



January 20, 2010

Dear Fellow Congregants,

When it became clear, for the reasons Congregational President Greg Russell explained in his letter last week, that Congregation Beth Tikvah could not return contributions made to our capital campaigns, my next thought was, "What are we going to do with the money?" I'm sure that yours was some version of the same.

Fundamentally, in terms of building, we have two alternatives. We can leave the assets in the bank and in the ground in the hope that they will grow into something substantial enough for us to be able to move from our current home someday. Or we can take the assets and see what we can do with what we have. This is the decision which faces us as a congregation. We would like to be able to make that decision, and bring closure to this decade of our lives, at the annual meeting in May, on Sunday, May 23, at 5:00 p.m.

As part of that decision-making process, Greg asked me to form a group to develop a concept for what we could do with the building at 6121 Olentangy River Road, and a plan for sharing the concept with the congregation. Those initial steps have been taken, and our first of three **CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE SESSIONS has been scheduled for Sunday, February 14, from 1:30 to 4:00 PM. The others will be on Sunday, March 7, and Sunday, April 25, at the same times.**

Why those days and times? It's not Shabbat; it's not in the evening, when older congregants don't like to drive and parents have to get kids into bed; and it's the only time on Sunday when the sanctuary is not in use for Religious School. Recognizing that students in second session will just be getting out of school, we have planned a social half-hour, for people to gather and talk and feed their children and themselves-food will be provided-and to take their children to child-care, and to come back for the meeting. By the way, older children will be welcome at these meetings. Some of them are perfectly capable of understanding the issues, and this is, after all, a family decision.

Why three meetings? Because the problems are complex, we can't possibly anticipate all the congregational concerns, and we need four hundred brains working on this. We will take every comment back to the drawing board, literally, and return at the next meeting with proposed changes. Each of the three meetings will be different, because we will be at different stages of the process. We'd like you to be at all of them, or at least at as many of them as you can make.

We will look not only at architectural issues and potential solutions, but also at financial issues and potential solutions, and political issues and potential solutions. We are well aware of the constraints of our current architecture, of our financial resources, and the political environment. Potential answers to all of these issues will be presented on February 14, March 7 and April 25.

In the meantime, I'll be writing to you regularly with updates. Please feel free to write to me at [jstefano@wowway.com](mailto:jstefano@wowway.com) or to any other members of the working group. Their contact information is listed below. Tomorrow: the needs of the congregation, and the key architectural concept.

Shalom,  
*John Stefano*

#### The Working Group

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