



Transition and Succession: Frequently Asked Questions

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Timeline

When is Rabbi Zemel retiring?

Rabbi Zemel will retire on June 30, 2025. Until that time, he will remain in his role as senior rabbi, leading our congregation.

Will Rabbi Zemel take a sabbatical before his retirement?

Rabbi Zemel will be on a long-planned sabbatical from February 1, 2024 through March 31, 2024. As in years past, while he is on sabbatical, the rabbis and the executive director will work together, in coordination with the Board, to ensure that all temple activities continue and to respond to congregant needs that arise during this time.

What is the timeline and plan for selecting Rabbi Zemel's successor?

Prior to Rabbi Zemel's announcement, the Temple Micah Board had adopted a [transition plan](#) that will structure the transition process during the coming months and years. The plan anticipates a transition period of potentially up to another two years following Rabbi Zemel's retirement (up to three and a half years from now). The key plan components and their expected duration are:

Discovery: Within the next few weeks, we will launch a [listening plan](#) to gather information and engage the full membership on this process. This discovery process will inform the other components of our [transition plan](#); we expect to carry out this process over the next 4-6 months.

Search: We will engage in a search for rabbinic leadership, led by a Rabbinic Search Committee.

If we choose to engage an “Interim Rabbi”:

- The Interim Rabbi search will begin in the fall of 2024, in time to find an Interim Rabbi before Rabbi Zemel’s retirement in June 2025.
- The permanent rabbinic leadership search will begin in the fall of 2025, with the goal to select leadership by the spring of 2026.

If we choose to seek a permanent rabbinic leadership, instead of choosing an interim rabbi:

- The permanent rabbinic leadership search will begin in 2024, with the goal to select leadership before Rabbi Zemel’s June 2025 retirement.

Celebration: Later this year, we will begin planning appropriate ways to honor and celebrate Rabbi Zemel, his visionary leadership, and his impact on our community. Celebration activities will occur prior to Rabbi Zemel’s retirement on June 30, 2025. (More details on the celebration are provided below – see “Membership Involvement”.)

Welcoming: The last phase of the transition process involves thoughtfully preparing to welcome and integrate new rabbinic leadership. These events, including rabbinical installation, will occur in the first year of the new leadership’s tenure.

When will the new Rabbi be announced?

The announcement of a proposed rabbi will depend on how the search process unfolds. Our plan anticipates that new permanent rabbinic leadership may be announced in the spring of 2025 or the spring of 2026, depending on whether we rely on an interim rabbi.

Transition Plan & Succession

Who will oversee the key components of this transition plan?

The Board has established a Transition Committee to oversee the key components of the process and report regularly to the Board. The Transition Committee will

coordinate other committees charged with leading the discovery, search, celebration, and welcoming efforts.

Who is on the Transition Committee?

Our Temple president, Rielle Miller Gabriel, has appointed Joshua Berman and Betsy Broder, both former Temple Micah Presidents, as co-chairs of the Transition Committee. They will be supported by our executive director, Beth Werlin, and the current president and vice-president, Brent Goldfarb.

Who will select Rabbi Zemel's successor?

According to our congregation's Bylaws, the Board is responsible for determining the process to identify and recommend to the membership a new rabbinic leadership for the congregation. Once the Board has proposed new rabbinic leadership, a special meeting of the membership will be called to vote on whether to accept the recommendation of the Board.

The Board has adopted a [transition plan](#) that establishes a Transition Committee to oversee a discovery process and a Rabbinic Search Committee. The Rabbinic Search Committee will generate a recommendation for rabbinic leadership.

Will there be an "Interim Rabbi"?

The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) recommends that congregations follow what is known as the Interim Rabbi model. No decision has been made on whether we will engage an Interim Rabbi, and the Board will consider this option among others.

An Interim Rabbi is specially trained to help a congregation clarify its goals and objectives for a permanent rabbi while performing specified rabbinic duties for the synagogue. Ultimately, we would have discretion to define the roles for an Interim Rabbi. Since Interim Rabbis are not eligible to become permanent rabbis, they are in a unique position to work with the congregational leadership to help the congregation prepare for the next spiritual leadership structure.

What roles will the current clergy, Rabbis Beraha, Crawley, and Slakman have during this transition?

We cherish all of our rabbis and anticipate that they will continue to play important roles throughout the transition, including providing their invaluable input on the

transition. The Board president and vice president have discussed the initial transition plans with the rabbis and will work collaboratively and transparently during this transition. We kindly ask that everyone respect the rabbis' private deliberation as they consider the possibility of their future on the rabbinic leadership team.

Are we considering not having a single Senior or Head Rabbi (i.e., alternative leadership structures)?

No decisions have yet been made about which rabbinic leadership structure will be chosen. The Board's [transition plan](#) does account for consideration of alternative rabbinic leadership structures.

What will Rabbi Zemel's role be after his retirement?

The Board has already decided, in collaboration with Rabbi Zemel, that he will be given the title of Rabbi Emeritus. Rabbi Zemel has shared with the Board his interest in maintaining involvement with the Micah community in a variety of ways post-retirement. The exact nature of his engagement with the congregation as Rabbi Emeritus will be defined in collaboration with the board and rabbinic leadership at the appropriate time.

Will there be any changes to current synagogue activities during the transition?

Rabbi Zemel is not retiring until June 30, 2025. Through this period, we do not expect to make changes to Micah activities, including worship, Machon Micah, speakers and other educational offerings, Shabbat services for families with young children, and Storefront, as well as our many lay-led groups and activities. Likewise, we do not anticipate making changes to Micah's current level of staffing. We will strive to maintain regular activities and operations throughout our entire transition.

Membership Involvement

How can Micah members be involved in the process?

Micah members will have multiple opportunities and ways to get involved and are encouraged to participate in this transition process. Starting in February 2024, there will be a number of small-group "listening sessions" in which members will be invited to share their views. Further, members can privately provide input directly to the Transition Committee by emailing transition@templemicah.org. (The Transition

Committee will make every effort to respond promptly, but please understand it may take a bit of time.) There will also be opportunities to serve on various committees and sub-committees, and we will be striving for representation from a broad spectrum of our membership. As the Transition Committee delves into their work over the coming weeks, the committee will announce additional opportunities to engage.

How will we be celebrating Rabbi Zemel?

We will be celebrating Rabbi Zemel in many ways between now and June 2025. There will be a celebration committee that will work with the congregation to develop these ways to honor and thank Rabbi Zemel. We hope that many volunteers will contribute to these exciting and emotional events. Stay tuned for various announcements and please share thoughts.

Where can I keep up to date on transition information and developments?

We are committed to maintaining a transparent transition process and open channels of communication with the congregation, as well as to providing regular updates. We will keep this webpage updated with all the latest information about the transition and will amend these FAQs as new questions and answers emerge. We encourage members to email us at transition@templemicah.org with questions, concerns, or other input.