

HCRJ Annual Meeting – Committee Reports

Budget Committee

HCRJ BUDGET COMMITTEE PURPOSE:

“The Budget Committee will consist of at least three (3) members, one of whom will be the Treasurer, who may not serve as chair. The committee will review and approve a proposed budget prepared by the Executive Director and Treasurer. The budget will then be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval before being submitted to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. Additional responsibilities will include periodic review of account receivables and of developing a policy (or evaluating current policy) in conjunction with the Exec Dir, for the collection of outstanding account receivables. The Budget Committee Chair will also be a member of the Investment Committee.”

BUDGET COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES (FY 2023-2024):

1. Review/ Clean Accounts Receivables
2. Align Religious School Registrations with Membership Account Payments
3. Close a Sizable Budget Gap (approximately \$100,000)
4. Review/Approve Proposed 2024-2025 Budget

BUDGET COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES (FY 2023-2024):

Quarter 1 activities included a review and assessment of HCRJ's “true” membership numbers, past due aging, budgetary impact, and gaining an understanding of HCRJ's chart of accounts. With the Executive Director we implemented a new process by which past due accounts were contacted through a series of follow-up communications and implemented criteria for old account removal. In the future, in addition to approving new members, HCRJ Board of Trustees will review inactive members for removal from the rolls. Through these efforts, HCRJ was able to raise \$15,000 in previously uncollected dues, retire outdated accounts, and refine our understanding of projected income.

The committee also determined a stronger link was needed between Religious School Registration and Membership Dues; that is to say, there was previously no mechanism for follow up between religious school registration and accounts being in good standing despite HCRJ policy stipulating that accounts be in good standing prior to the start of religious school. To ensure that 2024-2025 school registration and dues payments would be linked, systematic modifications were made to ShulCloud. In addition, we aligned the payment schedule for religious school with the fiscal years' membership for all families, whether paying in full or through a payment plan.

Quarters 2,3,4 were focused on closing a projected budgetary shortfall due to the unexpected loss of an anonymous donor not known during the 2023-2024 budget planning process.

HCRJ has a history of a once-yearly Annual Campaign fundraiser. Our Budget and Philanthropy Committees (Marc Levinson, Chair) began to meet jointly and decided to close the gap by crafting a Matching Gift Challenge launched in January 2024 as a follow up to the initial Annual Fund campaign letter. Through these efforts, HCRJ raised an additional \$88,689.57 to strengthen HCRJ's future and close the gap. The Philanthropy and Budget committees proposed that a Matching Challenge continue as standard practice as part of the Annual Campaign and philanthropy efforts moving forward.

We have reviewed and approved the proposed 2024-2025 HCRJ Budget.

Respectfully submitted,
Anat Shaw and Ray Morgenstern
Budget Committee Co-Chairs

Membership Committee

The HCRJ Membership Committee is delighted to present a comprehensive report on the outstanding year we have had in terms of membership growth and engagement. This past year has proven to be one of our most successful yet, with a significant increase in membership across all categories. Despite nearly tripling our member count from the previous year, a key focus for us was ensuring the accuracy and strength of our membership numbers, resulting in a more precise representation of our community support.

Central to our growth has been a simple yet powerful strategy – asking. By inviting our community members to officially join and support HCRJ, we received an overwhelmingly positive response. The deep-rooted love for HCRJ, whether for our diverse programs, dynamic religious school, esteemed rabbi, or unique Shabbat experiences, made the decision to join an easy and enthusiastic "yes."

Throughout the year, our committee aimed high and successfully worked towards our set initiatives. Discussions spanned various membership aspects, which included: building upon previous initiatives to enhance new member integration, emphasizing the value of full membership, refining membership structures, and organizing engaging events for both new and existing members. Noteworthy among our initiatives was the inception of the Board Buddies program, designed to bolster connections with current members through increased outreach efforts during significant occasions. This proactive outreach not only increased engagement but also led to the recruitment of new committee members, further fortifying our resolve to expand membership outreach, especially targeting new families and individuals within the Houston community.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our members for their unwavering support and commitment to HCRJ. Your dedication fuels our mission, and we welcome any feedback on enhancing your experience or insights into what you cherish most about HCRJ. In these challenging times, we want you to feel a true sense of belonging – whether you are a longstanding member or exploring what HCRJ has to offer, you are valued as part of our extended family.

For the year starting July 2023 to May of 2024, we added 43 new memberships to our HCRJ family. The 43 memberships were in the following categories:

- Full Membership: 27
- Associate Memberships: 14
- 30-34: 1
- Under 30: 1

These memberships included 18 children from kindergarten to 12th grade.

As of May 2024, the total membership at HCRJ is:

- Full Memberships: 219
- Associate Memberships: 70
- 30-34: 5
- Under 30: 2

Respectfully submitted,
Cory Baum
Membership Committee Chair

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee and Board of Trustees are pleased to recommend that the following persons serve as executive officers for 2-year terms beginning on July 1, 2024, and ending on June 30, 2026:

President: Bruce Shelby
Vice President: Laura Rosenfield
Secretary: Lauren Salomon
Treasurer: Amie Hill
Past President: JoAnn Innerarity

The Nominating Committee and Board of Trustees are pleased to recommend the following nominees to the Board for 3-year terms beginning on July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2027:

Cory Baum Jake Hoffman Victoria Lazar

The Nominating Committee and Board of Trustees are pleased to recommend that the following previously elected trustees continue for the remaining two years of their 3-year terms ending June 30, 2026:

Kitty Kahn Ray Morgenstern Anat Shaw

The Nominating Committee and Board of Trustees are pleased to recommend that the following previously elected trustees continue for the remaining one year of their 3-year terms ending June 30, 2025:

Naomi Rosborough

The Nominating Committee and Board of Trustees are pleased to recommend that the following nominees fill the remaining one year of the 3-year terms vacated by Lauren Salomon and Amie Hill, respectively, ending June 30, 2025:

Stacey Cook Don Hawkins

Respectfully submitted,
Adam Forman
Nominating Committee Chair

Philanthropy Committee

We focused on two avenues to benefit the congregation this year: the Annual Campaign (and, in particular, the Matching Gift Challenge), and strengthening the L'Dor V'Dor Legacy League (those who made an outright gift or a pledged bequest to our L'Dor V'Dor Endowment).

Philanthropy (from the Greek *philos*, “love,” and *anthropos*, “human”) translates as “love of humanity.” That’s exactly what our congregants and nonmembers alike demonstrated by their generosity toward these two initiatives. While we hope that the bequests to the L'Dor V'Dor Endowment will not be realized for a long time, they exemplify the selflessness of those who plant trees under whose shade they will not sit — truly passing their philanthropic legacy from generation to generation. We are honored to have 21 members of the L'Dor V'Dor Legacy League.

Faced with the unexpected loss of an anonymous donor who regularly contributed a substantial amount (due to relocation, not dissatisfaction with HCRJ), two congregant families created a Matching Gift Challenge. They generously gave \$35,000 as an incentive to inspire other gifts, and their challenge was not only met but exceeded — with 81 congregants and 28 nonmembers (who wanted to show their appreciation for our programming) contributing an additional \$53,689.57 as of May 7, several of whom made multiple gifts! This brought us to just under \$89,000 of our \$100,000 goal (with the effort continuing until June 30... so there’s still time). This also proved that it’s better — and more sustainable — to have smaller gifts from a larger number of stakeholders than a lot of large gifts from just one! (An old saying about “not putting all your eggs in one basket” comes to mind.) We are also grateful to the 53 individuals and families who gave to the Annual Campaign in 2023 before we began the Matching Gift Challenge.

HCRJ is an incredible community, and we greatly appreciate everyone who contributes their time, talent and treasure toward making our congregation safe, strong and vibrant. Thank you!

Submitted with profound gratitude,
Marc Levinson
Philanthropy Committee Chair

Rabbinical Liaison and Human Resources Committee

The Rabbinical Liaison and Human Resources Committee met with Rabbi Gross so that he could share the annual review outline he developed for discussion with the office staff as well as relate his suggestions regarding job responsibilities. The committee then met with HCRJ staff to encourage discussion of newly created job descriptions, giving staff the opportunity to make suggestions regarding their specific responsibilities. Procedures for these discussions were followed as outlined in HCRJ's new Human Resources booklet now given to HCRJ employees when they sign their contract. The goal of the committee each year is to continue these procedures to keep lines of communication open among committee members, the Rabbi, and HCRJ employees.

Respectfully submitted,
Ed Hurwitz
Rabbinical Liaison and Human Resources Committee Chair

Religious School Committee

HCRJ Religious School Director Betti Buck has continued to grow and enhance our Religious School through progressive programming and intentional efforts to expand in Hebrew language learning.

For the 2023-2024 academic year, enrollment increased significantly to 111 students. Traditionally, student enrollment has remained level in the 80s. Several new students have joined religious school later, in sixth grade, which is an indication of strong interest in B'nai Mitzvah preparation. There has been some discussion regarding the extra pressure on teachers, parents and children to get these students prepared. Fortunately, this class is intrinsically motivated and eager to learn!

This year's calendar allowed us to celebrate most holidays in school. Opening day included a High Holiday educational rotation where our students made shofars in the Shofar Factory and learned about concepts such as Tashlich, Sukkot, Chanukah, Tu B'shevat, Purim (carnival and Ozrim-led play), and Passover (a model Seder where children decorated and assembled their own seder plate) were also celebrated through fun, informative activities for the whole family. Cooking, art, and Hebrew movement rotations reinforced the students' knowledge as well as their ability to connect each holiday with certain symbols, foods, names, games, and much more.

Kindergarten celebrated their Consecration ceremony on October 27th and received miniature Torahs representing the beginning of their Jewish learning. There was 100% participation from 1st and 2nd-grade families in the L'dor V'dor Program on February 25th, where children led a beautiful presentation and families shared stories, items, and values passed down from generation to generation. M'esibat Siddur was celebrated on April 12th for 3rd graders and their families with a dinner followed by a ceremony, where the children received a siddur with a beautiful cover decorated by their parents. Special assemblies were led by students throughout the year, including a 4th-grade presentation about leadership and a 5th-grade presentation about Chesed (acts of kindness). In addition to preparing for their B'nai mitzvot, the 6th graders visited the Holocaust Museum and read poetry reflecting on this very moving experience at Shabbat Services on May 3rd.

The 7th graders have passionately embraced their class mitzvah project. They raised record-breaking funds for Texas Children's Hospital through a car wash (\$700) and bake sale (\$500). We have celebrated 15 B'nai Mitzvot this year! More Hebrew has been added into the service, including additional prayers, larger portions of the parsha, the addition of troupe for many eager learners, and a longer service.

The older students, Confirmation Class (8th-9th grades) and Ozrim (10th-12th grades), have begun to form meaningful bonds. Together, they participated in a pizza party and Escape Room on December 10th. The Confirmation class remained active with Interfaith Youth Houston by participating in religious traditions – Christian (exploration of instrumental music in worship), Muslim (Iftar service and feast) and sharing Jewish traditions, as well as multi-faith service projects including bicycle building at Christ the King Lutheran and Mitzvah Day at HCRJ. Confirmation Shabbat will be held on May 31st to celebrate the dedication and growth of our 9th graders. Both 8th and 9th graders will lead the prayers and share inspiring words they wrote at the Confirmation Retreat in Schulenburg, Texas. Our 13 Ozrim bring a lot of energy and fresh ideas into each classroom and really roll their sleeves up to tackle every assignment, including

growing their Hebrew knowledge so that they can better teach the younger students. We honored our 3 graduating seniors on May 3rd.

Torah Tots, our preschool program, has really gained momentum. Siblings and new families fill the social hall with song, crafts and a lot of fun movement. It's a joy to see these young kids eagerly embrace ruach (spirit)! This early childhood program is essential for filling future kindergarten classes. We truly appreciate all members advertising our free and open (no enrollment or rsvp required) Torah Tots program to the community.

There has been a lot of interest in music, and a youth choir was created to teach Hebrew and Jewish values through Israeli songs and music. This group started meeting in April outside of their religious school commitment, after Sunday school hours, and prepared to perform at the Shabbat B'yachad Religious School Teacher Appreciation and Senior Graduation Service on May 3rd.

Parent involvement is essential to create community. Our monthly family breakfast tradition has continued the first Sunday of each month. Families sign up to contribute ingredients, volunteers set up the buffet, and even some of our younger students look forward to wielding the responsibility of the big knives to prepare fruit. Beyond bagels and cream cheese and the promise of the prized sugary donut holes (which most definitely motivate kids to arrive early), families engage in conversation at regular intervals and make connections. For many, these checkpoints allow for shared ideas and resources as everyone embraces both minor and major milestones.

As a reminder, it takes more than one gathering a month to create community. Parents and extended family are encouraged to join for Religious School assemblies and Shabbat B'Yachad. Even just skipping the carpool line and walking into the building for drop off and/or pick up makes huge progress towards recognizing faces, learning names, finding common ground, and ultimately forming new friendships.

Religious School concluded classes on May 5, 2024, bringing a fulfilling and enriching academic year to a close. A few parents have expressed interest in teaching. Please reach out to Betti if you have an interest as she will be conducting a new teacher training over the summer.

HaKarat Hatov (recognizing the good and blessings all around us) and gratitude for our amazing HCRJ teachers and staff!

Respectfully submitted,
Amie Weisberg Hill
Religious School Committee Chair

Ritual Committee

High Holy Day Worship

This past year, we had about the same attendance as the previous year for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. Each service was held in person and live streamed.

Weekly Worship

Our attendance has been steady, and particularly strong during our special events such as Purim Shabbat and Rodeo Shabbat. We still have some who stream each week as well. The Rabbi, Mike Kahn and Yana are doing a wonderful job. Our Shabbat Service on the first Friday of the month, Shabbat B'yachad (Shabbat Together), remains popular. This service typically includes the HCRJ choir, which is now directed by Monica Isomura, a professional musician who has taken the choir to the next level. Shabbat B'yachad starts at 7:15pm. Shabbat Services on other Friday nights are more traditional and start at 6:30pm.

Special services which drew crowds from around the community included Purim with Karaoke following, Rodeo Shabbat followed by dancing, Church Without Walls for MLK weekend, a special M'esibat Siddur ceremony for second and third graders and Autism Awareness Shabbat.

HCRJ Seder

The congressional seder was back at HCRJ this year. We sold out, with over 160 attendees. Everyone that attended had a great Passover experience. In addition to the traditional seder, a family seder was added a week later to better accommodate demand, as well as adapt to the needs of families with young children.

Respectfully submitted,
Lauren Salomon
Ritual Committee Chair

Security Committee

Accomplishments

- Continued great partnership with Aaron Pena and his team of officers
- Improvements from the 2023 Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP): 30 cloud-based, high-resolution cameras with local and remote monitoring, new access control systems at the administrative office door, main entry door and patio gate, significantly-enhanced exterior lighting along the entry drive, parking lot and main entry canopy and wrought iron fencing along Bering and along the main entry drive from Bering to the eastern edge of the building
- Non-Grant Improvements: 911 Key Box, Plexiglass on Patio Gate, Parking Lot Restriping with Arrows
- Created Incident/Suspicious Person Report
- Responded to member concerns (i.e. Religious School families after October 7th) with new plan in place and a third officer
- Working on Religious School security matters – having the principal sit in the foyer the entire Religious School day, creating a sign-out sheet for kids being picked up early, designating one room as a parent hang out room during Religious School, setting up fire drill for the early fall and more
- The committee approved Betti Buck carrying a firearm at work because she has military training

Coming Next

- Applied for the 2024 Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP): Barrier above all metal framework and gate on the west side of the property, new light on the existing east parking lot pole, unprotected glass to be replaced with Bullet Resistant glass and/or armor coating, public address system through the facility and hiring off duty-peace officers
- Religious School Security Workshop – Evacuation, Shelter in place drills, use of AED (automated external defibrillator) and Stop the Bleed training
- Prepare for High Holy Days

Respectfully submitted,
Kitty Kahn
Security Committee Chair