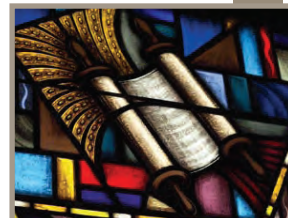


The Reform Advocate

Volume IX, Number I: Winter 2016 - 2017

THE SOCIETY FOR
**CLASSICAL
REFORM
JUDAISM**

Reclaiming & Renewing
Our Heritage for the 21st Century



In Memory of **Edward Meyer Ackerman**

July 23, 1928 - October 1, 2016

With deep regret and in affection and respect, the Society for Classical Reform Judaism announces the recent passing of our Founding Board Member and Benefactor, Edward M. Ackerman. Ed passed away peacefully at his home in Dallas, Texas, on Saturday, October 1, 2016, surrounded by his family. He was predeceased by his wife Helma Ackerman and is survived by his children Paula Ackerman Menendez (Douglas), David Ackerman (Caroline), Samantha Ackerman Simons, and Eddie Ackerman (Beth); his grandchildren Phillip, Emma and Lilly Simons, Reid and Owen Ackerman, and Sam and Sarah Menendez.



Edward M. Ackerman was born July 23, 1928, in Dallas, and was a graduate of Woodrow Wilson High School and the University of Texas. He served as a lieutenant in the US Air Force, stationed in Japan during the Korean War. Following his service, he did post-graduate study in finance at New York University before joining Salomon Brothers, and later returning to Dallas as their regional manager. Ed founded Ackerman Associates, L.P., Dallas' first hedge fund, in 1969 and compiled an impressive track record of investment success until his retirement in 2007.

He is also the founder of Ackerman Capital Management, an investment advisory firm that continues to thrive today.

As a philanthropist, Ed had a significant impact throughout the Dallas community. Much of his time and resources were dedicated to the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Foundation, Temple Emanu-El, the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas, the Dallas Holocaust Museum, Hebrew Union College, and, pre-

eminently, the Society for Classical Reform Judaism.

As a faithful Jew, Ed was deeply committed to the Classical Reform tradition, and had long been an advocate for its perpetuation at his home congregation, Temple Emanu-El of Dallas. Along with fellow SCRJ Founder, Max Tonkon, he organized the Friends of Classical Reform, which fostered regular worship Services from the *Union Prayer Book*, accompanied by the great choral repertoire of American Reform. When the Society was founded in 2008 to advocate for this vision on a national basis, Ed Ackerman was one of its organizers, and remained an active member of its Board of Trustees until

his death. He early on became the major benefactor of our work, both with ongoing support for our operations and programs, as well as the many special projects the Society has so successfully initiated. His broad, creative vision embraced our goal of fostering a meaningful encounter with our Reform heritage by the new generation of rabbis and leaders of our Movement, through our work with Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

Beginning with our seminars and institutes at the historic Cincinnati campus in 2009, Ed's support made continuing expansion possible, establishing the Society as a regular presence at the College's Jerusalem and Los

Angeles centers as well. His generous support culminated in the establishment of the Ackerman Professorship for American Jewish History and Reform Judaism at HUC in 2014. In addition, Ed supported the Society's partnership with Har-El Congregation of Jerusalem, Israel's pioneer Reform synagogue, and sponsored the publication of our contemporary revision of *The New Union Haggadah* by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Ed's dedication to the work of the Society and its mission of preserving and renewing our Reform heritage will now be perpetuated by the Ackerman Foundation for Classical Reform Judaism, which will provide ongoing support for our work into the future.

* * * * *

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO A DEAR FRIEND

by Max Edward Tonkon

Edward M. Ackerman was my life-long friend. We grew up together in Dallas, and both attended the University of Texas (UT). We were in the same swimming class. We shared so many interests and values, that we enjoyed spending time together. After each swimming class, we talked about our lives over a breakfast of hash browns and eggs, and became fast friends. We were closer than most fraternity brothers.

After graduating from UT, we went our separate ways. Ed headed to New York, and I to San Francisco. Then we both entered the military. Ed became a US Air Force soldier and was stationed in Japan during the Korean War, and I was drafted into the US Army and sent to Germany. We both became First Lieutenants. After our service, we returned to Dallas, always our home, and began our business careers. We married, had children and became members of Temple Emanu-El. Ed and I were active in the congregation, and participated in a group that later became the Society for Classical Reform Judaism (SCRJ). We both became founding board members of the Society under the leadership of Rabbi Howard Berman.

Ed's leadership and generosity were instrumental in making the SCRJ a respected voice in the Reform Movement and among members of many Reform congregations that miss the beautiful loving words of

the *Union Prayer Book*. Because of Ed's vision and commitment, Classical Reform Judaism is now an integral part of Rabbinic studies at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. Congregation Har-El in Jerusalem is supported by the Society in its efforts to promote progressive Judaism in Israel, and many Jews around

“Ed’s philanthropy knew no bounds...”
“His gifts and his spirit will always be remembered
with love, devotion, and great respect.
He will be sorely missed.”

the world are now being introduced to Classical Reform values and practice.

Ed's philanthropy knew no bounds. In addition to supporting the Society for Classical Reform Judaism, he funded several other organizations that were very close to his heart. These included the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas, where students young and old learn about the history of

the Holocaust; and the Hockaday School, a prestigious girl's school in Dallas. Ed was so beloved by both organizations that the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) honored Ed with a dinner, and the Hockaday

School named Ed "Mr. Hockaday," and how Ed loved being "Mr. Hockaday!"

Ed's gifts and his spirit will always be remembered with love, devotion, and great respect. He is sorely missed.

OUT OF THE ASHES - INTO THE LIGHT JEWISH PRIDE & PROGRESSIVE JEWISH PRACTICE ON THE RISE IN POLAND

This past fall, a group of members from Central Reform Temple in Boston traveled to Poland and Hungary to visit Jewish historical sites and to learn more about Jewish life in these countries today. As you would expect, the itinerary included visiting concentration camps, ruins of once magnificent Temples and synagogues, and museums that chronicled the lives of Jews before, during and after the Holocaust. The group knew that this would be emotionally draining, but what they didn't expect, was how this trip would transform and inspire them.

While standing in and walking through the death camps and museums, the group bore witness to the horrors of the past. It was a heart-wrenching experience. Yet grief also sparked a deep awareness of how fortunate everyone was to be living in the U.S., even with the divisions and struggles Americans are facing today.

Here is the most surprising and heart-warming aspect of the trip. The Temple travelers saw a small but growing and very enthusiastic renewal of Jewish life and practice emerging from the rubble of these countries.

Here are stories of two amazing, progressive and vibrant Jewish communities in Poland.

* * * * *

EC CHAIM, WARSAW A BEACON OF HOPE FOR JEWS IN POLAND

by Jill Silverstein



I knew some of what Poland had once been – with its rich and vibrant Jewish community of millions and a thousand year history. I was also painfully aware of what remains of that community today.

Our group arrived in Warsaw, the first city on our twelve-day journey through Poland and Hungary, each with our own notions of what we would find. Some of those notions were confirmed, quickly and often. We found, which I believe we all expected, a Poland that is still a country with very few Jews in the post-war era. In fact, no one really knows what that number is. The speculation is that there are between eight and twenty thousand Jews in the entire country, a country of 35.5 million people. Rebounding from the ravages of the Shoah, where Jews were once one third of the population of Poland, followed by forty years of communist rule, it is not overly shocking that, whatever Jews might have remained,

are not exactly standing up to be counted. History has demonstrated that this is not always a prudent strategy for us.

On the flip side of pre-conceived ideas, were some encounters that left me completely agape, in most surprising and uplifting ways. One such experience was our first Friday night in Warsaw. We attended Shabbat services at Ec Chaim, a small but growing Reform Jewish congregation that the SCRJ has supported over the past few years, including buying an organ for their sanctuary. The sanctuary, offices and religious school are housed in a newish, unremarkable office building in the downtown business district of Warsaw. But, what we found there was quite remarkable!

This particular Shabbat happened to be the celebration of Rabbi Stas Wojciechowicz' tenth year in the Rabbinate. In addition to Rabbi Berman and our members from Central Reform Temple in Boston visiting, Stas had teachers from Germany and Israel there to mark the occasion, as well as many friends and

The excitement that evening was palpable. Stas, his own mini 'force of nature', moves easily between teachers and guests and congregants and children, and as we discovered looking at some of the historical



Ec Chaim Members on a Shabbaton (Sabbath Retreat)

buildings of the Jewish community of the past, he is in the center of an emerging progressive expression of Judaism in the wider communal landscape. The sanctuary was very crowded that evening, as I imagine it must be every Shabbat, not just on this special occasion. The room was filled with warmth and chatter, laughter and love. We felt welcomed and included as part of the 'family' from the minute we entered the building. What I found most beautiful and exciting about this buzz of Jewish life in Poland was that this congregation is filled with committed young families, who clearly love their Rabbi. For me, the ray of hope for the future came during the Kiddush. Of course, there were words of appreciation and congratulations and lifting our glasses high for the blessing over the wine, for Shabbat and for Rabbi Stas.



From the left: Rabbi Stas, Rabbi Yosi Leshem, Rabbi Howard Berman, Rabbi Ada Zavidov, Rabbi Walter Homolka

'fans'. Stas himself has had his own amazing journey to this particular day and celebration - born and raised in Uzbekistan, studied in the U.S. as a high school student, immigrated to Israel at the age of 17, graduated from the University of Haifa and ordained as Rabbi by the HUC-JIR in Jerusalem, he has served as a congregational rabbi in Ashdod, Israel and St. Petersburg, Russia. And now he serves as the first Progressive Rabbi of the Community, a post he has held since October 2010.

But when it came time for the Ha'motzi, it was a group of children who seemed to emerge from under the tables and between the legs of people standing in the room that took my breath away. There they were – sweet and angelic, scrubbed and excited over who could recite the blessing the loudest and the fastest. Ec Chaim is a testament to the power of the human spirit, the abiding depth and strength of our tradition and the abundant hope of people everywhere. In this moment, in this relatively small gathering in Warsaw on a particular August Shabbat we found, what I hope is the next generation of committed Jews rebuilding a vibrant Jewish community in Poland – may it be God's will!

JOYOUSLY RECLAIMING JEWISH LIFE JCC, KRAKOW

by BK Hipsher



Auschwitz in the Rain

Driving to Auschwitz in the rain
Silence parted by whispered sharing in hushed tones

Low grey clouds hang over us
As they did on those who traveled this road so long ago

And the trees stand by knowing us as they knew them
Loving us with the air we breathe as they loved them

Driving to Auschwitz in the rain past places they rode by
Houses whose families live there still

Churches from hundreds of years whose crosses stood
silently
As they passed on that last short ride to work camps and
gas chambers and ovens

Driving to Auschwitz in the rain past farms that bring forth
bread from the earth
Bread that sustains the generations that remember... them.

©2016 BK Hipsher

That last event of the day has become the central memory of a long and vibrant trip to Poland and Hungary with my temple family from Central Reform Temple of Boston. Our last event on that day was a Shabbat dinner lovingly prepared and served by members of the Jewish Community Center in Krakow Poland. We had passed this building earlier in our trip. I remembered the bright posters on the wall outside on the street welcoming everyone. I remembered thinking how wonderful it was to see an unguarded building proudly welcoming anyone walking along Miodowa Street in Krakow to come inside.

Our hosts included the founder and executive director of JCC Krakow, a Holocaust survivor, and three of the vibrant young people who participate in the life of this gathering place. I don't remember much about the food we ate but I vividly remember how I felt. I remember the stories of those who spoke to us about their own journey's recovering their Jewish heritage. And I remember the images displayed in the room... images that showed one scene when viewed from one angle and a very different view from the opposite angle.

It had been a brutally sad day. Many of us had visited Holocaust museums and memorials around the world. But nothing could have prepared us for what it would feel like to entering the gas chamber at Auschwitz where the use of Zyklon B crystals was perfected. Nothing could prepare us for walking on the same earth where hundreds of thousands had walked their last steps on earth. We were tired, sad, exhausted. But we had one more event before the day was done and we could escape the horror in sleep.

JCC Krakow provides a place for people of all ages to come together in community to learn about the Jewish heritage of Poland. Most of those who call this place "home" do not identify as Jewish. Some are recovering their own family history after the horrors or World War II decimated the Jewish population of Poland and the long years of anti-religious Soviet occupation that followed. Some of them simply want

to learn about Jewish history and culture in Poland because understanding Poland means understanding the Jewish culture that dominated the country before World War II. Many of these members and friends of JCC Krakow are young and filled with energy and optimism, ready and willing to make themselves vulnerable to a group of strangers who desperately needed to hear their stories on this particular night.



JCC Krakow's Volunteers (above)

"Our 50 volunteers are the heart and soul of our institution. This team of devoted, intelligent Poles, almost none of whom are Jewish, work hard every day to help us rebuild Jewish life in Krakow." ("Meshugoyim" meaning "Crazy People" in Yiddish, is used here as an endearing term. It is said with a smile.)

The rain had stopped, the lights were bright in the cozy community center, the food was warm and nourishing, and the stories shared by those who spoke to us that night was balm to our weary souls. It is not hyperbole to acknowledge that the love shared with us that night changed my life on a day that started in the rain at Auschwitz and ended in the warm glow of Shabbat candles with a new generation of Poles free to be who they are and enact the ancient rituals of hospitality once more.



*Zofia, 79, native Krakow Holocaust Survivor
Lighting Sabbath Candles (JCC Krakow Photo)*

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FIRST INTERFAITH OPPORTUNITY SUMMIT “EMBRACING THE NEW JEWISH REALITY”

Intermarriage is now Mainstream

by Rabbi Devon Lerner

The Society recently participated in and helped sponsor an historic first Interfaith Opportunity Summit, organized by Interfaith Family. It was held in November at the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia and was a huge success. Over 300 people attended, including clergy and Jewish professionals from congregations, Jewish schools, Hillel chapters, and Jewish Philanthropies. Interfaith marriage researchers and members of interfaith families also attended and presented, adding depth and breadth to the summit.

This was the first major Jewish sponsored conference to focus on the importance of welcoming interfaith couples into the Jewish community. Outreach to interfaith families was seen as a means of strengthening, not weakening, Jewish communities and life. The day-long event featured presentations on recent research on intermarriage in the US, panel discussions on ways to help interfaith families feel more welcome in congregations, descriptions of successful interfaith programming, and dialogues with members of interfaith families about what helped them feel welcome in congregations. Here are some of the highlights of the summit.

SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS

Recent Research Results

1. **The intermarriage rate now averages 70%** in some parts of the country, among non-Orthodox Jews. This upward trend means that most Jewish families have an interfaith marriage in their immediate or extended families. Interfaith marriage is truly mainstream now.



2. A new Pew Center study, released on the day of the conference, reveals that **1 in 5 adults in the US were raised by parents who came from different religious traditions** (defined as parents from different faith traditions, or where one parent is unaffiliated).

3. A recent study conducted by the Brandeis University Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, titled “Under the Chuppah: Rabbinic Officiating and Intermarriage,” found that **85% of the interfaith couples who had a rabbi officiate at their wedding, chose to raise their eldest child Jewish**. This rate was close to the percentage of Jewish couples who raised their children Jewish.

This study is likely skewed because it is based on interviews with interfaith couples who traveled to Israel as part of the Birthright Israel programs. Yet, the presenter believes that further study will indicate that interfaith couples, in general, are much more likely to raise their children Jewish when a rabbi officiates at their wedding. The percentage may be lower than indicated above, but he predicts that it will still be high.

4. According to a survey conducted a year ago by Big Tent Judaism, **almost half of Conservative rabbis have defied the movement’s ban on officiating at interfaith marriages**. This highlights

the growing acceptance of interfaith marriages within the Conservative Movement.

5. Rabbi Nadia Siritsky, an SCRJ Board member, also shared preliminary results of the SCRJ-Spalding University Survey, *How Does The Amount Of Hebrew In A Worship Service Affect How Welcome You Feel In A Congregation?*

This study confirms what many of us know intuitively and anecdotally, that **interfaith families, as well as Jews who don't read or understand Hebrew, feel left out and alienated by too much Hebrew in worship services.** They report losing interest and daydreaming when long passages of Hebrew are read, and are less likely to attend services. They feel more engaged and more likely to attend when they understand the prayers, and when the content of those prayers resonate with their modern lives.

This explains why many interfaith families and non-Hebrew reading and speaking spiritual seekers find Classical Reform worship services more accessible and meaningful. Classical Reform services are conducted primarily in English and include poetic passages that speak directly to their needs and concerns. *A more complete report of this study will be published in the next Advocate.*

What Helps Interfaith Families Feel Welcome in Congregations?

These points were emphasized repeatedly throughout the day:

1. **A warm, non-judgemental welcome by members of the congregation.** People from other faith backgrounds are often anxious about entering a Temple or synagogue. They worry about being judged.
2. **Finding like-minded members who share their values and interests.** Connecting personally with members of the congregation is key for interfaith families, and arguably any family, when deciding where they wish to belong.
3. **Experiencing full inclusion in the life of congregation.** We heard more than one moving

story from parents with other faith traditions and backgrounds, who cried when they were invited up to the bimah to hold the Torah during their son or daughter's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. For them, this was a watershed moment when they truly felt that they belonged to the congregation.

THE TAKE AWAY FROM THE SUMMIT

Interfaith marriage is mainstream and here to stay. Recent research on interfaith families in the United States and within Jewish communities, seem to confirm that interfaith marriages are not weakening Judaism. The opposite could be argued about the impact of the growing numbers of interfaith families belonging to Reform congregations. They often inspire Jews by birth to have a greater appreciation of the power and beauty of their heritage, and they bring new eyes and renewed energy to our communities. As we get to know each other, we gain a deeper appreciation of our different faiths traditions and backgrounds. We become friends in a loving and caring community.

According to the testimonies of members of interfaith families and presenters of successful interfaith programming, the best way to attract interfaith families is to give them an unconditional welcome, without any preconditions. This means greeting them warmly as equals, more concerned about them as people than about their plans to convert. Building relationships is key for them, as it is for most spiritual seekers. It means including them as full members, able to participate on the bimah with their sons and daughter when they become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, and more.

Some rabbis and congregations are not comfortable offering this type of welcome. A few Conservative rabbis, educators, and leaders spoke openly and compassionately about their struggle. They are working hard to become more inclusive and welcoming of interfaith families. Each of us must find our own way to address this important matter.

These conversations will continue, and we look forward to participating in the next Interfaith Opportunity Summit. According to Interfaith Family, it will likely be held in 2018.

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE OVER BREAKFAST

by

Rabbi Devon Lerner and

Rev. Dr. BK Hipsher



A minister and a rabbi sit down to breakfast... No it's not the beginning of a joke. It's what daily life is like for Rabbi Devon Lerner and Rev Dr. BK Hipsher, life partners who are members of Central Reform Temple of Boston.

A two-clergy family is complicated. A two-clergy family from two different faith traditions is also time consuming: two different lists of holidays to celebrate, often two faith communities to maintain, two theological viewpoints, and a constantly running interfaith dialogue on everything from charter schools to the new US administration's cabinet picks. This is what life is like for us.

When we first met there was an instant rapport. We quickly bonded in our similarities. Both of us enjoy exploring spirituality and spiritual practice. We both enjoy reading and discussing, even arguing, the meanings of sacred texts. And we both feel the need at this point in our lives to be part of a community of faith that supports our own journey and provides opportunities for service to the wider community.

BK Hipsher: "I had never heard of Classical Reform Judaism, before I met Devon. Sadly I was not taught anything about the diversity of Jewish life and practice. I had no idea that there was a form of Judaism that would allow me to experience a service, predominantly in English, that I could understand. I assumed that most of the service would be written, spoken, and sung in Hebrew essentially excluding me from participating.

I remember the very first service I attended at what was then called Boston Jewish Spirit (later renamed Central Reform Temple of Boston). I could participate and allow my spirit to resonate with the ancient prayers translated into English but still repeated in Hebrew. As the years have passed I became a full participating member of the congregation. They have become for me a faith community family that remembers the anniversaries of my family members deaths, prays for the healing of my friends, and celebrates the important milestones in my life as a minister.

The ethical and ritual basis of Judaism is also at the core of my own Christian tradition. Understanding the ancient and current manifestations of that Jewish tradition adds a deep layer of understanding and respect to my own expression of faith. And the respect and care with which my own tradition is respected is equaled only by my own respect and admiration for the archetypal precepts of Judaism as expressed in Classical Reform practice."

Having our relationship not just accepted but celebrated and integrated into the life of our temple is a major support for our relationship. Our prayer is that every interfaith couple will find the kind of community we enjoy.

Devon Lerner: I agree with BK, that we were immediately drawn to each other by our interest in exploring spirituality and spiritual practice. She forgot to mention that we also both love football...which we cannot ethically justify or explain. We clearly have more spiritual work to do!

Our interfaith relationship can get complicated, but not because we have different theologies. BK and I are on the same plane here. We both appreciate each other's rich traditions, which are grounded in a loving God. The rituals and language we use to express our

faiths differ, but the basic values and purpose are the same - to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. In my almost 38 years as a rabbi, active in interfaith work and dialogue, I have yet to meet a progressive clergy person who does not share this perspective. The interfaith part of my relationship with BK enriches my mind, heart and soul.

I enjoy watching BK lead a service. She is a wonderful preacher, with a gift of including prayers and a variety of music that inspires me and many others. Her ministry is unique. She is the pastor of an MCC (Metropolitan Community Church) congregation online in virtual world called Second Life. Her members create their own avatars (digital, animated figures, similar to

those you see in video games) in any image they like. While the avatars are not real, the people who inhabit them are very real, as is the virtual church experience. Everyone knows that BK is a practicing minister and they speak to her, via texting, about their real lives. A very interesting and needed ministry.

Beyond the details of our lives together, the bottom line is that we love each other for who we are. Like most couples, we fell in love because we fit together - emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually - not because or in spite of our different faiths or cultural backgrounds.

Happy Holidays from a Rabbi and a Reverend living happily ever after.

* * * * *



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We understand Judaism to be foremost a religious commitment rather than an ethnic identity.

We promote opportunities for meaningful and accessible worship, primarily in the language of our own time and place.

We demonstrate our religious commitment in ethical action inspired by the Biblical Prophets.

We affirm the American experience and its ideals as central to our Jewish identity.

We extend a warm welcome and unconditional support for interfaith families and all spiritual seekers.

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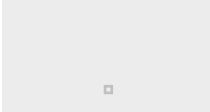
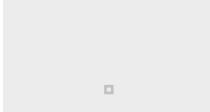
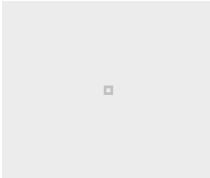
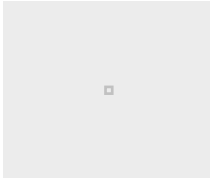
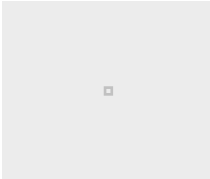
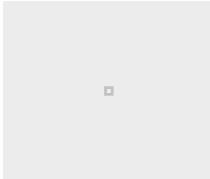
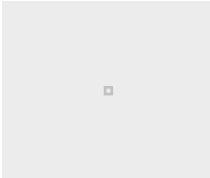
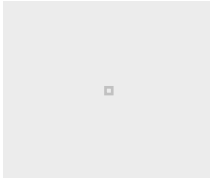


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Your copy should address 3 key questions: Who am I writing for? (Audience) Why should they care? (Benefit) What do I want them to do here? (Call-to-Action).

Create a great offer by adding words like "free" "personalized" "complimentary" or "customized." A sense of urgency often helps readers take an action, so think about inserting phrases like "for a limited time only" or "only 7 remaining!"

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