



Dear Congregational Leaders,

Earlier in July, you received an email asking you to participate in the URJ's upcoming Pulse+ Survey—an opportunity for you to be forward-looking for your congregation. As part of our preparation for the URJ's 150th anniversary next year and our reflection for the upcoming High Holidays, we are now asking you, as congregational leaders, to help the Union for Reform Judaism be forward looking and reflective as well. Specifically, the URJ North American Board is proposing amendments to our Constitution and Bylaws with new Vision, Mission, and Values statements that will be added to Section II of the Bylaws. [You can view these statements here](#), and we are asking for your comments. We are also providing more context for these proposals later in this message.

Each of these statements serves a distinct purpose. Our **Vision** is our desired future state and need not be unique to us. Our **Mission** is our fundamental purpose; effective mission statements steer clear of jargon, vagueness, and/or a listing of activities. Our vision and mission statements should each be only one sentence that can readily be recalled. Our **Values** are what everyone across the organization should strive to embody in their work and underlie all we do, which is why we are including them in the new language. Values should be a small number (ideally six or fewer) of words or short phrases with brief descriptions. For context, [here](#) is the current language in the Constitution.

Our Bylaws provide congregations with a 60-day comment period on any proposed Constitution and Bylaws changes. The North American Board will consider all comments before voting on the amendments in the Fall. **Please send your comments on the URJ Updated Vision, Mission, and Values Statements by Wednesday, September 28, 2022 to: URJMissionVision@urj.org.**

To supplement these materials, we have provided a Q&A document with additional background and a “deeper look” document that explains the proposed language . We also will offer office hour sessions in August and September with members of the URJ Board and Executive Team. We encourage you to join these sessions to ask any questions you may have. Keep an eye out for details and Zoom links in the coming weeks.

As background, the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) leads the largest Jewish movement in North America. We are a network of over 800 URJ congregations, 15 camps, the Religious Action Center, and more. In sacred partnership with our Reform Movement partners, the broader Jewish community, and our allies, we have the scale and ability to connect and mobilize people and communities in powerful ways.

Next year, we will celebrate 150 years as an organization. Moments such as these are times to reflect on the accomplishments and challenges of the past. Much more importantly, they are moments to look ahead:

דַּע מֵאַיִן בָּאתָ, וּלְאֵן אַתָּה הוֹלֵךְ

Da me'ayin bata, u'l'an atah holech (Pirkei Avot 3:1)

“Know where you came from, and where you're going...”

There will be many opportunities to mark the URJ's 150th anniversary over the months to come. In preparation, we have been asking ourselves what we can do to strengthen the URJ and, in doing so, strengthen the Reform Movement. **This work starts by coming together to adopt a clear Vision (our desired future state), Mission (our purpose), and Values (our core beliefs) for the URJ.**

As we look ahead, what is most important remains unchanged.

Congregations have been at the core of our work, and it remains a critical part of our work to ensure congregations thrive in meeting the challenges of a changing world and Jewish community. We have added important concepts around peace, justice, equity, and belonging to create a more robust Vision statement. Our updated Mission statement clarifies the role that the URJ has played all along and helps to unite us as one organization with a common purpose. Everything we are and everything we do will continue to be grounded in the Jewish values we live out every day, inspired by Torah and our sacred texts. We have articulated those core values to ensure that they remain front and center in our work.

At the same time, the world around us is changing and this affects all institutions — including the URJ. We can choose to ignore what is happening in the world. Or we can recommit to our most deeply cherished values and reform again, as we have so many times in the past, going back to the time of Caleb, Joshua, Miriam, and Devorah who saw hope and possibility where others saw none. Across our work, we will ensure that the URJ is a place of belonging for all, especially those who have been excluded in the past. We will continue to guide congregations in becoming true places of belonging and we will cultivate new congregations, welcome innovative communities, and widen individual outreach so that all who wish to connect with Judaism and the Reform Movement have a place in the URJ. Over the next year, we will adopt long-term strategies to do so and will share updates with you about our specific plans.

We look forward to your comments on the URJ's updated Vision, Mission, and Values and to reforming together with you, now and into the future.

Shabbat Shalom,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Brodkey Kaufman".

Jennifer Brodkey Kaufman (She/Her), Chair
North American Board of the URJ