

Our Boundaries / Our Opportunities

Report of the Committee to Recommend Appropriate Participation of People who are not Jewish within Congregation Dor Hadash of Pittsburgh

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Acknowledgments:

The challenging task assumed by this committee is a considerable one. We are grateful to have had the support and encouragement of Elissa Hirsh, then President of Congregation Dor Hadash, from the outset. The dedication, sincerity, and integrity with which this committee worked were a blessing to behold. Norma, Rob, Vic, Mary, Claire, Milt, and Janet are to be commended for persevering when, at several junctures, it would have been so much easier to have walked away from the table. The congregation owes them a great debt of thanks. We were deeply fortunate to have had the sensitive ears and scholarly wisdom of Rabbi Shoshana Kaminsky of Beth Samuel Jewish Center in Ambridge, without which this effort would be in “perpetual committee”.

May we give thanks to the Creator of all the people of our world for granting us the patience to begin this important task.

Part One: INTRODUCTION

It is crucial at the outset to note that the Jewish Tradition has provided means for decision making in a variety of ways. Words of Torah informing contemporary activity have resulted in a great body of works which became codified and accepted as law. This halakhic approach is one that is still valued and utilized in many parts of the Jewish Community. For those who see this as the only legitimate way of coming to conclusions on questions such as the participation of people who are not Jews in congregational life, the process used by this committee will perhaps be of interest, but not likely satisfactory. For those among us who find halakha binding, guidance must be sought from sources which are consonant with that need.

Unlike the approach of halakha, the process used here is a contemporary method known as Values Based Decision Making. The paradigmatic Reconstructionist model for values-based decision-making is comprised of:

- Study of Jewish sources and practice
- Study of current information from the social and natural sciences
- Reflection on values
- Analysis of the impact of each possible decision on each affected party
- Democratic and inclusive process maximizing the number of participants

An important component of this process is the Reconstructionist Movement's affirmation of local autonomy. Even when congregations utilize similar decision-making processes, they may emerge from these discussions with divergent policies. It is implicit that the guidelines / recommendations of today will be addressed on an ongoing basis and that the congregational policies from which they emerge will undergo change in the future. This report is a beginning, not an ending; it is intended to stimulate learning and provide guidance within the congregation concerning the opportunities as well as the limits for participation of non-Jews.

Congregation Dor Hadash, like all North American Jewish congregations, has come to embrace families who have among them individuals who are not Jews. As the rate of "intermarriage" has grown, so has the desire among many of these families to live with genuine connections to the rhythms of the Jewish cycle of life. More than ever, the need to respectfully, sensitively, and responsibly address the dimensions of participation of non-Jewish individuals in all aspects of congregational life has become an issue requiring honest examination with resultant formulation of guidelines. Over the years inconsistency of practice has been complicated by lack of policy. This has resulted in confusion and conflict within the congregational community.

We recognize that as a Reconstructionist congregation, people who are not Jews will frequently participate as part of our community in a variety of ways. Those who find meaning in the way of life of the community of Jews are encouraged to participate in our congregation's activities, to orient their family's life in practices consistent with Reconstructionist Judaism, and to join the community most fully through conversion to

Judaism. The congregation has a responsibility to assist those so interested in achieving these goals, and this report is intended to help address that responsibility.

In the spring of 2002, the Board of Congregation Dor Hadash, at the request of the Ritual and Life Events Committees, articulated a charge to develop policy recommendations with regard to the participation of people who are not Jewish in the activities of the congregation. Earlier, in 1998, The Jewish Reconstructionist Federation assembled a Task Force to address the role of non-Jews in JRF congregations. Their report, titled *Boundaries and Opportunities*, encouraged JRF affiliate congregations to use a “Reconstructionist” oriented values-based approach to develop individual congregational policy recommendations for the participation of people who are not Jews in the three central areas of congregational life: Membership, Governance, and Ritual. As stated in the introduction to their report, it “is intended as a model to serve each congregation as it designs its own process for values-based decision-making. It provides guidelines, not rules; recommendations, not regulations. Each congregation should establish its own policies on community roles and on individual rights for non-Jews”. The document was made available to all members of our congregation and was summarized in a congregational “talk” after Friday Evening services within a few months of its publication. It has served as this committee’s process model. The document, along with its bibliography and appendices served as an anchor and reference at all points along the path leading to our own recommendations. The entire text of JRF’s *Boundaries and Opportunities* was made available to each committee member and reviewed in preparation for the task.

In order to fully comprehend the scope, history, and full context of the task of the committee, and as part of the education process, all are strongly encouraged to read in full the original JRF document. Copies are available from JRF and summaries are available on line at: www.jrf.org/cong/rolenonjew-sum.html and www.jrf.org/rt/boundaries.html

JRF’s *Boundaries and Opportunities* set forth a values-based decision-making process which our Dor Hadash committee used in arriving at recommendations. The model identified ten steps and thirteen values to apply to the process. They are:

Ten Steps

1. Appoint an “Inclusivity Committee” that reflects all the views and constituencies of the congregation.
2. Create a trusting atmosphere.
3. Examine the congregation’s mission and underlying values.
4. Determine who will be affected by the decisions.
5. Consider the issues involved in membership, ritual, and governance.
6. Explore which values pertain and which values conflict in each area.
7. Select appropriate means to educate the congregation (including the board) once the inclusivity committee arrives at a series of positions.
8. Vote on the positions at the committee and board levels.
9. Make policies available to all members and prospective members.

10. Continue the education process.

Thirteen Values

- Commitment to Community
- Connection to God
- Democracy
- Diversity
- Holiness (Kedushah)
- Human Dignity
- Integrity of Jewish Ritual Practice
- Jewish Continuity and the Survival of the Jewish People
- Jewish Education
- Maintaining an Inviting and Accepting Atmosphere
- Preservation of Jewish Tradition
- Preserving Peace in the Home (Shalom Bayit)
- Welcoming the Stranger / Guest (Hachnasat Orbim)

The committee members were solicited by the chairperson from a diverse and broadly representational base of the congregation. Assisted by Rabbi Kaminsky, the committee comprises the “Inclusivity Committee” in step #1 above. It should be noted that the group was of such a diverse nature that agreement on the values, the consultative role of a rabbi, and the process itself were examined and discussed extensively and critically before the committee could get on with the task. It should also be noted that the committee did not include non-Jews. A significant number of committee members have family members who are not Jews. Consideration was given to including non-Jews in the committee and decided against. Revisions to the original document, however, have had direct input from non-Jewish membership.

Operational Note:

In our tradition, unanimity of opinion is sometimes not possible. In the case of disagreement with regard to recommendations set forth by this committee, it will be noted that a Majority and Minority opinion may both be given. It was agreed upon by the committee that in these instances the majority opinion is to be considered the opinion recommended for policy.

A core group of questions was generated from the twelve areas of Recommendations set forth in the *Boundaries and Opportunities* document. These questions formed the basis from which the committee’s recommendations for policy for the congregation emerged:

I. Membership

1. What are the defining circumstances under which a person who is not a Jew may be a member of Congregation Dor Hadash?
2. What are the responsibilities of the application process in determining membership of a person who is not a Jew?

II. Governance

3. What are the defining circumstances under which a person who is not a Jew may hold office on the congregational board?
4. Which committee chairs may be held by a person who is not a Jew?

III. Ritual

5. Are there circumstances under which a person who is not a Jew may complete a minyan?
6. may a person who is not a Jew lead the prayer service?
7. In what manner is it permitted for a person who is not a Jew to participate in the rituals of the Torah Service? (Specifically: aliyot, chanting Torah, chanting / reading the Haftarah, gabbai, hagbah, g'lilah, mi-sheberach, ark opener, d'var Torah, and being on the bimah with a Jew who is performing any of these functions)
8. Which blessings may be said by a person who is not a Jew?
9. Are there circumstances under which congregational authorization and/or ritual participation may take place in the event of a marriage involving a person who is not a Jew?
10. What are the permissible ritual activities in which a person who is not a Jew may participate during Covenant Rituals?
11. What are the permissible ritual activities in which a person who is not a Jew may participate during B'nai Mitzvot?
12. What are the permissible ritual activities in which a person who is not a Jew may participate during funerals / burial?
13. What are the permissible ritual activities in which a person who is not a Jew may participate during aufruf?
14. Under which circumstances may a person who is not a Jew be buried in the congregational cemetery?
15. What are the burial and mourning practices which may be accorded a person who is not a Jew?

Part Two: RECOMMENDATIONS

A: Membership

As a beginning point for membership considerations a review was made of the current by-laws, recent efforts at the composition of a "Mission Statement", the application form and process for membership, and trends and precedence for membership of persons who are not Jews.

The values of diversity, democracy, Jewish continuity, survival of the Jewish people, maintaining an accepting atmosphere, peace within the home, and commitment to the community were applied.

There are a variety of possible reasons why a person who is not a Jew may wish to seek membership in the congregation. Applicants might be married to or partnered with a

person who is Jewish, might seek to raise children within Judaism, might seek unity of religious practices within the family, might choose to live and participate among the Jewish people through love of the people and culture, might be on a path towards conversion to Judaism, or could have some other agenda. All members of the committee agreed that there is a point at which it is appropriate to question one's motivation for seeking membership.

All agreed that if an applicant for membership is not a Jew, it is appropriate to determine if that person is actively involved in a non-Jewish religion, which would exclude membership in Congregation Dor Hadash. This would also be true for membership in our religious school for children who are attending religious education in a non-Jewish program.

Opportunities for participation in activities must be available to family members and guests as appropriate even in the absence of membership.

Recommendation #1: Membership

A person who is not a Jew may be a member of Congregation Dor Hadash under defined circumstances. Primarily this individual would be one who is married to, partnered with, divorced from, or widowed from a Jewish member of the congregation. If the person is actively involved in another religion, appropriate participation within the community should be permitted without membership.

Recommendation #2: Membership Application Process

The membership application process should ensure obtaining accurate information, including religious status and intention for membership, from prospective members.

B. Governance

The process of organizing, teaching, regulating, leading, and representing the congregation is the responsibility of the membership which has been delegated to a board and certain committees. Those aspects of governance which require representation within the larger Jewish and Inter-faith communities, and which demand a commitment to a Jewish way of life through the teaching or development of religious material, demand that a Jew hold positions which ensure these operations. Positions which are of a coordinating / managing function may be held by non-Jews. It should be noted that the nature of offices and positions may change over time. If these positions take on an advisory component or an aspect of representation in the larger community, they should be assigned to individuals who are Jewish.

It was noted that there is some precedence of actual practice with regard to non-Jews holding positions on the Board of Directors and other committees. This was taken into consideration, but did not determine recommendations for policy.

Values which pertain to the area of governance include commitment to the community, democracy, diversity, human dignity, integrity of Jewish ritual practice, Jewish continuity and survival of the Jewish people, Jewish education, and preserving peace within the home.

Recommendation #3: Board Members and Committee Chairs

The following offices must be held by Jews: President, Vice President for Administration, Vice President for Ritual, Membership Chair, Program Chair, Adult Education Chair, Life Events Chair, Social Events Chair, and Past President. The offices of Secretary, Treasurer, Social Action Chair, Dor L'Dor Liaison, Member At Large, and "Kol" Editor may be held by non-Jews. The four non-board member positions of Administrative Assistant, B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator, Sedra Review Coordinator, and Service Leader Coordinator may be held by non-Jews.

{**Minority Opinion:** The following offices must be held by Jews: President, Vice President for Administration, Vice President for Ritual, Membership Chair, Life Events Chair, and Past President. All other offices may be held by non-Jews.}

C: Ritual

The area of ritual participation presents the most significant challenge in determining permissible activity of a person who is not a Jew. Since Judaism generally places a greater importance on what one does rather than what one believes, values are transformed into actions. Reconstructionist practice has taken great pains to make practice meaningful rather than merely following what went before, although past practice is extremely valuable in informing the development of expected as well as permissible action.

All of the identified thirteen values come under consideration with regard to ritual activity.

The congregation has a responsibility to identify and develop opportunities for non-Jewish participants within the boundaries of the recommendations.

■ Minyan

A minyan is required for certain prayers and rituals defining this activity as the public prayer of the Jewish community. As such it requires a minimum number of responsible Jews. A minyan is not required for praying to take place. The spontaneous prayer of the individual soul is always acceptable and encouraged, usually in silence at one's place within the group. The Borchu, Kaddish, K'dushah, and Torah Service are examples of forms of prayer / ritual which require a minyan. Many aspects of prayer are not necessarily representational of the Jewish public community and may be performed by a smaller group than a minyan and / or with the participation of non-Jewish pray-ers. One who is not a Jew should be encouraged to participate in appropriate aspects of prayer that do not require a minyan.

Recommendation #4: Minyan

A minyan must be comprised of Jews of at least the age of b'nai mitzvah. A person who is not a Jew may not complete a minyan.

(The number comprising a minyan, and the possibility of such measures as using an open Ark, Torah scroll, or chumash to complete the minyan should be referred to the Ritual Committee)

■ **Leading Prayer**

The service leader is the public, formal representative and facilitator for the Jewish community in prayer. Leadership and responsibility for the overall service therefore require that person to be Jewish. There are, however, certain parts of the service which are of a more universalistic rather than particularistically Jewish nature, such as psalms, poetry, and readings. Reconstructionist congregations in general and Congregation Dor Hadash in particular rely on non-rabbinic leadership during prayer. It is important to educate the congregation regarding the liturgy so that non-Jews can prominently participate in appropriate parts of the service.

Recommendation # 5: Leading Prayer

The Service Leader must be a Jew. Appropriate opportunities for participation in the prayer service may be offered to a person who is not Jewish.

■ **Torah Service**

The Torah Service involves a host of obligations incumbent on one who is a Jew. According to Jewish tradition, the people stood at Sinai and affirmed the covenant between the Jewish people and God. Each time the Torah is publicly read, surrounded by its rituals, that moment is reenacted. The Torah Service is the part of the service where most often the marking of a family or community special occasion takes place with ritual honors being assigned to family and guests. While the boundaries of the specifically Jewish nature of these ritual activities must be reserved for Jews, opportunities must be available for those who are not Jews yet have significant relationships to those performing them. This needs to be done in a way that does not falsely imply Jewish identity for one incapable of performing the ritual.

The committee discussed the permissibility of non-Jews reading selections such as the Prayer for Peace or their coming forward when names are solicited for prayers for healing during the Torah Service.

It was generally felt that a non-Jew may come forward to give a name during the misheberach for healing. Other actively participatory parts of the Torah Service involve obligations which require a Jew for their performance. Non-active participatory affirmations of respect (accompanying and standing respectfully silent with a related Jew who performs the ritual activity) should be permitted. (Also refer to #8, Life Cycle Events)

Recommendation #6: Torah Service

One must be a Jew to perform the tasks of aliya, gabbai, hagbah, g'lilah, chanting Torah and Haftarah, leading mi'sheberach, opening the ark, and delivering a d'var Torah while the Torah Service is taking place.

A person who is not a Jew may silently and passively accompany a Jew who is a participant in a Torah related activity as an *affirmation of respect*.

{Minority Opinion: Only Jews are permitted on the bimah during any part of the Torah Service.}

■ Blessings

Blessings being both public and private in nature, no attempt should be made to restrict any individual's words of prayer from their personal place (seat) in the house of worship.

It was generally agreed upon that a person who is not a Jew should not lead services, lead a blessing to which the congregation responds with "ameyn", actively participate in the ritual activities of the Torah Service, light the Shabbat candles, hold the Sefer Torah, and like activities. It was also generally agreed upon that such a person, as an affirmation of respect, may passively participate in such ritual activities by being present with the related person who is a Jew who is actively engaged in the ritual activity. The non-Jewish individual may also actively recite (but not lead for the congregation) blessings of a more universal nature, i.e. those blessings which do not contain the words / concepts of "asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav".

The committee discussed the concept proposed in the *Boundaries and Opportunities* document which delineates blessings into "particularistic" and "universalistic". Some of the committee members felt that any blessings which include the words *Adonai* or *eloheynu*, regardless of the "commanded" aspect of the blessing, are inherently Jewish in nature, thus not appropriate for those who are not Jews. Others felt that the tetragramaton and the concept of "our God", is universal and appropriate for an adherent of any religious persuasion for recitation. Others felt that there might be no problem with participation in any blessing by a non-Jew. One felt that any blessing recited anywhere by anyone is not an issue except when it would be done from the bimah where a representation of a non-Jew as a Jew might be interpreted.

Recommendation #7: Blessings

Only a Jew may publicly lead the congregation in the recitation of blessings (a formula to which the congregation responds "ameyn") whether they contain the words *asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav* or are more universalistic in nature.

{Minority Opinion: A person who is not a Jew may participate in English prayer readings from the bimah at points in the service other than the Torah Service, and that the distinction of "universalistic" versus "particularistic" blessings is not significant with regard to the issue of non-Jewish recitation of blessings.}

■ Life Cycle Events

Life cycle events are the most common occasions in which those who are not Jews find meaning in and connection with Jewish ritual. Given the rate of intermarriage, defining the appropriate opportunities for non-Jewish family members to positively and joyously participate is incumbent on the community. Values coming into consideration include Jewish continuity and survival of the Jewish people, maintaining an inviting

and accepting atmosphere, preservation of the Jewish tradition, preserving peace in the home, and welcoming the stranger / guest.

Recommendation #8: Life Cycle Events

A person who is not a Jew is encouraged to participate in the life cycle rituals such as Brit milah / banot, b'nai mitzvah, and aufruf in the following ways:

- 1. Participation in *affirmations of respect* during candle lighting or the Torah Service.**
- 2. Joining, but not leading the recitation of universalistic blessings such as *shehecheyanu* or *motzi*.**
- 3. Offering personal prayers or supplementary readings.**
- 4. Addressing personal remarks to the one whose life cycle event is being celebrated.**

■ Wedding / Commitment Ceremonies

The area of wedding / commitment ceremony was the most complex and difficult topic for the committee. All of the thirteen articulated values come into play when a new core unit of the community is created. How that union is authorized, sanctioned, celebrated, and accepted by the congregation will have potentially significant influence on those who seek the blessings of the community. The issue becomes more complex within our congregation since marriage involves a legality within the larger non-religious community and because Congregation Dor Hadash has no rabbi, thus making it incumbent on particular members to legally authorize and officiate at such simchas.

Before the recommendations are stated below, it is important to share the painstaking consideration that took place.

The committee reviewed the elements of the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony, examined some modern alternatives to the traditional service including the “Children of Noah” service as described in Anita Diamant’s Jewish Wedding Book. It was noted that it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics concerning the number of “mixed” unions. Among those rabbis who are willing to officiate, the most common requirements appear to be: dedication to a Jewish home, raising children Jewishly, non-participation jointly with clergy of other religions, and limitation / qualification of the wording of certain parts of the ceremony.

A review of the Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist rabbinic practice guidelines shows unanimity in attitude that a “mixed marriage” should, in general, not be authorized. There are allowances however for “positions of conscience” as exemplified in the Reconstructionist position which permit the rabbi latitude in situations that welcome and encourage engagement in the couple’s development of a Jewish life, hopefully and ultimately leading to the conversion of the non-Jewish partner. There is also the emerging concept of the non-Jewish partner acquiring the status of “ger toshav” (righteous sojourner), which in some rabbinic circles makes the rituals of the Jewish wedding acceptable with certain modifications.

The values which become most difficult to reconcile include Maintaining an Inviting and Accepting Atmosphere, Integrity of Jewish Ritual Practice, Preservation of

Jewish Tradition, Jewish Continuity and Survival of the Jewish People, Holiness, and Human Dignity.

Some expressed the feeling that Jewish ritual object such as the Kiddush cup and Chuppah should be regarded the same degree of exclusivity as approaching the Torah. Some expressed the need for preservation of all aspects of the Jewish wedding ritual ceremony to be reserved only for Jews. Others expressed a need for accommodation without which future development / progression toward a Jewish identity would be unlikely.

There was consensus among committee members that those who find compelling meaning in ritual Jewish practice imparting meaning to the union should give consideration to conversion to Judaism for the non-Jewish partner. The congregation has a responsibility to assist non-Jews who wish to pursue paths toward conversion to Judaism.

Six committee members were in favor of congregational authorization and sanctioning of the marriage of a person who is not a Jew to a Jew under certain conditions.

Two members of the committee were opposed to such a union being authorized and sanctioned under any circumstances.

Rabbinic consultation yielded a summarization of the “pros and cons” of authorizing and sanctioning such unions.

Below are the summarized statements of position within the committee and the consultative advisories:

1. The marriage of a person who is not a Jew to a Jew should not be permitted in the context of a Jewish wedding ceremony and may not be authorized by the congregation or any of its members.
2. If the marriage of a person who is not a Jew to a Jew is to be permitted and authorized by the congregation, the entire scope of ritual activity must be made available to the non-Jew as the Jewish marriage and wedding contract can be seen as the portal for legitimate community responsibility in all respects. In as much as the committee has concluded that there should be a distinction between permitted ritual activities by a Jew and by a non-Jew, such a wedding ceremony should not be permitted nor such a marriage authorized by the congregation.
3. The marriage of a person who is not a Jew to a Jew may be permitted and authorized by the congregation under certain conditions. The value of Inclusiveness is critical here. The Jewish partner / family should have a history of commitment to the Jewish community as exhibited by more than new or recent membership in the congregation. The use of Jewish ritual objects, actions and words should be permitted. This includes chuppa, Kiddush cup, the breaking of the glass, and the expression of blessings consistent with the policy of exclusion of recitation of blessings by the person who is not a Jew which contain the phrase “asher kid’shanu b’mitzvotav”. The blessing which contains the phrase “by the laws of Moses and the Jewish people should be altered for the non-Jewish partner. The individual case and circumstances should be considered rather than basing decisions on inflexible rules.
4. Permitting congregational participation in and authorization of marriages between intermarried partners would serve as a distinct welcoming of the couple to the

Jewish community in a way that otherwise secular weddings cannot. It is hoped that this would encourage by however a modest increment the raising of their children as Jews and the conversion of the non-Jewish member. This admittedly also has disadvantages in that certain inconsistencies can result. By considering the significance of the intermarriage rate, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. And as for the possible inconsistencies, evaluate them carefully and consider the accepted ones as necessary compromises – as with most life decisions.

5. We do not want to encourage interfaith marriages, but we need a way to assist those who wish to have a Jewish household and raise their children as Jews. By not permitting and authorizing these marriages while saying that we wish such couples to be part of our community we send a contradictory message. Interfaith marriages may be performed and authorized by the congregation with the following stipulations:

There is a commitment to raise children as Jews.

There is a commitment to have a Jewish household.

There is a commitment on the part of the non-Jewish partner to Jewish education for her / him self. It is the responsibility of the congregation to aid in the availability of this education. The Jewish partner will be encouraged to attend the course of study as well.

The Jewish partner is an established member of the congregation. The point here is to avoid having people join simply for the availability of an intermarriage.

Decisions to authorize and perform such marriages should be on a case-by-case basis and taken very seriously. It should, however, be done openly and warmly.

6. **Officiating at Interfaith Marriages: Pros and Cons (Rabbi Shoshana Kaminsky)**
Interfaith marriage and the Jewish community's response to it is without a doubt the most explosive issue of our age. Those of us in the liberal Jewish community are forced to weigh two of our most precious values: Jewish survival versus being an open and welcoming community. There are powerful arguments both for and against officiating at interfaith marriages:

Arguments in favor: Interfaith marriage is a reality in the Jewish community today. Approximately half of all Jews who choose to marry will marry non-Jews, and it is nearly impossible to persuade them to do otherwise. Rather than turning our back on this reality, the best thing the Jewish community can do is to extend a warm welcome to such couples. This is best accomplished by providing a Jewish presence at the wedding. An interfaith couple who find someone in the Jewish community to officiate at their wedding will be more likely to feel invited into the Jewish community. Having been so warmly welcomed, the non-Jewish may well be more likely to consider the option of conversion to Judaism. On the other hand, someone who can find no one from the Jewish community to perform their marriage may come to the conclusion that all of our talk of being a welcoming community is just talk, and that we have failed to deliver on our promises at this time of need for the couple.

The issues are slightly different who has already proven their commitment to the Jewish community but who has chosen to join their lives with a non-Jew. There may well be the expectation that of course the community will support his/her marriage by providing someone to officiate. If that turns out not to be the case, these people may decide to leave the community they feel has rejected them.

Reconstructionist values state that there are times when the urgency of the situation calls for a profound break from past practices. Our long-term survival as a community depends on welcoming in the non-Jewish partner in an interfaith marriage, rather than excluding the Jewish partner!

Arguments against: Although interfaith marriage is a reality in the Jewish community today, that doesn't mean that we should be affirming and celebrating those who choose to marry a non-Jew. When a member of the Jewish community – particularly a rabbi – stands with a couple at the time of their wedding, the entire Jewish community is essentially represented. And so, when a member of the Jewish community officiates at an interfaith marriage, the couple – as well as the guests – might well come to the conclusion that the Jewish community approves and accepts this marriage, and interfaith marriage by extension.

The long-term survival of the Jewish people depends on the continued existence of Jews! Since more than 2/3 of interfaith couples do not raise their children as Jews, we can expect that fully 1/3 of the American Jewish community will vanish in the next generation. We must do everything on our power to curtail the practice of interfaith marriage, which is proving so devastating to our people!

Recommendation #9: Wedding / Commitment Ceremonies

The Marriage / Commitment ceremony of a person who is not a Jew to a Jew may be permitted and authorized by the congregation under certain conditions.

- 1. The Jewish partner must have a well established membership in the congregation.**
- 2. The non-Jewish partner must commit to maintaining a Jewish household, the pursuit of furthering his/her understanding of Judaism, support of the Jewish partner's practice of Judaism, and to the raising and education as Jews of children who may result from the union.**
- 3. The Marriage / Commitment ritual may include traditional ceremonial objects and actions such as chuppa, Kiddush cup, breaking of the glass, recitation of the "seven blessings", and an appropriately modified ketubah.**
- 4. The formula which includes the phrase "by the laws of Moses and Israel" must be changed.**

{**Minority Opinion:** The Marriage / Commitment ritual of a person who is not a Jew to a Jew should not be permitted in the context of a Jewish wedding ceremony and may not be authorized by the congregation or any of its members.}

■ Death and Mourning

In death and bereavement, the focus is the provision of appropriate comfort to those who have sustained a loss as well as burying the dead of our community. If membership, governance, and certain ritual participation are permitted to a member who is not Jewish, then it should obtain that mourning the loss of a loved one or the death of that non-Jewish person requires attention by and support from the congregation.

In the area of death, burial, and mourning, the values which apply are Human Dignity, Preserving Peace within the Home, Integrity of Jewish Ritual Practice, and Maintaining an Inviting and Accepting Atmosphere.

With regard to mourning practices, the ideas enumerated in the sections on Blessings and Minyan should apply. Otherwise, there should be no restriction placed on one's participation in mourning practices. Having a "shiva service" for a non-Jewish relative of a non-Jewish congregant is a permissible way of comforting that member of our community.

Recommendation #10: Death and Mourning

A person who is not a Jew who is a member of the congregation may be buried in the congregational cemetery. A non-Jew who is a member of a Jewish family who are members of the congregation may be buried in the congregational cemetery. The funeral service may include psalms, prayers, hesped, the El Maley Rachamim, and the recitation of Mourners' Kaddish.

{**Minority Opinion:** The Funeral of a person who is not a Jew should not include the El Maley Rachamim}

Part Three: EDUCATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The ten step model set forth in JRF's *Boundaries and Opportunities* continues beyond the generation of the recommendations with these important steps:

7. Select an appropriate means to educate the congregation (including the board) once the Inclusivity Committee arrives at a series of positions.
8. Vote on the positions at the board / congregational level.
9. Make policies available to all members and prospective members.
10. Continue the education process.

Education of the board and discussion within it and the Ritual Committee have taken place resulting in some modifications of the original document.

It must be stressed that this document serves not only as a compromise, but also as a starting point. It is anticipated that over time, education and discussion will result in changes to the recommendations and corresponding changes to the policies of our congregational practice. Just as we define ourselves by our boundaries, may we continue to offer opportunities to those among us who approach our community with sincerity.

May, 2004 / Shavuot, 5764

The Involvement of Non-Jews in Our Community
Current Guidelines of Congregation Dor Hadash
Accepted – June 17, 2005

Congregation Dor Hadash is a Jewish Religious organization. Many of our families include non-Jews, and these families have bonded intimately with the rest of the community. Both to support these individuals and families in their attachment to Jewish life and to provide clarity for them and the community as a whole, we set forth these guidelines for participation.

We encourage our non-Jewish members to participate actively within our community's religious, social, educational and organizational life. Yet, our goal of inclusiveness needs to be balanced with the voice of Jewish tradition which, at times, makes it impossible for non-Jewish members to participate fully in every aspect of religious and community life. Practices reserved for Jews are specifically set forth in this document. Except as so provided, non-Jews may participate on the same basis as any other member of the congregation. When the tradition limits the non-Jews' involvement, the community will seek ways of involving them through alternative practices.

The following policies are presented as guidelines of practice. It is our intention that by establishing these guidelines there will be a reduction in ambiguity and an elimination of the discomfort that has arisen from varying interpretations of the congregation's policies.

1. Membership

A person who is not a Jew may be a member of Congregation Dor Hadash under defined circumstances. Primarily this individual would be one who is married to, partnered with, divorced from, or widowed from a Jewish member of the congregation, except if the person is actively involved in another religion, in which case, ways to participate in the communal life of our Congregation, other than membership, are available. Membership is open to an individual in the process of conversion to Judaism.

2. Governance

The following offices must be held by Jews: President, Vice President for Administration, Vice President for Ritual, Membership Chair, Program Chair, Adult Education Chair, Life Events Chair.

The offices of Secretary, Treasurer, Social Action Chair, Social Events Chair, Dor L'Dor Liaison, Member at Large and "Kol" Editor may be held by a person who is not Jewish.

The four non-board member positions of Administrative Assistant, B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator, Sedra Review Coordinator, and Service Leader Coordinator may be held by a person who is not Jewish.

3. Minyan

A *minyan* must be comprised of Jews at least of the age of *b'nai mitzvah*. Communal prayers that require a *minyan* may be recited in the presence of fewer than ten adult Jews at the creative discretion of the prayer group present.

4. Leading Prayer

The Service Leader is the *Shaliach Tzibbur* – the “Emissary of the Congregation,” a role reserved for Jews. There are many opportunities for Congregants and their guests to participate in the service.

5 Torah Service

In recognition of the special relationship between the *Torah* and the Jewish people, we reserve for Jews the following Torah honors:

aliya, gabbai, hagbah, g'lilah, chanting *Torah* and *Haftarah*, leading a *mi'sheberach*, opening the ark and delivering a *D'var Torah* while the *Torah* service is taking place.

A person who is not a Jew may accompany a Jew who is a participant in a *Torah* related activity as an affirmation of respect.

A non-Jew is welcome to deliver a Friday night Sedra Review.

6. Blessings

The person who leads a communal blessing is acting as an emissary on behalf of the congregation (*Shaliach Tzibbur*).

Only a Jew may publicly recite and lead the congregation in the recitation of blessings which contain the words *asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav* (who has made us holy through Your commandments).

A person who is not a Jew may recite, but not lead the congregation, in the recitation of blessings of a universalistic nature (examples: *shehecheyanu, motzi*).

7. Life Cycle Events

Life events, whether joyous celebration or sad observances, know no religious boundaries and we welcome non-Jews to participate in these events in appropriate ways.

Non-Jewish family members and friends are invited to participate in the life cycle rituals such as of *brit milah, brit banot, b'nai mitzvah* and *aufruff* by the following activities:

1. Participating in affirmations of respect during candle lighting or during the *Torah* service.
2. Joining, but not leading, the recitation of universalistic blessings such as *shehecheyanu* or *motzi*.
3. Offering personal prayers or supplementary readings.
4. Addressing personal remarks to the one whose life cycle event is being celebrated.

Death and Mourning:

A person who is not a Jew who is a member of the congregation may be buried in the congregational cemetery. The funeral service may include psalms, prayers, *hesped*, the *El Maley Rachamim*, and recitation of Mourners' *Kaddish*.

The Congregation offers traditional mourning practices for Jewish members in mourning for non-Jewish family members, as well as for non-Jewish members in mourning for Jewish family members.

The Marriage / commitment ceremony of a person who is not a Jew to a Jew may be permitted and authorized by the congregation under certain conditions.

1. The Jewish partner must have a well established membership in the congregation.
2. The non-Jewish partner must commit to maintaining a Jewish household, the pursuit of furthering her/his understanding of Judaism, support of the Jewish partner's practice of Judaism, and to the raising and education as Jews of children who may result from the union.
3. The marriage / commitment ritual may include traditional ceremonial objects and actions such as *chuppa*, *kiddush* cup, breaking of the glass, recitation of the "seven blessings" and an appropriately modified *ketubah*.
4. The formula which includes the phrase "by the laws of Moses and Israel" must be changed.

Congregation Dor Hadash
February 4, 2007
2007 Boundaries and Opportunities Committee Report.

It must be stressed that this document serves not only as a compromise, but also as a starting point. It is anticipated that over time, education and discussion will result in changes to the recommendations and corresponding changes to the policies of our congregational practice. Just as we define ourselves by our boundaries, may we continue to offer opportunities to those among us who approach our community with sincerity. (Congregation Dor Hadash Our Boundaries / Our Opportunities Report, May 2004 – concluding paragraph)

2007 Committee members:

Ruth Drescher

Carl Fertman (Chair)

Bruce Ledewitz

Patt Ledewitz

Daniel Leger (Chair 2004 Boundaries and Opportunities Committee)

Dan Resnick

Rabbi Shawn Zevit (Consultant)

Acknowledgements:

I want to thank the Dor Hadash Board and Boundaries and Opportunities Committee members for their diligence and care in moving forward with the work of the Boundaries and Opportunities Committee within Dor Hadash. I would also like to acknowledge members of the congregation who independently reviewed the committee's work and Dor Hadash members from interfaith families and households who contributed to the work of the committee.

Dor Hadash Boundaries and Opportunities History

In the spring of 2002, the Board of Congregation Dor Hadash, at the request of the Ritual and Life Events Committees, articulated a committee charge to develop policy recommendations with regard to the participation of individuals who are not Jewish in the activities of the Congregation. The roots of this committee can be traced to a 1998 Jewish Reconstructionist Federation report titled Boundaries and Opportunities. Chaired by Daniel Leger, the Dor Hadash committee labored for 24 months producing a report in May 2004 (Our Boundaries / Our Opportunities). The report made policy recommendations in membership, governance and ritual and included both majority and minority opinions. From this report guidelines were developed called "Involvement of Non-Jews in Our Community Current Guidelines of Congregation Dor Hadash". They were accepted by the board on June 17, 2005. Congregational bylaws reflecting the report and guidelines were adopted by the Congregation at the annual meeting on March 26, 2006.

Dor Hadash, with its long history of a supportive and welcoming community, has a group of interfaith families. Even prior to acceptance of the bylaw changes, conversations and discussions about the interfaith families within the larger Jewish community as well as within Dor Hadash had become intense. The 2004 Boundaries and Opportunities Committee report (Our Boundaries / Our Opportunities) provided an opportunity for our interfaith families and members to focus on and clarify their role and life as members of the community. In particular, membership and governance were identified by the Congregation's interfaith families as controversial.

In the spring and fall of 2006, the interfaith couples celebrated Shabbat dinners followed by conversations about Boundaries and Opportunities. Rabbi Shawn Zevit participated in both dinners. Within the Congregation 14 families have identified themselves as interfaith. The families include new members, families with children: preschool, primary, Bnai Mitzvah, post Bnai Mitzvah and college and beyond, as well as divorced and separated interfaith family members.

In response to Dor Hadash member discussions of Boundaries and Opportunities in November 2006, the Dor Hadash Board charged a new Boundaries and Opportunities committee chaired by Carl Fertman to address issues of membership and governance. Furthermore, the committee was charged to investigate strategies to continue interfaith family and member discussions related to ritual and community life.

The work of this new committee involved review of both the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation and the Dor Hadash Boundaries and Opportunities documents. Discussions were held with congregational members. Bylaw proposals reflective of Dor Hadash's emphasis on Jewish traditions, values and community life became the centerpiece of the committee's work. Emails to the general congregation as well as targeting interfaith families, were used to solicit feedback. A meeting of the previous current and previous chairs, Rabbi Zevit, Dor Hadash President, and

committee members reviewed the bylaw proposals. On Sunday, February 4, 2007 the proposed bylaw changes will be presented to the Board.

Article I - NAME, LOCATION AND PURPOSE

Section 3. Congregation Dor Hadash shall be a Jewish religious organization affiliated with the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation. Members of Congregation Dor Hadash are dedicated to preserving and transmitting our ancient heritage as explained and reinterpreted for the present age. We adhere to our tradition and culture, and deepen our understanding and appreciation of Judaism through education, practice, and prayer. The Congregation is democratic, with equal rights for all members except as may pertain to certain ritual practices for which there may be differences between the roles of Jews and non-Jews.

Article II - MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

Section 1. Members participate in all the activities of the Congregation.

Section 2. Membership shall be open to all interested persons over age eighteen (18) who are Jewish or who are married to, partnered with, divorced from or widowed from a Jewish member of the congregation, except if the person is actively involved in another religion, in which case, ways to participate in the communal life of the congregation other than membership are available. Membership is open to an individual in the process of conversion to Judaism.

Section 3. All members shall be entitled to vote. Household adults shall be considered separate members under one membership fee. A child of a member can be part of a family membership, as a nonvoting member.

Section 4. The membership year and the fiscal year shall be July 1 to June 30, inclusive.

Section 5. Membership in the Congregation may be on an individual, family, or associate basis.

a. Individual Membership

b. Family Membership - Two or more adults or children living in the same household.

c. Associate Membership - Individuals living in the community but not yet established economically, such as students, interns and residents. Spouses of associate members shall enjoy membership privileges.

Action items (1) or (2)

Article II - MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

(1) Proposed Section 2. Membership in Dor Hadash is open to all people 18 years or older, who are Jewish, or who are/were partnered, married, child of, or otherwise related, to a Jewish member. Dor Hadash also welcomes as members those who are exploring a commitment to Judaism. Situations not covered by these guidelines will be considered by the board on an individual basis, with the guiding principle being respect for the integrity of Jewish values and traditions.

(2) Delete Section 2

Article IV - OFFICERS AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1. The officers of the congregation shall be the President, Vice President for Administration, Vice President for Ritual, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Section 2. The Board of Directors shall consist of the five officers, the chairs of standing committees for social action, programs, social events, membership, adult education, youth education, and life events, the editor of the *Kol*, one Member-at-Large chosen from the under-40 age group, and during alternating years, either the President-elect or the immediate Past President.

Section 3. Each Board member shall be elected by the Congregation. The term of each Board member shall be for two years and until his or her successor is elected with two exceptions: The term of the Member-at-Large shall be for one year. The President-elect shall serve for one year before becoming President for a two-year term. After the two-year term as President, the holder of that office then serves one year as immediate Past President. No Board member shall hold the same office or serve as chair of the same committee for consecutive terms, except by the recommendation of the nominating committee and acceptance by the Executive Committee.³ All terms shall begin immediately after the election at the annual meeting.

Section 3a. The office of President (including President-elect and immediate Past President), Vice President for Administration, Vice President for Ritual, Membership Chair, Program Chair, Adult Education Chair, and Life Events Chair are all to be held by Jews. Other offices and chairs may be held by Jews and non-Jews alike.

Action items (1) or (2)

Article IV - OFFICERS AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(1) Proposed Section 3a. Participation in leadership roles is restricted to those who have made a commitment to Jewish values, traditions and community life. The offices of President, Vice-President for Administration, and Vice President for Ritual which involve representation of the congregation to the greater Jewish community are to be held by Jews. All other board positions are open to any member of the congregation.

(2) Delete Section 3a