Consolidated Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings Report
Presented to the
Congregation Albert Rabbi Search Committee (RSC)
By the RSC Stakeholder Advisory Group
August 13, 2020

What do you value most at Congregation Albert?
- The strong sense of community
- Consistent services
- A willingness to put Jewish values into action (such as with asylum seekers and work with homeless assistance organizations)
- CA’s history as the oldest synagogue in NM

Opportunities, primary future goals:
- Opportunity: A Rabbi will serve as the spokesperson/outreach person for Congregation Albert, and work with communities across the region.
- Opportunity: Greater clergy engagement with all stakeholder membership groups
- Goal: Better programming to encourage diversity at our congregation, specifically:
  - Much better programming for our school-aged kids in terms of youth groups and opportunities to be involved between bar/bat mitzvah and confirmation
  - To embrace Jews of Color (JOC) and diverse groups within membership, and provide opportunities for the Congregation to grow and learn together.
- Goal: Increasing participation and membership via outreach to non-members
- Opportunity and Goal: Collaborations with other synagogues
- Opportunity and Goal: Taking a strong stance on social justice issues, including providing education to membership about social justice issues and how they relate to Jewish values.

What qualities do you appreciate in a Rabbi?
- The consensus of the stakeholder groups was a desire for the Congregation Albert Rabbi Search Committee (CA RSC) to prioritize experience over age in the selection of a new Rabbi.
- Some stakeholder groups did discuss the gender and sexual identity of the new Rabbi. During the Advisory group consensus meeting. Facilitator Sarah Newman explained that the gender and/or sexual identity of the new rabbi was not to be a discussion topic. The CCAR is working to address inherent bias in the rabbi selection process, and now requires rabbinic search committees to participate in inherent bias training prior to considering any candidates. Members of the CA RSC are currently in the process of completing inherent bias training.
- Experience with:
  - Working with families and children (preschool-high school aged)
  - Working in highly diverse congregations, including congregations with a strong JOC/LGBTQ/Disabled/non-Ashkenazi presence (or willingness to learn)
  - Educating congregations on social justice issues and discussing why action on particular matters is in line with our Jewish values. The Rabbi should be able to take a stance on
social justice issues as long as it is based in the context of Jewish values and teachings, and not just on her/his personal beliefs..

- Facilitating discussions where there is a difference of opinion. The majority of the Advisory Group members concurred that the rabbi can engage in political discussions as long as s/he is willing to respectfully listen to divergent opinions, and not endorse or suggest voting for a specific candidate or party.

- Extensive knowledge of Hebrew and sacred texts
- A growth mindset
  - Someone who is open to feedback and is an experienced active listener.
  - Someone who will lead the Congregation through growth and changes
- Someone who is present and engaged in Board of Trustees’ meetings and committee work (not required to attend all committee meetings)
- Someone who will engage with all of CA’s stakeholder groups, who wants to learn about the people and the varied interests at CA and wants to be involved.
- Someone who is approachable.
- A willingness to make services accessible to those with disabilities and special needs, such as having a sign language interpreter at every service (not just High Holy Days) and providing closed captioning for virtual services
- Spirituality over religiousness:
  - Willing to be a spiritual guide for the community. Someone who is open to more interpretations of God than the big man in the clouds.
  - Is open to and supportive of the full spectrum of what it means to be Jewish and how one lives a Jewish life
- Stakeholder groups agreed that the Rabbi should not be the CEO CA, but should have an understanding of how the business side of a congregation operates. This seems like a good opportunity for the RSC to educate the community on the role of the Rabbi. Some, but not all, groups specified wanting a rabbi who would be willing to address current issues identified in some stakeholder meetings, such as microaggressions and racism within the CA community.

**Draws to Albuquerque:**

- The potential to make a BIG IMPACT in a place where the community needs to be united and inspired.
- The opportunity to be the primary spokesperson for the Jewish community throughout NM (as the leader of the largest and oldest synagogue in the state).
- NM’s involvement with Jews seeking Spanish citizenship through repatriation - a great pull for a Rabbi who values diversity.
- Accessibility to nature both in and within a few hours driving distance from Albuquerque.
- NM’s weather.
- Albuquerque is a diverse, welcoming and open community.
- A generally lower cost of living.
- The landscape is similar to Israel.