

“HOW-TO GUIDE” FOR SINAI CONNECTIONS LEADS AND LIAISONS

Sinai Connections is a gathering of Temple members building community. It is about the relationships we foster, the common interests we share and the support and caring we give each other. Relationships grow organically, they take time and commitment. By working together, we hope to build Sinai Connections throughout the Temple Membership.

SINAI CONNECTIONS GOAL/ MISSION STATEMENT

To strengthen Temple’s culture by developing innovative and inclusive ways for Temple members to connect and enhance their relationships with each other and Temple.

SINAI CONNECTIONS LEADERSHIP GROUP (SCLG)

Sinai Connections Leadership Group provides strategic direction and leadership to implement the vision and yearly strategies, in partnership with Temple’s Director of Community Engagement.

SCLG MEMBERS

(as of March 2021):

Marilyn Cukier, Phyllis Johnston, Norm Katzman, Rhonda Singer, Marci Trachter-Shane, Suzanne Witkin, Joanne Wolfson and Johanna Novis, Director of Community Engagement

ROLE OF THE SINAI CONNECTIONS LEADERSHIP GROUP

The Leadership Group shall:

- Develop annual goal(s), strategies and tactics.
- Create events that contribute to growing connections between Temple members (such as Oneg Shabbats, Passover Kiddush, etc.).
- Foster the creation of new Sinai Connections Groups.
- Act as Liaisons, providing guidance and support to the Group Lead(s).
- Provide advice where they have special skills or knowledge.
- Use personal networks to engage other members, raise the profile and build partnerships with other Temple groups.
- Encourage and engage in social media by liking, commenting and helping to create items to post on Temple’s Social Media sites.

Role of the Liaison:

- Works with the Leads and assists them to grow their groups.
- Facilitates the fostering of relationships amongst the members.
- Helps the Lead(s) with ideas for “Doing Jewish”.
- Assists in marketing of groups.
- Shares the history of Sinai Connections.
- Supports the Lead(s) with challenging issues that might arise.
- Stays connected with the Lead(s) and the group.

Role of the Lead

The role of the Lead(s) is to organize and manage their individual group including:

- Deciding on the date and time of meetings.
- Arranging for space (or a Zoom session).
- Marketing.
- Sending out meeting reminders (including Zoom links and passcodes).
- Keeping the group’s Liaison in the loop.

The Lead is also responsible for helping to develop relationships within their group by:

- Introducing the Brit and ensuring it is used as a basis for relationship building.
- Acting as a welcomer/greeter.
- Encouraging everyone to participate.
- Moderating the discussion of new ideas/ suggestions/projects/books/Groups etc.
- Participating in the group.
- Being cognizant of attendance at meetings and ensuring that someone contacts absent members.
- Sending condolence notifications to the group.
- Working with the group to achieve consensus or address any concerns that arise.

SINAI CONNECTIONS WEBPAGE AND TOOL KIT

The main page of the Sinai Connections website is designed for all Temple members. On the right-hand there is a button titled “Tool Kit for Leads”. The password for this page is: COnnections (The ‘0’ is a zero). The Tool Kit webpage is the equivalent of a procedure manual, providing information on how to start up and grow a Sinai Connections Group. The various documents on this page provide the Leads with additional support to address a number of situations.

Note: These pages are constantly revised. If you think these pages need to be updated, please contact your Liaison.

HOW TO START A SINAI CONNECTIONS GROUP

A Temple member reaches out to a member of the Sinai Connections Leadership Group or Marcie Goldberg, Temple's Programs and Operations Coordinator, with their idea.

- Marcie will connect the member who wants to start a Sinai Connections group to a Liaison, who will evaluate and discuss the possibility.
- The Liaison discusses the idea and explains the structure ie: need for a strong Lead/Co-lead, living the Brit, and "Doing Jewish".
- A group can be formed by targeting specific individuals or by marketing.
- The Lead(s) can decide when to schedule their group's meetings.
- Groups can meet anywhere convenient to them.
- If groups plan to meet at Temple, the Lead(s) should work with Marcie, who looks after room requisitions, room set up, supplies, refreshments and custodial staff. (Note: outside food is not allowed.) Alternatively, Marcie can set up a Zoom link for the group.
- Marcie receives all inquiries from congregants who may want to join a Sinai Connections group and forwards them to the appropriate Sinai Connections Lead(s) and Liaison.

It is *imperative* for the Lead(s) to send Marcie up-to-date contact lists for their group in case of early closure, weather and/or special unforeseen situations. The respective Liaison should also be kept apprised of the members/numbers in each group.

SINAI CONNECTIONS GROUPS CAN EVOLVE

Experience has shown that Sinai Connections groups can evolve. For example, Sinai Stitchers started as one group and divided into two groups to suit the needs of the members. One group meets weekly during the day, the other meets one evening a month. The Power of Posture group separated into two groups when there were too many people to fit in a room. Keep in mind that for a group to split, some member(s) in the new group will need to volunteer to be the Lead(s).

Each group can impose their own criteria for when to split or cap a group size. Once a group solidifies, it may be difficult for new members to join. Starting a second group might be advisable. Other groups may be more inclusive and anyone who comes is welcome. The groups can decide for themselves.

Groups may also decide to reschedule the time or frequency of meetings. When this occurs, the Lead needs to relay that information to their Liaison so the necessary changes in room allotments, Zoom sessions and marketing can be made.

MARKETING

Advertising is done in conjunction with your group's Liaison who will ensure the information is appropriately updated in E-Vents, Ei-ru'im and all other Temple communications. A reminder of the cut-off date for advertising in Ei-ru-im, which is approximately two months prior to publication date, will be sent to the Lead(s) by their respective Liaison.

FEES AND EXPENDITURES

If a group's activities require any expenditures, (such as hiring an instructor, purchasing supplies or booking ice time), the cost must be covered by the participants. The Lead is responsible for collecting and recording these funds so that all monetary transactions, fees and expenditures, are transparent. Temple Office does not deal with monies collected and used for Sinai Connections groups.

ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT

When playing a sport, such as Curling or a game such as Mahjong, it is important to have sufficient participants. It is good practice for the Lead(s) to send an email ahead of the meeting, asking for an RSVP to ensure a critical number.

The Lead(s) should track attendance at all meetings in order to identify if someone is repeatedly absent. If that is the case, the Lead(s) should ensure that someone contacts the absent group member. We try to support one another when someone has taken ill or is having difficulties.

Depending on the situation, the Lead(s) might want to pass this information to our Senior Staff Representative, Johanna Novis, Director of Community Engagement, so it can trigger a call from the clergy.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

When contacting your group it is important to respect the members' personal privacy. The Lead(s) may ask their members for permission to share everyone's email addresses amongst the group. This information should be sent as a shared document. The preferred document is an Excel spreadsheet (see the following example). If any member of the group does not want to share their contact information please respect their privacy and do not add them to the contact list.

When sending emails to the group, the Lead's email address should go in the 'To' line and the members' email addresses should be entered in the 'BCC' line as in the following example. This will help prevent fraudulent use of members' email addresses and avoid bombardment of unwanted emails due to people using 'Reply All'.

To: leads@rogers.com ▾

Cc:

Bcc: member1@rogers.com ▾ member2@rogers.com ▾

Subject: re: Group Contact List

Message Size: 27 KB



Sinai Connections
Group Contact List.xlsx
21 KB

CONDOLENCE NOTIFICATIONS

All Leads are added to the list of Temple members who receive condolence notification emails. If a notice relates to one of your group members, the Lead is expected to send an email to the group informing them of the death. Please personalize the email, for example:

It's with sadness that I report the death of _____, the _____ of our fellow Sinai Connections member _____. For more information see _____ (include a link for either Benjamin or Steeles Memorial if there is any information on one of those sites).

WHAT SETS SINAI CONNECTIONS GROUPS APART FROM OTHER GROUPS?

1. Sinai Connections Groups are based on our Brit. This Brit is a contract between the group members. It is the basis for the relationships Sinai Connections groups strive to foster. When starting a new Sinai Connections group, Leads are encouraged to introduce and discuss this Brit. It can be helpful to refer to, if at any time, Leads or their members feel that some participants are not adhering to the Brit.
2. In order to get to know one another in a safe, non-confrontational way, Leads are encouraged to focus discussions on “open ended questions”. These are questions that mean something to everyone and have no right or wrong answer. For some examples see [Sinai Connections Conversation Starters](#).
3. Sinai Connections groups strive to “Do Jewish”. This includes adhering to the Brit and supporting each other in times of need. It will mean different things to different groups. For example, Sinai Stitchers knit hats for the IDF and baby hats for newborns in our congregation. La Connexion Française learned French vocabulary associated with Chanukah and discussed how the holiday was celebrated in France. They also got together for Mimouna, a Sephardic celebration that takes place at the end of Passover.

WHAT TO DO WHEN NON-TEMPLE MEMBERS WANT TO JOIN YOUR SINAI CONNECTIONS GROUP

The opportunity to belong to a Sinai Connections group is one of the privileges of being a Temple Sinai member. Sometimes non-members want to join one of our groups. Dealing with these situations can require a delicate conversation. We usually welcome the non-member to stay for the current session and explain that there are many opportunities for non-members to come to Temple Sinai programs, but, in order to participate in a Sinai Connections group, they must be a Temple member. We direct them to speak to Temple's Membership Services Coordinator or Executive Director about membership opportunities.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH ISSUES WITHIN A GROUP

If uncomfortable situations arise within your group, please refer to the following documents:

- [The Sinai Connections Brit](#)
- [ACCT Model - A Tool to Help Leads Deal with Challenges](#)
- [Taking Control from Hijackers](#)

You can also approach your Liaison for assistance. Sensitivity to people's concerns is of utmost importance. Remember, we are building community through Sinai Connections.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

One way to measure success of a Sinai Connections group is through relationships, 'Doing Jewish' and impact.

- Relationships: Are we helping congregants build deep relationships with people who will be there for them in times of joy and difficulty?
- "Doing Jewish": Are we finding ways to "Do Jewish" by incorporating Jewish traditions, wisdom and/or understanding to our groups?
- Impact: In what ways are we having an impact on our Temple Sinai community?

Sinai Connections is a work in progress. We welcome new and innovative ideas for groups. With the help of the Sinai Connections Leads we hope to foster new relationships, share and support each other while enjoying common interests, and together, build our Temple community.

