

Union for Reform Judaism Updated Vision, Mission, Values: A Deeper Look

For Congregational Leaders
July 2022

URJ Vision

(our desired future state)

The Union for Reform Judaism envisions a world in which Judaism enables all people to experience peace and wholeness (*shalom*), justice and equity (*tzedek*), and belonging and joy (*shayachut* and *simcha*).



world – while our geographic focus remains the U.S., Canada, and Israel, we seek a world in which all people experience peace and wholeness, justice and equity, belonging and joy.

experience – the act of feeling, sensing, doing, or being. No two people’s experiences are alike, and it is the diversity of experience that enriches the world.

peace and wholeness (*shalom*) – a state of being, within each of us internally and externally in the world.

Judaism enables – the world we seek may reflect universal values, but we are motivated by our Jewish tradition. And while we are the Union for Reform Judaism, our vision is not about our denomination; it is about Judaism repairing the world.

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all people – if I am only for myself, who am I? While we acknowledge our special responsibility to our own Jewish communities, we seek this world for all people.

justice and equity (*tzedek*) – the world we seek is just and equitable, meaning everyone has what they need to thrive. We work to ensure all are treated fairly and to overcome barriers that oppress and divide us from one another. It is not only the right thing to do; it is essential to our ability to grow and have the impact we seek.

belonging and joy (*shayachut* and *simcha*) – enabling all people to experience both joy and a deep sense of belonging – not merely being welcomed in – is akin to *hiddur mitzvah* (*beautifying the mitzvah*), enhancing and heightening the human experience.



URJ Mission

(our fundamental purpose)

The Union for Reform Judaism creates, connects, and inspires diverse congregations, camps, and other Jewish communities to engage in spiritual growth and to pursue justice and equity.



The URJ – While the URJ is a leader of the Reform Movement, this mission is only for the URJ, not for the full movement.

diverse – the wide spectrum of congregations, camps, and other Jewish communities and the backgrounds, identities, ideologies, and perspectives of those who belong to those communities.

creates – given that individuals make up communities, the URJ develops experiences for individuals that both meet their needs and introduce them to others with shared interests.

connects – bringing together institutions and communities across and beyond the Reform Movement to unite and take joint action.

inspires – influencing, energizing, and leading others by example.

congregations – the more than 800 institutions that are members of the URJ as well as those that may wish to join in the future.

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other Jewish communities – intentional groupings of youth and adults beyond URJ congregations and camps. Jewish tradition teaches us that by relating to the other in community we bring about the potential for wholeness.

camps – the institutions that engage youth and adults in year-round immersive communities.

engage in spiritual growth – through Jewish prayer, ritual, study, music, and practice, we can deepen our connection to ourselves, one another, and the Divine.

pursue justice and equity – our call to ensure all are treated fairly and have what they need to thrive requires proactive and sustained effort.



Values

(our core beliefs)

Shared Humanity

בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים *B'tzelem elohim* (Genesis 1:27)

“In the image of God.”

We see everyone as created in the divine image and, as such, treat everyone with respect, dignity, and kindness.

Justice

דַּרְשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט *Dirshu mishpat* (Isaiah 1:17)

“Seek justice.”

We seek justice for all people throughout the world.

Belonging

אַתֶּם נֹצְרִים הַיּוֹם כְּלֶכֶם *Atem nitzavim hayom kulchem* (Deuteronomy 29:9)

“You stand today, ALL of you.”

We build, connect, and enrich communities – congregations, camps, programs, social justice work, and more – where youth and adults across all identities, generations, and lived experiences feel a deep sense of belonging.

Learning

וְתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כְּנֶגֶד כָּלֶם *Talmud Torah k'neged kulam* (Mishnah Peah 1:1)

“The study of Torah, above all.”

We honor Torah; wrestle with Jewish traditions and beliefs, including God; and engage directly with the difficult questions of our age.

Evolving

וּבְטוּבוֹ מְחַדֵּשׁ בְּכָל-יוֹם תְּמִיד מַעֲשֵׂה בְרָאשִׁית *U'vtuvo mechadesh b'chol yom tamid ma'aseh v'raysheet* (Yotzeir Or, daily liturgy)

With goodness, the Holy One renews creation every day.”

We awaken to new awareness, holding ourselves accountable for changing as we grow.

Israel and Jewish Peoplehood

כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲרֵימִים זֶה בָּזֶה *Kol yisrael arevim zeh ba'zeh* (Shevuot 39a)

“All of Israel and the Jewish people are responsible, one for the other.”

We are committed to the safety and vitality of the Jewish people and to a secure and just state of Israel as a home – for all Jews and for all its inhabitants.

