

## **Union for Reform Judaism**

### **Q&A Updated Vision, Mission, Values Statements**

**Q: *Why is the URJ updating these Vision, Mission, and Values statements now?***

A. The pandemic has affected every organization in Jewish life and beyond, resulting in significant and profound thinking and reimagination. The URJ is no exception. As we prepare to celebrate our 150th anniversary in 2023, we want to strengthen the URJ's foundation as much as possible. This starts by adopting updated Vision, Mission, and Values statements to ground and set our work up for success as we embark on our next 150 years. We are consciously doing this work now in the months before the High Holy Days to take stock and reflect internally as an organization.

**Q: *Why am I being asked for comments?***

A. Congregations are formal members of the URJ. As congregational leaders, your input is both highly valued and required. The URJ's Bylaws provide congregations with a 60-day comment period on any proposed Constitution and Bylaws changes, and the North American Board will consider the comments received before voting on the proposed amendments.

**Q: *Should I bring these to my full congregation for comments?***

A. We are sending this to the President, Executive Director, and Senior/Solo Rabbi of each congregation and seeking your views as the leaders of your congregation.

**Q: *What level of detail are you seeking in the comments?***

A. We would like to hear both what resonates for you and what questions you have about these statements. If you have concerns, we welcome specific suggestions for how to address the issue raised.

**Q: *How were these statements developed and what was the involvement of congregational leaders in that process?***

A. A Strategic Direction Working Group made up of staff and lay leaders, including several congregational leaders on the North American Board, drafted these statements based on a broad range of input, including an analysis of the Jewish ecosystem, focus groups with individuals across and beyond the URJ network, and review of recent studies of Jewish Americans. The North American Board (NAB), a group of 180 congregational leaders from across the United States and Canada, as well as leaders from over a dozen Reform Movement partner organizations, had the opportunity to give input on a draft earlier this summer. The NAB then reviewed a revised draft in late July and unanimously approved that these statements be shared with congregational leaders for official comment.

**Q: *Who are these statements for and where will they live?***

A. These statements will reside in the URJ's Bylaws as well as on our website and will be referenced by the URJ's North American Board, Executive Board, and staff in our work.

**Q: What is the significance of these statements and how will they affect congregations?**

- A. These statements are the foundation for the URJ's work. They will inform our long-term strategies, our programmatic development, and our financial investments. We will use them as touchstones to ensure they inform strategic decisions and to hold ourselves accountable to the values we hold most dear.

**Q: How do these statements strengthen our relationship to partner organizations in the Reform Movement?**

- A. Partnership is a critical component of everything we do at the URJ, whether that be within our own URJ network, the broader Reform Movement, and with other allies. By clarifying our unique purpose we will be better positioned to collaborate with other Reform partner organizations around shared interests and to support them as appropriate in fulfilling their own missions.

**Q: What are the definitions of Vision, Mission, and Values and what criteria should we use to evaluate these statements?**

- A. **Vision** is an organization's desired end state – it is what the world will look like if we are ultimately successful in achieving our mission; it should be one simple sentence that can easily be recalled and shared.

**Mission** is an organization's fundamental purpose – it describes what the organization looks like when it is doing exactly what it should do; it should be one simple sentence that can easily be recalled and shared.

**Values** are what the organization most highly values – they are what everyone across the organization should strive to embody and practice in their work; they should be small in number (ideally 6 or less) and include a short description.

**Q: What happens next in the process?**

- A. We will compile comments from congregational leaders and share back with the North American Board (NAB) for their review and any possible amendment, and the NAB will vote on the proposals in the fall of 2022. The URJ's Executive Board plans to adopt long-term strategies for how best to achieve our Mission in service of our Vision and help ensure the success and sustainability of the URJ later this year.

**Q: How should I share my input and how can I get more information?**

- A. You are invited to submit comments to [URJMissionVision@urj.org](mailto:URJMissionVision@urj.org) by September 28th. In the next few weeks you also will receive an invitation to attend one of four scheduled "office hour" sessions to ask any questions and to get more information on both the process and substance of the statements.