

# Theme Minyan Presentation and Guidelines

## What is a Theme Minyan?

A Theme Minyan is a low-stress, friendly gathering hosted and facilitated by temple members occurring directly after the weekly evening minyan. Theme-minyanim have two important purposes:

1. To encourage more people to attend evening minyan.
2. To build Community by bringing together temple members and interested parties to discuss a topic of mutual interest.

The Ladle Fund at Temple Emunah sponsors these events (food, drinks and publicity costs).

Theme Minyanim are interactive facilitated conversations, rather than lectures or presentations, and are organized and facilitated by temple members without an invested interest in gaining clientele for a business, selling a product, or advocating for a specific point of view. Sometimes a specialist may be invited by the Minyanim host(s) to participate in a Theme Minyan to help add knowledge to a particular topic of discussion.

We at Temple Emunah are so excited by the momentum of the Theme Minyanim, and have hosted more than 65 theme Minyanim to date! We have seen both an increase in our Minyan attendance as well as making many wonderful new friends. This is possible because of people like you, who have wonderful ideas and wish to share their passion with others! Thank you!

Theme Minyanim have also captured attention in the local and national Jewish community: CJ Magazine [Voices of Conservative Judaism] for instance in July, 2015, described Temple Emunah's Theme Minyanim the following way: [“A synagogue finds a creative way to increase minyan attendance while connecting members to each other”](http://www.cjvoices.org/article/how-to-grow-your-daily-minyan-two-creative-approaches/). (http://www.cjvoices.org/article/how-to-grow-your-daily-minyan-two-creative-approaches/)

## Examples of Past Theme Minyanim

Davids	Jewish Humor	Stepmothers Night	Israel
Miriams	Science	Poetry	Gann Academy
MIT	Crafts (knitting, crochet)	Healthcare Professionals	
Play Reading	Emunah Riders	Scrabble	Caregivers

## Theme Minyanim Guidelines

A Theme Minyan topic is proposed by a 'Host'. The Host(s) of the Theme Minyan is a temple member and has the following responsibilities:

1. **Confirming a topic and date**
2. **Publicity**
3. **Room set-up**
4. **Refreshments**
5. **Facilitating**
6. **Clean up**

These responsibilities can be performed by the Host or shared by a small group of temple members. Each Theme Minyan also requires a Discussion Facilitator. Because of their interest in the topic, the Host may often also be the Facilitator. It is recommended that the Host(s) personally invites a few fellow congregants to attend the Theme Minyan. These events are most successful when a small group is assured to attend. The Host is supported by a member of the Theme Minyan Committee and by Jodie Parmer, the temple's family educator.

### 1. **Confirming a Theme Minyan topic and date**

So you have an idea for a Theme Minyan? That's great! The first thing to do is confirm that your topic/idea meets the Theme Minyan definition at the beginning of this document. [Contact](#) [Joelle Gunther](#) or [Anne Miller](#), the first point of contact, to talk about your idea.

If your idea fits as a Theme Minyan, and after you have finalized your idea with Joelle or Anne, here is how the process works to get the date on the calendar:

1. [Email](#) [Jodie Parmer](#), our synagogue Program Director/Family Educator, with your idea and confirm the name(s) of the Host/Facilitator.
2. Jodie will get back to you with any questions and ideas as well as with possible dates to host the Theme Minyan.
3. Confirm which date works best for you.
4. Jodie will reserve the date and begin preparation for publicity of the Theme Minyan (see Section 2 below).

### 2. **Preparation for a Theme Minyan Publicity**

At least 3 weeks ahead of the Theme Minyan provide Jodie Parmer ([jparmer@Templeemunah.org](mailto:jparmer@Templeemunah.org)) with a more detailed description. Jodie will publicize the event in the appropriate places. Jodie is in charge of creating the Theme Minyanim flyers and sending out PR on the Temple end. A member of the Theme Minyan committee can also help you brainstorm ideas for publicity.

As the Theme Minyan Host we ask you to also publicize the event via Emunah Talks, and to invite friends and family who may be interested in participating in your Theme Minyan - personal invitations make a big difference. A reminder: Theme Minyanim begin at 7:30 pm with evening minyan in the Large Chapel. All PR should note that the event begins at 7:30 pm.

### **3. Meeting Materials and Room Set-up**

A week before the Theme Minyan, contact the Temple office (Marilyn, [office@templeemunah.org](mailto:office@templeemunah.org)) to discuss how you want the room to be set-up (see Annex 1). Typically chairs are set up in either a circle/U-shape, or around the tables. If you have any additional needs, such as a projector and screen, document copying, let Marilyn know at this time. The Host supplies his/her own laptop computer, if needed. Document copying will be billed to the Ladle Fund which sponsors the Theme Minyanim.

### **4. The night of the Theme Minyan**

#### **Lights and Logistics**

Please make sure to come an hour before the start of the minyan to make sure the room has been set up according to the original plan, and to bring the food. For lights and logistics details, please see Annex 2.

#### **Refreshments/Snacks**

There is a table by the window for refreshments, and the hot water and a Keurig will be set up. Remember to turn on the power to the hot water and Keurig. The standard set-up includes tea, coffee pods, sweetener, small plates, napkins, spoons, hot and cold cups.

The Host is asked to purchase refreshments/snacks for the evening, which will be reimbursed through the Ladle Fund. For reimbursement, label these receipts 'Ladle Fund Theme Minyan, date of Theme Minyan, your name' and give to Alisa Billings or leave in temple mailbox outside the main office marked: For The Attention Of: Accounting Manager, Alisa Billings.

Refreshments and snacks must be provided following the rules of Kashrut and the kitchen and food rules for Temple Emunah. For recommended refreshments or snacks, see Annex 2.

## 5. Facilitating the Discussion

The responsibilities of the Host/Discussion Facilitator are very important. At the end of Minyan the Facilitator invites everyone to come to the Theme Minyan.

Once in the meeting room, the Facilitator welcomes everyone and encourages them to enjoy the drinks and snacks throughout the evening. The Facilitator can then spend a few minutes asking attendees to introduce themselves, providing an overview of the topic, and explaining/describing their interest or connection to it, before opening the topic for discussion.

The Facilitator can follow with either a personal story or questions to stimulate the discussion. It is important for the Facilitator to keep the discussion going and enable all attendees to have the opportunity to speak. To help with this it may be appropriate for the Facilitator to gently interject if one or two people appear to be dominating the conversation.

Remember, each discussion will have a life of its own and does not always go the way of the initial vision. It is ok to allow the discussion to develop its own life while still staying on the topic.

The conversation usually concludes about 9:00pm.

## 6. Clean Up

Remember:

- ✓ Turn off/unplug the hot water and Keurig machines before leaving.
- ✓ Collect all purchased leftover food and take home.
- ✓ Return unused almond milk to refrigerator.
- ✓ Put trash in the trash can and return glass plates/bowls to the butcher block table in the kitchen to be washed.
- ✓ Turn off the lights in all the rooms that you used. (The kitchen light switch panel is on the wall next to the dishwasher.) If you are the last group in the building, turn off the lights in the upstairs and downstairs lobbies.
- ✓ Lock the upper parking lot and main entrance doors. If you do not know how to lock the doors, ask someone in the office for instructions prior to the event.

Please note: This is an “*evolving*” document so if you have any comments or other instructions that you would have found helpful and think should be included in this guide, please contact Anne Miller ([annehlmiller@verizon.net](mailto:annehlmiller@verizon.net)), as your input will help future Hosts. Thank you.

**Annex 1: Pictures of Typical Theme Minyan Room Setup:**



## **Annex 2: Lights and Logistics**

If your event is on a Tuesday night in the Katz Meeting Room, please do not touch the Wednesday morning breakfast table. It will be labeled. If the Katz Meeting Room is unavailable, the Theme Minyan discussion can be set-up in the Multi-purpose Room. The Large Chapel can be used as a last choice.

There is a light switch control panel near the door in the Katz Meeting Room. There is a control panel in the hall to the upper parking lot that controls the hall light and also controls the Katz Meeting Room. Do not be surprised if someone leaving the building through the hall turns off the hall lights and unwittingly turns off the Katz Meeting Room lights.

## **Annex 3: Recommended refreshments/snacks**

Below are some guidelines for providing refreshments and snacks for Theme Minyanim. Please read through this section carefully and if you have questions contact the one of the Temple office staff who will be able to help. Note that home-cooked food is not allowed; only foods with acceptable kosher symbols is allowed.

**Fruit** - *grapes or clementines work well.*

Keep all fruit in its original packaging: Do not pre-cut or wash fruit. You may wash/cut the fruit in the Temple kitchen. Ask someone in the Temple office (during office hours) to show you where to find appropriate knives, cutting boards & serving plates.

**Cookies** - *1 or 2 choices.*

Ensure all items (other than fruit) have a Temple acceptable kosher symbol. The easiest one to find is an O with a U inside of it, or a K. There are other kosher symbols which are acceptable, and you can find a list of them on the Temple website: Learning – Kashrut Guidelines. If you are not sure, bring cookies into the office to ask a Temple staff member during office hours if it is acceptable.

**Salty Snack** - *Chips or pretzels.*

These are optional. Ensure a Temple-accepted kosher symbol is on the package.

**Beverages** - Water (fill pitcher in kitchen with ice & water), seltzer, and soda are good choices. For non-dairy creamer, parve almond milk is available in the Temple refrigerator. Additional almond milk is in the 'food closet' near the loading dock.

**Serving bowls:** Clear, glass serving bowls and plates can be found in the stainless steel cabinet nearest the dairy sink. Extra paper goods can be found in the paper closet (to the left of the loading dock by the kitchen).

