

**JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST CONGREGATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
November 1, 2023**

Board Members Present: Luke Adams, David Block, Robin Byster, Edie Canter, Marie Davidson, Reese Gratch, Emily Harris, Nancy Katz, Rick Kulp, Gail Luxenberg, Irv Miller, Hanna Seltzer, Hannah Shearn, Anne Wildman, Chai Wolfman

Staff Present: Rabbi Rachel Weiss, Cantor Howard Friedland

JRC Members were present as well

I. Welcome, Agenda, and Call to Order – Hannah Shearn. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. Andrew volunteered to be timekeeper.

II. Blessing/Covenant of Kavod Sicha – Board.

III. D'Var Torah – Cantor Howard

IV. Remarks from Rabbi Rachel Weiss. Rabbi Rachel welcomed all to the meeting. She acknowledged the trauma we are experiencing, and that it is not easy to be Jewish right now. She expressed her gratitude for the JRC community and how we hold each other when times are hard. While we do not all see things the same way the value of JRC as a community is to both comfort and to push and challenge its members to live our values. We have come a long way in the last ten years in our ability to talk about the complexity of Israel/Palestine issues.

She encouraged members to listen carefully and recognize that our responses come from our hearts, our emotions, our intellect and our desire to do something. Rabbi Rachel commended the work of the Israel/Palestine working group. Members of the working group came from very different ideological and life experiences. They approached their work with deep respect and honesty. Rabbi Rachel found remarkable their ability to reach a consensus statement, an achievement that has not happened in other synagogues of which she is aware. hat they were able to reach a consensus.

V. Israel/Palestine Working Group Presentation – Working Group Members. Emily explained the genesis of the working group. When the recent crisis arose, senior leadership at JRC suggested we designate a diverse group to come together, listen deeply, to develop guiding principles and to develop programming on Israel/Palestine issues. Hannah appointed the following

individuals to the working group: Marla Baker, Stan Cohn, Christin Duffy-Levy, Michael Deheeger, Sam Frolichstein- Appel, Laurie Goldstein, Emily Harris, Abby Harris-Ridker, Sandy Spatz, Hannah Tzucker-Seltzer, Rabbi Rachel Weiss, Mark Zivin. They quickly developed a resource list and set up times for facilitated discussions for members. The working group also developed the following guiding principles identifying areas of shared agreement:

- Commitment to the Jewish people
- Speaking up for the dignity and value of every human life is a Jewish value.
- Hamas' heinous act of terror on October 7 must be condemned.
- Immediate release of the people held hostage.
- Ceasefire is required to create the conditions for peace.

Emily noted that a ceasefire is a temporary cessation of hostility while peace negotiations are underway. Based on these principles, the working group created the statement now under consideration by the Board. Emily reflected that while the statement is not one that any of the members might write individually, it represents a remarkable consensus among work group members with varying beliefs, ideologies and concerns.

Abby Harris-Ridker discussed the immense power of speaking as a community. The writing team had very different political positions about Israel/Palestine, but all agreed that a call for human rights based on our Jewish values is essential. Marla Baker and Hanna further described the consensus building process as the members reached agreement on the guiding principles, and the importance of issuing a statement as a JRC community.

VI. Statements/Questions from RSVP Speaker List – JRC members.

Many members made statements and Sandy Spatz read statements from members who were not able to be present. The following is a summary of the themes and questions that emerged from the statements:

- There was deep appreciation expressed to the working group for their hard work and remarkable process.
- It is important for JRC to publicly speak up for the value of every human life.
- Stopping the killing of civilians is critical to peace.
- What does “never again” mean if we do not address Hamas' horrifying actions.

- Support the statement from the working group as representative and descriptive of JRC’s values.
- Is it necessary to make a statement that may be divisive for our members and drive some away.
- It is necessary to make a statement – the moment calls for us to articulate our Jewish values.
- The guiding principles reflected in the memo to the board give context to the statement and should be part of a preamble to the statement.
- The term “ceasefire” drew the most comments and questions from participants:
 - Almost everyone agreed with the concept of minimizing hardship to civilians.
 - The term ceasefire or immediate ceasefire was problematic for a number of speakers. Some saw it has having military and diplomatic nuances that they did not agree with.
 - Many agreed with the statement “stop the killings.”
 - “Humanitarian pause” was suggested as a concept in lieu of “ceasefire” in the statement.
 - Some saw a ceasefire as a necessary step to addressing issues of justice and accountability, which cannot be done during times of violence.
 - A ceasefire is necessary to address the terrible humanitarian crisis of the civilians in Palestine.
 - People are dying and as Jews we need to say something, and stand with people around the world calling for a ceasefire.
 - We need not get hung up in language – the sentiment of cessation, ceasefire, is the same. We need to model who we are as a congregation, connect around this issue.
 - The title of the statement should not lead with the call for a ceasefire, as it seems to prioritize this over the other principles.
 - The younger generation of JRC supports the call for a ceasefire.

VII. Board Debate on Motion to Adopt the Statement of the Israel/Palestine Working Group – Board members. Emily moved that the Board endorse the statement prepared by the Israel/Palestine Working Group on October 29k 2023. Second, by Anne. The Board expressed its gratitude to the Israel/Palestine working group for their efforts. The Board discussed the issues as reflected in the statements and questions raised earlier in the meeting. The value as well as the potential problems of JRC issuing a statement were discussed, as was the idea of adding a preamble to address the guiding principles and the context of the statement.

A motion to table the motion to adopt the statement was made by Irv, seconded by David. Discussion was had. Vote on motion to table: 12 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions. **Motion to table passed.**

The Board discussed next steps. The working group will discuss whether it will revise the proposed statement considering tonight's discussion, and several members offered to assist with drafting if requested. Emily asked for volunteers to assist with facilitating the Israel/Palestine discussions set for this coming Friday night after Shabbat services and for Saturday. Hannah thanked all and especially Emily and Rabbi Rachel for their hard work.

VIII. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:30 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Katz
Board Secretary