

Engaging with the URJ to **Strengthen** **Your Congregation**



UNION *for*
REFORM JUDAISM
Building Communities. Reimagining Jewish Life.

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The Union for Reform Judaism strengthens congregations that connect people to Jewish life. Our legacy, reach, leadership, and vision mean that we can unite thousands of years of tradition with modern experience to strengthen Judaism today and for future generations.

We help congregations stay relevant and innovative, supporting them as they inspire sacred action and expand the ways in which people can live Jewishly. We develop leaders to face today's adaptive challenges and nurture innovation to be responsive to changing needs. The URJ also deepens the network of congregations to support each other and learn from experts. Additionally, we provide personalized support for congregations in transition and crisis.

Review this brochure to see a list of upcoming and ongoing opportunities, programs, and resources for your congregation's lay and professional leadership.



Leadership Development Opportunities

- **The Leadership Institute** provides opportunities for training and engagement of lay and professional congregational leaders and teams. Through in-person and virtual learning, the Leadership Institute builds both critical thinking and practical skills in an effort to inspire sacred action within Jewish communities:
 - The annual **Scheidt Seminar for Presidents and Presidents-Elect** convenes congregational presidents each spring to learn, network, build relationships, and enhance leadership skills. It serves as a springboard for learning throughout presidents' terms.
 - **The Shallat Rabbinic Transition Program and Retreat** prompts presidents and new senior/solo rabbis to build strong, effective working relationships. Through shared learning about transition management, the president and rabbi plan and implement the rabbi's successful integration into the congregational community.
 - **The *Had'rachab* Seminar for Lay Leadership in Ritual Life** trains individuals to lead services and conduct some life cycle ceremonies in support of the spiritual life of their small congregations. Learning for participants continues throughout the year.
 - The **Scholar Series on Leadership** offers the chance to learn with thought leaders in the area of congregational leadership. Each scholar engages participants in a web-based conversation and also contributes a blog post. At the conclusion of each Scholar Series, a self-guided resource for continued learning is made available in The Tent.
 - **Board Workshops** bolster leadership skills, foster community within a congregational board, and facilitate conversation around key areas of congregational life. 5-6 hour workshops are designed and facilitated by trained lay leaders or URJ staff members in consultation with your congregation. Available topics include: orienting new board members, reimagining volunteer engagement, and setting goals for the future.
 - **The Balfour Brickner Rabbinic Seminar and Fellowship Program** offers rabbis the opportunity to enhance their social justice advocacy work by studying texts, developing practical skills, connecting with like-minded colleagues, and lobbying members of Congress.

- **Leadership Development Modules** will allow you to construct a customized leadership development program from pre-packaged materials. The Leadership Institute staff will be available to assist in creating the right program for your congregation's unique needs. This curriculum will be available in 2017.
- **URJ/HUC-JIR Professional Development Seminars** offer day-long in-person learning opportunities as well as shorter online seminars led by Jewish education and youth engagement experts.
- **Training Teen Leaders:**
 - **The Bernard and Audre Rapoport *L'Taken* Social Justice Seminars** offer weekend-long advocacy training and experiential learning for teens, including lobbying on Capitol Hill, empowering them to educate and inspire their home communities to act. Alternate programming is available in place of lobby day for Canadian participants.
 - **NFTY *Nashir* Song Leading Seminars** offer skill development and hands-on training to teen musicians at all experience levels so that they can play a role in song leading at your congregation.
 - **URJ Kutz Camp**, the center of Reform Jewish teen leadership, is an immersive summer experience that equips teens with skills and tools necessary to be active, effective community leaders.



Support in Addressing Major Priorities

- **Communities of Practice (CoP)** convene cohorts of congregational leaders for 18–24 months around a shared topic of interest. Supported by URJ staff, experts, and other members of the cohort, participating congregations learn and launch experiments to advance their work. Topics include: engaging families with young children, reimagining congregational education, engaging baby boomers, engaging small groups with meaning, pursuing social justice and the B'nai Mitzvah Revolution.

- The URJ's **Crisis and Transition Management** Directors, Rabbi Janet Offel (joffel@urj.org) or Rabbi David Fine (dfine@urj.org) provide support to congregations for a wide range of situations, including conflict management, crisis management, lay-clergy relationships, and **major clergy transitions**. Clergy transition and search support are provided in partnership with the Central Conference of American Rabbis and American Conference of Cantors. Contact the URJ as soon as you are considering a transition, or as early as concerns develop.
- The Reform Movement's pursuit of justice comes to life through the work of the **Religious Action Center** (RAC) of Reform Judaism in Washington, D.C., which for over 50 years has educated and mobilized Reform Jews to organize and advocate for public policies that reflect our Movement's values.
- The RAC works with members of Reform congregations from communities across North America to fight against the structural racism that is embedded in our society and to advance justice for all people. Learn more about the RAC's **racial justice campaign** and how your congregation can get involved at: rac.org/racialjustice.
- The URJ supports congregations in **engaging the next generation** year-round with these programs:
 - **NFTY and URJ Camp staff partner with congregations** to support local and regional youth programming and to offer ongoing professional development for congregational leaders.
 - **Youth Summit at NFTY Convention** provides networking, leadership development opportunities and professional training to congregations' youth professionals and lay leaders.
 - **The Service Corps Fellowship** supports youth professionals and educators in bringing the "camp magic" into congregational life year-round. Supported by URJ Camp professionals, these Fellows organize programming and encourage more local youth to attend camp, visit Israel and participate in NFTY and Mitzvah Corps.
 - URJ Youth offers **monthly training for youth leaders** in-person and online at the local, regional and North American level, to deepen your congregation's youth engagement work.

- The URJ's **Rosewell Lech Lecha Fellows** are young adult emissaries who work in North American congregations, building bridges to Israel and world Jewry for youth, young adults and congregations at large.
- As part of the URJ Ruderman Disabilities Inclusion Initiative, the web-based **Disabilities Inclusion Learning Center** offers webinars and other evidence-based resources that enable your congregation's lay and professional leaders to incorporate inclusion effectively into all areas of congregational and communal life.
www.disabilitiesinclusion.org
- **Introduction to Judaism** and **A Taste of Judaism**® offer an adult-level introduction to Jewish thought and practice suitable for interfaith couples, non-Jews considering conversion, and Jews seeking basic knowledge. The URJ provides advertising grants, print-ready ads, resources, and materials to support your congregation with running these courses.
- PJ Library® offers free subscriptions of books of Jewish content to families with young children all across North America. Our **PJ Library-URJ-WRJ Partnership** can provide resources for congregations to use this program as a tool to engage local families in their communities.
- A **congregational self-assessment tool** will enable congregations to evaluate their work in various areas of synagogue life, and compare the results to congregations of similar size and demographics. Once your congregation identifies areas for focus, a URJ staff member or a trained lay leader will be available to help identify next steps. This opportunity will be available in 2017.

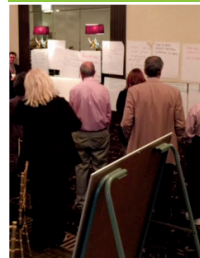


Networking and Convening with Other Congregations

- **URJ Communities** connect you to other congregational leaders in your own geographic region to share resources, build relationships, collaborate, and support each other in your sacred work. The URJ Communities Programming Menu provides a wide range of resources available for your community gatherings: invite a URJ staff or faculty member to attend your URJ Community event, or lead your own discussion with the help of self-guided resources provided in the menu.
- The **URJ Biennial** brings North America's Reform community together to learn, worship, network, celebrate, and to guide the direction of the movement.
- **Bringing Children, Youth, and Young Adults Together:**
 - The **URJ camps and youth programs** (overnight and day camps, NFTY teen leadership programs, Mitzvah Corps social justice programs, Israel teen travel programs, etc.) offer social and educational opportunities for students from Pre-K through college and beyond, all of which help young people develop essential skills grounded in Jewish values and become their best selves. New specialty camps provide focused experiences in science and technology or sports.
 - **NFTY Convention**, a bi-annual event, brings together more than 1,000 Jewish high school students over the Presidents Day Weekend. Attendees participate in workshops on current events and hot topics, hear from well-known speakers, sing and dance, spend a day touring the host city, and celebrate Shabbat together. They return to their communities inspired to make lasting impact on the future of their congregations.
 - **URJ Keshet Taglit—Birthright Israel** provides a free, 10-day trip to Israel to 18- to 26-year-old young adults who have never traveled to Israel on an organized trip. As a leader in the Reform movement, you can give priority status to any young adult in your community.

Access to a Network of Exceptional Resources

- **The Tent**, the URJ's interactive, online communication and collaboration forum, enables Reform congregation members to join conversations related to synagogue and Jewish life in North America, and to access a variety of resources, such as learning materials and marketing tools.
- The **Knowledge Network** team is your first stop for personalized answers, whether you want to know about managing the sacred, congregational life, URJ programs and initiatives, or other questions. The Knowledge Network works with a **corps of experts**, including representatives of URJ affiliates, when responding to your questions, and, as appropriate, connects you with the experts for deeper consultation: urj1800@urj.org or 855.URJ.1800.
- **ReformJudaism.org**, the website of Reform Judaism, includes a wide variety of content about Reform Jewish life, much of it suitable for congregational bulletins, websites, education programs, and more. Your congregation can also list its High Holiday services to connect you with potential members.
- ***Moving to the Leading Edge***, a URJ resource and discussion guide to move your congregation forward, features triggers for reflective discussion about hot topics in congregational life, written by experts, URJ staff and URJ congregational leaders who are doing innovative work.
- **The B'nai Mitzvah Revolution (BMR) Innovators Map** is an online program bank that features innovative congregational b'nai mitzvah programmatic ideas.
- Bi-annually, the URJ honors Reform congregations with innovative outreach and membership programs with the **Belin Outreach and Membership Awards**. Funded through the generosity of David Belin, z"l, \$1,000 awards are granted to winning congregations. Belin Award-winning programs are shared in The Tent, to inspire other congregations to pursue innovative and successful audacious hospitality efforts.



Especially for Small Congregations

- URJ **Small Congregations Director** Merry Lugasy (mlugasy@urj.org) is available to advise small congregations about all facets of synagogue life.
- The **Small Congregations Resource Fund** provides financial assistance to members of congregations with 250 members or fewer who wish to attend URJ programming, such as the Biennial or the Scheidt Seminar.
- The ***Had'rachab* Seminar for Lay Leadership in Ritual Life** trains lay leaders in congregations with no full-time clergy to conduct worship services and life cycle events.
- A number of URJ camps have funding specifically to incentivize and provide **financial support for first-time campers from small congregations** across North America. Be in touch with your regional camp to learn more.
- The URJ partners with the **Jewish Community Legacy Project**. Together, we aid congregations with aging populations, changing demographics, and declining membership to sustain active Jewish life for as long as possible and to create a legacy plan to address areas of concern in preparation for various eventualities.

Especially for Large Congregations (1,000 or more households)

- URJ **Large Congregations Director** Karen Sirota (ksirota@urj.org) is available to connect your congregation with similarly-sized communities, help launch projects, and offer advice on all facets of synagogue life.

Staying Up-to-Date

- Published twice each month, ***Inside Leadership*** provides lay and professional leaders with the latest URJ news, updates, and opportunities. To receive Inside Leadership or other newsletters, complete the newsletter subscription form at urj.org/subscribe.
- ***The Journal of Youth Engagement*** is a forum of ideas and dialogue for those committed to engaging youth in vibrant Jewish life and living, which highlights successful strategies from congregations across North America. To receive the Journal of Youth Engagement or other youth newsletters, complete the youth newsletter subscription form at urj.org/subscribe.
- **The Calendar of Programs and Events on URJ.org** offers a listing of upcoming Reform Movement programs and events. Check it out to see what is coming up, or add your congregation's own events that are open to the public.

Additional Congregational Benefits

- **RJ Web Builder**, a powerful software tool, allows even non-technical web masters to create cutting edge interactive and dynamic congregational websites.
- URJ member congregations are entitled to **bulk purchasing agreements** on video streaming, employee background checks, office supplies and more.
- **Ten Minutes of Torah** (TMT), a daily email each weekday, brings the Reform Jewish world to the inboxes of subscribers worldwide. TMT emails can be co-branded to include a congregation's logo together with the URJ logo.
- **Marketing tools** (Free print ads, ecards, social media banners, co-branded emails).



To access the electronic version of this
“Strengthening Congregations” brochure to share with
your leadership, go to the Files tab in the
URJ 2020 Vision group in The Tent at www.urj.org/thetent,
or contact the URJ Knowledge Network team at 855-URJ-1800.

**For more information about these and other
URJ programs and initiatives:**

Contact the Knowledge Network
at 855.URJ.1800 or urj1800@urj.org

Join the conversation in The Tent: urj.org/thetent

Visit our website: urj.org

The URJ can join your board or leadership meeting
via videoconference to discuss ways you can engage with us
to strengthen your congregation



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