**Ohavi Zedek Synagogue Membership Financial Support Guidelines**

Whether you are here once a day, once a week or once a year, the OZ community is here ready to support you 24/7/365. A synagogue membership is not something we buy, like membership at a gym. If we don’t get to the gym regularly and use the services, there is no benefit of membership, so why pay the bill? A synagogue is much more than a membership organization; it is a congregational home, an extended family. By being member at OZ, we each choose to belong as members and partners in community, and we each voluntarily pledge support according to our belief in the organization and its mission: **To provide a welcoming home for a diverse Jewish community, offering both traditional and innovative spiritual practice, learning for all ages and a commitment to social action.** And energized by the work of OZ’s Imagine 2025 strategic work, we’re poised to bring the organization into its next chapter.

Our annual membership pledges are an investment in the Jewish values, vision, and ideals that are the heart and soul of OZ. Our pledges are a statement of our support for OZ’s vision of a vibrant Jewish community that embraces both Jewish tradition and change while striving to create a “big tent” where Jews and their families of all types and backgrounds will feel welcomed and cherished. They represent our annual commitment to social justice, worship and spirituality, jewish life, friendships, lifelong learning, and the existence of the Jewish people. They are dollars endowed with meaning as our support helps guarantee the synagogue, staff and clergy are here for all who need them, to support *simchas* (celebrations) or to support us in times of need. Our Jewish predecessors here in Vermont built an amazing institution for us and placed it into our hands as a sacred trust. We need each and every family and individual to continue this tradition, to financially support OZ and care for our community and congregational home as we leave our generation’s mark on the future of Judaism in Vermont.

# Membership Support Pledges

Our sages wrote, Ein kemach, ein Torah, “Without bread, there is no Torah.” They recognized that without meeting the basic financial needs of the kehilla kedosha (holy community), there could be no Judaism. We have inherited and sustained an amazing Beit Tefillah (House of Worship), a Beit Midrash (House of Study) and a Beit K’nesset (House of Assembly & Community) here in Burlington.

We believe that dues and finances should never be a barrier to anyone who wants to be a member of our community. We strive to create a financial model that enables more people to affiliate with our community. By choosing to belong as members and partners in our community, we each pledge support according to our belief in the organization and its mission.

At OZ you are asked to make an Annual Membership Support Pledge based on the guidelines below and your ability to contribute. These guidelines reflect our desire to operate with a balanced budget - to live within our means.

For some families, what is outlined below may be beyond their current means and that is ok. Some may be able to contribute more. We are a community in the truest sense; we rely upon one another to help support those with more difficult financial situations due to reduced income or lost jobs in this challenging economy. In this way we ensure that each family makes a fair contribution and takes an equal stake in supporting our community. This is the essence of tzedakah – righteousness and justice – as our tradition teaches it, honoring the Torah’s command to give according to our means.

**Our Membership Pledge Model**

Our model is outlined on our website each year. On your annual membership support pledge form, you may designate the level of support you will make to sustain Ohavi Zedek. You will be able to choose your payment structure and number of installments and enter a payment method. It’s that simple.

Our annual budget is over $1,000,000. In order for membership pledges to cover the entire budget each family would need to contribute over $3,000. We need every member of our community to contribute to the best of their ability in order to maintain our current level of programming and growth to meet the changing needs of our Jewish community.

# Facilities & Security Fund Contribution

Ohavi Zedek’s buildings maintenance, security and technology needs are covered in part by members’ required annual contributions to our Facilities and Security Fund. Our goal is to address priorities with this fund and retain a reserve to plan for and meet the challenges of unforeseen costs and maintenance in the future.

# Hebrew School, Jewish Journeys and Other Programs

As of 2022, Hebrew School and Jewish Journeys programs are provided to members in good standing. It is our policy that no child should be denied a Jewish education based on financial hardship or difficulties. Note that there are additional cost to members for b mitzvah, event space rentals and other lifecycle events.

# High Holy Day Seats

High Holy Day seats are discounted for OZ members; the cost for tickets each year will be communicated prior to the High Holy Days to all members and posted on the OZ website.

Full‐time students may request free High Holy Day seats each year. Seats are available at the member rate for non‐members who have resided in Vermont for less than a year. Members may purchase tickets for family members (parents and/or children) who live outside the state. High Holy Day seats can only be reserved by members in good standing, who have made a membership support pledge for the current year and whose previous year(s) pledges are paid in full by September 1st or who have setup a payment plan to address their outstanding prior commitments. If you have any questions or concerns please email office@ohavizedek.org.

# Other Financial Support – Special Funds, Gifts and Planned Giving

There are many opportunities to support OZ, from contributing to special funds like the Imagine 2025 fund, the building renovation fund, pre-school and Hebrew school programming, kitchen, Nadav Teen programming, technology, the Shuk, summer camp endowment, our outdoor spaces, clergy discretionary funds and more. There also are opportunities to purchase honorary plaques [what else?] and for Planned Giving. All these gifts help ensure the strength and continuity of Ohavi Zedek. To discuss these or other options, please contact us here, email our president or make a donation in the member portal.

# Additional Information

1. Our fiscal year runs from July 1st through June 30th. Members joining mid‐year or at any time during the year may pro‐rate their pledge.

1. At the time application for membership to Ohavi Zedek Synagogue is made, a membership support pledge form and first payment or payment information should accompany the application.

1. New member applicants are presented to the Board President and Clergy and new members are approved by vote of its board of directors.
2. Each year in July, members will return membership support pledge forms and a payment or payment plan information. Pledges are calculated voluntarily based on each family’s financial ability to support the community, and should be informed by the guidelines and based on the community’s needs.

1. Membership may be cancelled after one year of non‐payment of synagogue obligations and pledges on an individual basis at the discretion of the Financial Review Committee and the Board of Directors. Honest and ethical financial behavior, including the honoring of pledges and financial commitments, is among the core values of Judaism.

1. The financial support structure is reviewed annually. It is subject to change as required and presented to the Board of Directors.

1. While each member or member family shall consist of at least one Jewish individual, family members who are of another faith (or no faith) are welcome to all Synagogue programs, facilities and services and are considered members of the community.

1. A written resignation from membership in the congregation is required to terminate a member’s continuing pledges and similar financial obligations. Until the congregation receives a written resignation, pledges and similar obligations shall continue to accrue. Before a former member may rejoin the congregation, all past financial obligations must be addressed.

1. When a single member marries or participates in a civil union, a new membership application should be submitted (or other notification to OZ’s office should be made) to add the spouse to the member’s records.

1. Any questions about synagogue finances, membership support pledges, tuition, etc. should be directed to the administrator or OZ’s president. All financial matters and arrangements are confidential.

*Updated June 2022*