



## Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation 2015-18 Strategic Plan Update and Extension

The following Plan updates the 2013-15 Strategic Plan that was adopted in 2012.  
(<http://www.jrc-evanston.org/membership/strategic-plan>)

Approved by JRC Board of Directors March 11, 2015.

### Introduction

I am very proud to present the revised strategic plan for 2015 through 2018. Although the current plan has one year remaining, a strong organization must keep a vigilant eye towards the future needs of its stakeholders. As we are fond of saying, the strategic plan is a living document and we will continue to make the necessary changes as the situation demands, for example, adding the goal of seeking new staff (including a Rabbi and Early Childhood Director). In addition to this new goal, this new plan updates several existing goals.

The sign of a good strategic plan is that it builds on previous strategic plans and continues progress towards established goals. I am particularly proud that we have not made major changes to the previous strategic plan, which means the work we did in 2012 was thorough and well-conceived. That plan involved the work of dozens of JRC board, committee chairs and members who based their discussions around a major survey that was completed by more than 40% of adult members.

In this new iteration of planning, we reexamined our missions, vision and values via a survey and the Forum on the Future meetings. This information is essential to selecting an appropriate rabbi. It is gratifying to see the widespread support for our current mission and vision. JRC is not as fractured as some have posited.

As I am sure you are aware, this excellent plan is the result of many hours of work by our intrepid Strategic Planning Committee: Linda Mathias Kaskel, Vice President of Strategic Development, Emily Harris, Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee and committee members, Cindy Aaronson, Reese Gratch, Barbara Pinzur, Sheri Young, and Sharon Diaz.

*Yasher Koach* to all.

David Tabak, President

## 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 (*Limud*), repair of the world (*Tikkun Olam*), acts of kindness (*Gemilut Hasidim*), joyful celebrations (*Simcha*) and the sacred work of community building. The congregation will be known for its spirituality, intellectual curiosity, inclusivity, respect for diversity, and deep commitment to social justice and sustainable coexistence between people and the environment.

## JRC's Core Values

In a 2014 congregational survey, respondents were asked to select the values most important to them at JRC from a list of 20 values that had been compiled from various policy documents for the 2012 Strategic Plan. Appendix A lists these 20 values in order of their importance to JRC members based on the survey results. The values that received the highest number of mentions are incorporated in the Vision statement.

## Goals and Objectives

The Strategic Plan sets six broad goals for JRC. Specific objectives identify categories of action to achieve each goal. 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	Collaborating Committees
1.1 Create opportunities for members to interact with each other.	Membership Adult Education Chesed High Holidays Library Ritual Practices Religious School
1.2: Support members in times of need.	Chesed Membership Information

Objective	Collaborating Committees
1.3: Sustain relationships with post B'nai Mitzvah youth and their families.	Religious School Membership Ritual Practices
1.4: Continue the culture of volunteerism.	Membership Information Development Tikkun Olam Religious School
1.5: Create a warm and welcoming environment and ensure the physical environment and events are accessible to all.	Accessibility and Inclusion Adult Education Art and Aesthetic Early Childhood Chesed High Holiday House Membership Ritual Practices Religious School
1.6: Develop a manageable plan for membership retention and growth.	Membership Accessibility and Inclusion Administration Adult Education Early Childhood High Holiday House Ritual Practices Religious School
1.7: Establish and sustain connection for young adults (ages 22-35) to JRC and Judaism.	Membership Adult Education Information Ritual Practices Tikkun Olam Young Adult Task Force
1.8: Develop a <i>havurot</i> structure for congregants to connect with one another through spirituality and shared interests.	Membership Adult Education Ritual Practices

**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	Collaborating Committees
2.1: Implement an annual planning process to identify themes, develop programs, establish budgetary priorities, and create collaborations between education programs, spiritual practices, <i>tikkun olam</i> , and membership.	Adult Education Early Childhood Committee Library Ritual Practices Religious School Tikkun Olam Information Membership
2.2: Provide education and support to members to enhance their spiritual experience, stimulate their intellectual curiosity, and offer opportunities for intergenerational interaction.	Adult Education Library Ritual Practices Religious School Membership
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.	Early Childhood Religious School Tikkun Olam
2.4: Enhance and/or expand Shabbat, holiday, and other religious services to energize and strengthen spirituality and build community.	Ritual Practices Information Membership
2.5: Infuse JRC congregational life with <i>tikkun olam</i> values and practices, including <i>Gemilut Hasidim</i> (Acts of Kindness), <i>Tzedakah</i> (Righteousness), <i>Bal Tashchit</i> (Do Not Waste or Destroy), and Social Action.	Religious School Tikkun Olam Adult Education Ritual Practices
2.6: Infuse JRC congregational life with spirituality, including <i>Kavanah</i> (Intention) and <i>Kedusha</i> (Holiness).	Ritual Practices Adult Education Early Childhood Religious School
2.7: Evaluate the role of the JRC Library.	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.**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Collaborating Committees</b>
3.1: Implement and monitor short-term and long-term development plans, including a capital campaign.	Development Administration Membership Operations
3.2: Expand our culture of voluntary financial support to enable JRC to meet its current and future obligations.	Development Treasurer Administration
3.3: Establish policies and processes for determining spending priorities.	Treasurer Development
3.4: Create methods of donor and volunteer recognition that reflect JRC’s culture.	Development Administration Membership
3.5: Implement ongoing and transparent communications on JRC’s finances and fundraising practices.	Development Information

**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	Collaborating Committees
4.1: Create leadership structure, policies, and procedures necessary to implement the JRC strategic priorities.	Governance Work Group VP, Education VP, Ritual Practices VP, Tikkun Olam Board President Strategic Planning Secretary
4.2: Define and support board, committee leadership, and staff roles and responsibilities, including creation of new roles as needed.	Governance Work Group Board President
4.3: Create charges for committees and task forces and monitor progress towards annual and long-term goals.	Governance Work Group Board President
4.4: Develop standardized nomination and orientation procedures to provide JRC with leaders that possess a broad range of skills and abilities and represent its diverse membership.	Membership VP Administration VP Governance Work Group
4.5: Increase board member knowledge about and involvement with fundraising and finances.	Treasurer Development Governance Work Group
4.6: Ensure that bylaws, policies and systems are consistent with our commitment to be a diverse community where it is safe to express our views on all topics including Israel/Palestine.	Israel Programming Tikkun Olam Board

**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). Our members especially want to intentionally find respectful ways to address the topic of Israel/Palestine, a challenge faced by congregations throughout the nation and the world.**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Collaborating Committees</b>
5.1: Improve internal communications with current and prospective members.	Governance Work Group Information Membership Tikkun Olam
5.2: Enhance and institutionalize systems to help JRC members comfortably express and discuss their diverse opinions and beliefs on a range of issues.	Board President-appointed task force Membership Tikkun Olam Council
5.3: Establish an environment where members feel safe to examine, express, and discuss the role of the land of Israel/Palestine in our lives and Jewish Culture.	Israel Programming Board
5.4: Improve external communications with local communities and the greater Jewish community.	Information Membership Tikkun Olam Council

**GOAL 6 – WELCOME NEW PROFESSIONAL STAFF, AND IMPLEMENT SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT THEM AS EFFECTIVE SPIRITUAL, EDUCATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERS**

**Rationale – In 2015 JRC will welcome a new early childhood director, programming staff and interim rabbi, and begin the process of searching for a long-term rabbi with the goal of having that person in place by 2016. While our staff supports our congregation, we must also be intentional about providing support to our staff and creating a balance between professional and volunteer contributions to our vibrant community.**

Objective	Collaborating Committees
6.1: Hire an Interim Rabbi by summer 2015	Interim Rabbi Task Force
6.2: Hire a long-term Rabbi by summer 2016	Rabbi Search Task Force
6.3: Hire an Early Childhood Director by summer 2015	Early Childhood Director Search Task Force
6.4: Define, recruit and hire for other professional positions in a timely way as needed and approved by the Board	Executive Director Board
6.5: Continue role of congregants in providing spiritual leadership, <i>chesed</i> , and other congregational duties, recognizing that clergy and professional staff cannot do it all alone.	Short-term Transition Task Force Membership Leadership Development Ritual Practices



## Appendix A – Core Values

In a 2014 congregational survey, respondents were asked to select up to seven values that are most important to them at JRC from the following list of 20 values. The values are listed here, highest to lowest, by percentage of mentions received in the survey. The first four values on the list were named as most important by over 50% of respondents. The survey results are available [here](#).

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

*Gemilut Hasadim*, 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.

*Limud*, Learning: We value Jewish learning as a means toward spiritual growth and communal connection.

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

*K'vod Sichá*, 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 ...

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

*Kehillah*, Community: We value our collective life as a congregational community.

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.

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

*Sh'lom Bayit*, Peace of the Home: We live together in our spiritual home in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation.

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

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

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

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

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

*Kedushat Shabbat*, The Holiness of Shabbat: We seek to make our home a sacred Shabbat space.

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

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

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

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