



An Open Letter to the Reform Movement

Dear Reform Congregational Family Member,

We are no longer in the world of our parents and grandparents. Ours is a faster world accelerated by technological innovation, a world in which geographical distance is no longer the measure of how far we must go to connect, study and debate, share experiences, and inspire one another.

Always, throughout history, as the world changed, so did the Jewish people. We have not only survived but thrived because of this age-old commitment, fine-tuned in every age, and the very trademark and namesake of our Reform Movement: to balance the constancy of our received tradition with the necessity of purposeful reform.

Today, again, we must reform our Movement to strengthen the Jewish future in the modern age.

As you may be aware, over the past decade the Union for Reform Judaism, the organization that serves you—900 Reform synagogues and more than 300,000 Reform families in North America—involved more than a thousand congregational presidents, rabbis, administrators, and committee chairs, as well as the Union's North American board and regional councils, in extensive studies to discover how we can better interact with and assist you. We've learned that you wish for:

- Expert, individually tailored advice in managing your synagogue and offering programs that engage Jews of all walks of life
- Exciting, North American-wide programming that has the power to connect us all, such as: our twelve camps, where youngsters have fun living Jewishly 24/7; the North American Federation of Temple Youth, where high schoolers act on these Jewish values to make the world a better place; the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, where resolutions passed by congregational leaders are championed in Washington, DC; Biennial conventions, where thousands of Reform Jews from throughout North America gather to inspire one another and reshape their local communities.

- Leadership and vision that will encourage you as individuals and congregations to try out new ideas as we build upon the nearly 200-year-old Reform experiment that has become the strongest Jewish Movement in North America

On March 15, 2009, the Union's Board of Trustees voted to accept a plan to build on these findings and more. These, in brief, are the envisioned changes in service your congregation can expect from us:

- A proactive advocate who will get to know your synagogue; develop an enduring relationship; assist you in identifying your vision, priorities, and emergent needs; and make sure that you receive the services and resources you need
- Access to experts in a wide variety of specialties
- Affinity networking/idea sharing grouped by similar congregational demographics, sizes, and interests
- Guidance to help your congregation lengthen the "affiliation life span" of synagogue members and build lifelong engagement with Reform Jewish values and community

This is the Union's new three-part organizational structure to sustain these goals:

1. Congregational Support Center: You will have your own congregational representative devoted exclusively to making sure you receive the expertise you need. Twelve congregational representatives, as well as four rabbis, will work with four U.S. Support Centers—North, South, East, and West—along with an additional office in Canada.
2. Congregational Consulting Group: Expert specialists, working in cross-disciplinary teams, will help you recruit and connect synagogue members, enhance Jewish literacy, create meaningful worship experiences, build sacred community, train and mentor congregational leaders, envision and plan sound synagogue