CJC, please call 410-730-6044 or email cjc@columbiajewish.org. Visit CJC online, www.columbiajewish.org.

###