

Jewish Reconstruction Congregation
2013 – 2015 Strategic Plan



Message from the Rabbi

As members of a spiritual community, our job is to chart and travel our own unique path to meaning. This is indeed a sacred endeavor—everything we do together, be it as “lofty” as celebrating the Shabbat and holidays or as “mundane” as volunteering for a committee, it is all profoundly holy work as long as we view ourselves as fellow travelers on a shared, common journey. In this regard, I believe this document does much more than plan our “strategies” for the coming years. I like to think of it, rather, as a “sacred roadmap.” May it help us to chart JRC’s course to a journey filled with meaning, purpose and holiness.

In Friendship and Shalom, Rabbi Brant Rosen

Message from the Committee Chair

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu la'asok b'tzorchai tzibur.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who sanctifies us through mitzvot and has commanded us to engage in the needs of the community.

The above prayer is read at the beginning of each board meeting to reaffirm the centrality of community at JRC. From our roots nearly fifty years ago, JRC has been committed to creating an engaged Jewish community that practices Judaism responsive to the times and culture in which we live.

As times change, it is important that we reevaluate what it means to be a Jewish community. The 2013 – 2015 Strategic Plan presented below is the result of many hours of work by JRC members who are committed to ensuring a warm and welcoming JRC that is responsive to the needs of its current and future members. The plan also ensures the financial security so JRC will continue to grow and thrive for another fifty years and beyond.

The strategic plan is a living document and nothing in it is codified. We expect to make changes as needed and we welcome your ideas and thoughts. Please feel free to email me at tabak@me.com. Together, we engage in the sacred act of community building.

B'Shalom, David Tabak Chair, Strategic Planning Committee

Todah Rabah

The strategic plan reflects many hours by committed JRC members and staff.

Special thanks to:

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Rabbi Brant Rosen

Cantor Howard Friedland

JRC Staff

Participants in the retreat

JRC members who completed the survey

Introduction

In 2011, the JRC Board of Directors initiated a process to create the congregation's first strategic plan since 2002. The plan completed a decade ago called for – among other things - a task force to assess the feasibility of creating a new building. Within a few years, JRC's green synagogue was under construction, thanks to contributions of time, talent, and funds from the entire congregation. In 2007, we moved in and began the work of revitalizing our programming and making the building our new home. Since the move, the congregation has grown by more than 60 families and has welcomed a new religious school director, membership and program coordinator, youth group advisor, and executive director.

At JRC, we strive for Jewish experiences that blend tradition and creativity in ways that touch the heart and mind. We collectively spend thousands of hours with our community, engaging in a wide variety of spiritual practices and social action activities; participating in and planning events; serving on the board, committees, and task forces; praying; celebrating; singing; learning; teaching; caring; and more.

Working effectively to sustain, nurture, and build our community requires intentional action. We live in a complicated world, and with more than 500 engaged families we need a roadmap to guide us. This plan is intended to help us set priorities and create meaningful processes and governing structures. It will only be useful if we continually rely on it to guide us and set benchmarks, and if we refresh it to meet our changing needs.

The Planning Process

The board authorized the formation of a strategic planning committee, which began its work in spring 2011. The process started with defining the scope of work and searching for consultants to assist with facilitation and creating a congregation-wide survey. Consultants conducted more than 30 interviews with congregants. Together the committee and consultants developed the survey, planned a retreat, and facilitated work groups to develop goals, objectives, and tasks. We analyzed JRC's internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats.

More than 350 members, or 40 percent of the adult membership, completed the survey and provided invaluable information for crafting a plan that is responsive and comprehensive. Eighty-four percent of the responding members said that JRC is “very close” or “close” to “being an ideal synagogue” for them. A summary of the results are listed below. More complete survey results are available to JRC members through the website.

Survey and Interview Findings Survey respondents cited the top five reasons for joining JRC as:

- Values of the congregation similar to my own: 52%
- The Rabbi: 34%
- Friendliness of the congregation: 31%
- Comfort with JRC ritual practices: 28%
- Had one or more friends and/or family at JRC: 26%

Respondents identified these top priorities JRC should consider in the future:

- Increase opportunities for social interaction among members: 37%
- Strengthen adult education programming: 29%
- Strengthen youth and teen programming: 29%
- Better integrate tikkun olam programs into other JRC activities: 27%
- Work towards becoming warmer, more welcoming, and friendlier: 26%
- Improve JRC’s financial health: 24%
- Strengthen the spirituality of JRC’s religious services and programs: 23%

The survey, interviews, and additional research also indicated that JRC would benefit from:

- More strategic and transparent governance.
- Greater emphasis on internal and external communications

In late January 2012, 70 JRC members including the board of directors, committee chairs, and other interested members, gathered to discuss the research findings and set goals and objectives. Six work groups met over several weeks to consider the following topics: diverse membership, spiritual needs, lifelong education, tikkun olam, governance, and fundraising/finance. The Strategic Planning committee compiled the results of these work groups to create a set of goals, objectives, and proposed action steps to guide more detailed operational planning and implementation for the next three years. The results of this planning process are summarized in this document.

Implementation and Timeframe

This 2012 Strategic Plan is a management tool for the board of directors, committees, and staff, encompassing the intent of the congregation as we continue to build a spiritual community, shape our governance, engage all generations, educate ourselves, repair the world, and secure the resources we need for financial sustainability.

The Plan is meant to create a foundation for improved congregational life. Its interconnected goals, objectives, and tasks support each other. Some can be implemented immediately, and others will only reach a pilot phase during the 3-year period of the plan. The following graphic represents the interconnected parts of the plan.

This plan is intended as a living document that will provide guidance over time, but that can also be refined and adjusted to meet our changing needs. Completion of the plan does not end the process – it begins a next phase of intentionally working together toward common goals and objectives in a thoughtful ongoing process.

Mission

JRC's mission is to create an engaged Jewish community that practices a Judaism responsive to the times and culture in which we live.

Vision

JRC will be a vibrant, warm, and welcoming Reconstructionist Jewish community and spiritual home that engages its diverse members in lifelong learning, tikkun olam, and the sacred work of community building. The congregation will be known for its joyful spirituality, intellectual curiosity, inclusivity, respect for diversity, and deep commitment to social justice and sustainable coexistence between people and the environment.

JRC Core Values

The following values come from JRC's 2008 Green Building Policies, Tikkun Olam, and Sicha documents. They are listed in alphabetical order.

Bal Tashchit, Do Not Waste or Destroy: We take seriously our responsibility not to waste, destroy, or squander the Earth's limited resources.

Gemilut Hasidim, Acts of Kindness: We extend ourselves to comfort the sick, provide hospitality, share in mourning, and provide for the needs of others within and outside our community.

Hachnasat Orchim, Welcoming Guests: It is a mitzvah to welcome guests into our home.

Kavod Michpacha, Honoring Family: We value the honoring of our members' extended families.

Kavanah, Intention: We value mindfulness and intention during our prayer services.

Kavod Sicha, Respectful Conversation: We use an intentional process to discuss difficult issues in order to honor our diversity, remain respectful, encourage a cohesive congregation, and allow authentic conversations to unfold.

Kedusha, Holiness: We seek to create a meaningful division between mundane and sacred activities.

Kedushat Shabbat, The Holiness of Shabbat: We seek to make our home a sacred Shabbat space. Kehillah, Community: We value our collective life as a congregational community.

Klal Yisrael, The Togetherness of Israel: Our home and communal practices reflect and connect us to our tradition and to Jews throughout the world.

Limud, Learning: We value Jewish learning as a means toward spiritual growth and communal connection. Living in Two Civilizations: As Reconstructionist Jews we understand that we live in both American and Jewish civilizations - and that the values of each support and strengthen our identity as Jewish Americans.

Minchagei Yisrael, Customs of Israel: We value Jewish customs, which connect us to our tradition, our culture, our history, and our Jewish community.

Shabbat Menuchah, Shabbat Rest and Renewal: We step back from consumerism and consumption to make space for contemplation and healing.

Shalom B'bayit, Peace of the Home: We live together in our spiritual home in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation.

Simcha, Joy and Celebration: We come together to share joy in our communal celebrations.

Tikkun Olam, Repair of the World: We are committed to creating a just world and supporting others in this mission.

Tzedakah, Righteousness: We share our resources to make the world more equitable.

Tzniut, Humility: We value respectful behavior, language, and attire in our synagogue.

Zicharon, Memory: We regard the memories of significant times in our lives to be sacred and holy.

Goals and Objectives

The Strategic Plan sets five broad goals for JRC. Specific objectives identify categories of action to achieve each goal and are presented here in priority order. In addition, each Vice President, committee, and/or staff member will receive a set of specific goals, objectives, and proposed action steps that were identified in work group meetings for specific topic areas. Work to realize these goals and objectives will require collaboration throughout JRC's board, committees, task forces, volunteers and staff.

GOAL 1—Serve, engage, and retain our diverse membership

Rationale: A central tenet of Reconstructionism is “belonging.” JRC strives to be a warm and inviting community that serves its diverse members, with their distinct needs, talents, and opinions. In order to succeed, we must be intentional about how we foster community, monitor members’ experiences, and plan for long-term and sustainable growth.

Objective 1.1: Increase opportunities for members to interact with each other.

Objective 1.2: Support members in times of need.

Objective 1.3: Sustain relationships with post B’nai Mitzvah youth and their families.

Objective 1.4: Enhance the culture of volunteerism.

Objective 1.5: Create a warm and welcoming environment and ensure the physical environment and events are accessible to all.

Objective 1.6: Develop a manageable plan for membership growth.

Objective 1.7: Establish and sustain connection for young adults (ages 18-29) to JRC and Judaism.

Objective 1.8: Develop a chavurot structure for congregants to connect with one another through spirituality and shared interests.

GOAL 2—Provide diverse and robust opportunities for life-long learning, spiritual fulfillment, and tikkun olam

Rationale: Our distinctive Reconstructionist educational, spiritual, and tikkun olam *programming are the lifeblood of JRC and provide our members multiple opportunities to be part of our Jewish community. One of the major findings of the strategic planning research was that these areas need to be better connected to enhance our congregational life.*

Objective 2.1: Implement an annual planning process to identify themes, develop programs, establish budgetary priorities, and create collaborations between education programs, spiritual practices, tikkun olam, and membership

Objective 2.2: Provide education and support to members to enhance their spiritual experience, stimulate their intellectual curiosity, and offer opportunities for intergenerational interaction.

Objective 2.3: Strengthen our religious school curriculum and early childhood program to ensure that they fully reflect JRC's values and priorities and meet families' needs.

Objective 2.4: Enhance and/or expand Shabbat, holiday, and other religious services to energize and strengthen spirituality and build community.

Objective 2.5: Infuse JRC congregational life with tikkun olam values and practices, including Gemilut Hasidim (Acts of Kindness), Tzedakah (Righteousness), Bal Tashchit (Do Not Waste or Destroy), and Social Action.

Objective 2.6: Infuse JRC congregational life with spirituality, including Kavanah (Intention) and Kedusha (Holiness).

Objective 2.7: Evaluate the role of the JRC Library.

GOAL 3—Build a sustainable and financially solvent community

Rationale: Maintaining and enhancing our programs at JRC require responsible financial practices and strategic fundraising efforts. Our current financial obligations make the need particularly pressing. New funds must be secured to meet our building loan obligations and operating costs and to allow for program enhancements. JRC's building loan comes due in 2013 and the plan is to refinance. Most of the commitments from the first capital campaign have been fulfilled.

Objective 3.1: Create and monitor short-term and long-term development plans, including a capital campaign.

Objective 3.2: Expand our culture of voluntary financial support to enable JRC to meet its current and future obligations.

Objective 3.3: Establish policies and processes for determining spending priorities.

Objective 3.4: Create methods of donor and volunteer recognition that reflect JRC's culture.

Objective 3.5: Implement ongoing and transparent communications on JRC's finances and fundraising practices.

GOAL 4—Develop a more strategic and transparent governance structure responsive to current and future needs

Rationale: JRC has a strong history of volunteer leadership. Congregational growth, staff transition, and an increasingly complex world have placed more demands on existing and potential volunteers and systems. We must put structures in place to make decisions based on agreed-upon priorities, create better “institutional memory,” avoid volunteer burn-out, nurture new leaders, ensure the best use of staff and resources, and continually adapt to changing needs.

Objective 4.1: Create leadership structure, policies, and procedures necessary to implement the JRC strategic priorities.

Objective 4.2: Define and support board, committee leadership, and staff roles and responsibilities, including creation of new roles as needed.

Objective 4.3: Create charges for committees and taskforces and monitor progress towards annual and long-term goals.

Objective 4.4: Develop nomination and orientation procedures to provide JRC with leaders that possess a broad range of skills and abilities and represent its diverse membership.

Objective 4.5: Increase board member knowledge about and involvement with fundraising and finances.

GOAL 5—Improve internal and external communications to promote JRC as a dynamic and warm community

Rationale: Improved communication underlies all of our goals. The fabric of our congregational life is deeply affected by how we share information both internally and externally. It is important for us to enhance how our community knows about the resources and opportunities JRC offers. We must honor JRC's core value of Kavod Sicha (Respectful Conversation).

Objective 5.1: Improve internal communications with current and prospective members.

Objective 5.2: Enhance and institutionalize systems to help JRC members comfortably express and discuss their diverse opinions and beliefs.

Objective 5.3: Improve external communications with local communities and the greater Jewish community.