

DRAFT

Includes first two sections of the forthcoming AH Tool Kit

Audacious Hospitality Toolkit

*A Congregational Guide to Welcoming All and
Fostering Communities that Contribute to
Creating a World of Wholeness, Justice, and Compassion*



www.urj.org/audacioushospitality

Audacious Hospitality Toolkit

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Welcome to the Audacious Hospitality Toolkit

“The old must be renewed and the new must be made holy.”
Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

Bruchim Habaim (welcome) to the Audacious Hospitality toolkit! We are thrilled that you have found your way to this dynamic guide and are interested in the work of Audacious Hospitality.


The roots of Audacious Hospitality began when Rabbi Alexander Schindler created Reform Jewish Outreach in the 1970s. The then Union of American Hebrew Congregations heeded his call and began to listen to the needs of those in our communities who were not being heard – individuals who were considering becoming Jewish, and couples who were in love and did not see conversion as an option, but who were considering raising Jewish families. We asked them to tell us about the barriers they experienced, to tell us what made them feel welcome and what made them feel distant, and what we could do to bring them close. Through this collaborative process we learned a great deal, much of which provides the foundation for the work of Audacious Hospitality today.

As the demographic landscape of North America continues to shift, so to does the collective identity of the Jewish people. Therefore, as part of the largest movement of Jews in North America, we cannot stand idly by as we witness the need to widen the circle and engage more groups of people who are often unrecognized and underserved in Jewish communal and institutional spaces.

Jewish populations such as Jews by choice and those exploring Judaism, Jews of color, Jews who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer, Jews who live with physical, mental, or intellectual disabilities, multiracial families, millennials, the aging Jewish population, Jews who are unaffiliated and uninspired by Jewish communal offerings requires our focused attention., Of course none of these Jewish populations are mutually exclusive and this also includes the evolving needs of interfaith and intermarried couples and families, With this history and our current Audacious Hospitality practices, we now have a fuller understanding of how to meet the needs of those in the margins of our Jewish community. It is our goal through Audacious Hospitality to build on our historical success, while challenging the status quo of Jewish life as we understand it today and continue to strengthen the Reform movement and North American Jewry.

Throughout these pages you will learn more about the vision, principles, and best practices of Audacious Hospitality while working towards effecting much needed change to support the diversity that is the reality of modern Jewish life.

At this time, this toolkit is a work in progress. We are continuously updating, revising, and with your feedback, co-creating resources needed to support our efforts in creating a more whole, just, and compassionate world. We know that turning inward to take inventory of how our congregations – clergy, office staff, board members, lay leaders, educators, and congregants – operate to create communities of full accessibility and inclusion is not an easy task. The toolkit, however, is designed to guide you step-by-step, to meet you where you are in the work of Audacious Hospitality and implement incremental changes over time. It is our honor to participate in this sacred work as we journey together to create diverse communities filled with meaning and connection.



*Jewish diversity,
in all its hues, is
no longer a wave
—it is the ocean
of Jewish life.*

*April Baskin,
URJ VP Audacious Hospitality*

What is Audacious Hospitality?

A key element of the URJ's 2020 vision, **Audacious Hospitality** is the focused effort to embrace our diversity and reach out to those currently not engaged in Jewish life. The URJ believes that everyone can feel at home in Jewish community—and that Judaism must meet people where they are today to thrive tomorrow. As a Movement, we stand for a Judaism that is inclusive and open. We believe that there is more than one authentic way to be Jewish. Audacious Hospitality is a transformative spiritual practice rooted in the belief that we will be a stronger, more vibrant Jewish community when we fully welcome and incorporate the diversity that is the reality of modern Jewish life.

Programs and Initiatives

Audacious Hospitality as a new initiative is in its early phase of development. As such we are continually creating new innovative and strategic initiatives as we work to expand our reach. Examples of our current work include:

Outreach and Engagement:

- **Introduction to Judaism and Taste of Judaism**
Existing initiative of the URJ offering formal introduction to Judaism classes for those interested in exploring Judaism that serves 14 cities across the US.
- **Community Connectors**
An Audacious Hospitality and NFTY Alumni Network Initiative to facilitate engagement in Jewish life among millennials who are alumni of NFTY of other URJ youth programs.

Leadership Development:

- **JewV'Nation Fellowship**
JewV'Nation is a fellowship that supports emerging and accomplished leaders in developing and incubating innovative Jewish outreach initiatives.

Resources and Education:

- **Disabilities Inclusion Learning Center**
In partnership with the Ruderman Family Foundation, the Learning Center offers Reform professionals resources to develop additional skills, strategies and understanding to make full participation of people with disabilities in congregational and communal life possible.

Resources and Education:

- **LGBTQ Active Learning Network**
A joint Audacious Hospitality Initiative in partnership with the Religious Action Center, Keshet, the Youth and Gender Media Project, and transgender members of the Jewish community to provide education and resources on advancing LGBTQ inclusion efforts in our congregations.
- **Audacious Hospitality Toolkit**
Comprehensive educational resources that support congregational clergy, lay leaders, and members to create a more welcoming, diverse, and supportive, experience in Jewish life.

AUDACIOUS HOSPITALITY

6 Guiding Principles

WELCOME

Open Tent

Ohel Patuach אוהל פתוח

First steps in creating warm and welcoming environments.

OBSERVE

Watchfulness & Assessment

Z'hirut זהירות

Strategies for observation and evaluation.

LEARN

Knowledge & Self-Awareness

Daat V'hitlamdut דעת והתלמדות

Deepening our practice of being in sacred partnership with one another.

DO

Courage & Compassion

Ometz Lev V'rachamim אומץ-לב ורחמים

"When the rubber meets the road."
Developing strategies for difficult moments.

HONOR

Honoring Diversity

Kavod כבוד

Realizing our full potential with honor, respect, dignity, in congregational and communal life.

LEAD

Leadership and Justice

Hanhagah V'tzedek הנהגה וצדק

Next steps in leadership and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).



Open Tent *Ohel Patuach* אוהל פתוח

First steps in creating warm and welcoming environments.

Welcoming Guests/Open Tent – An Overview

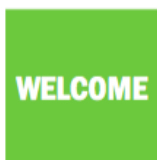
Jewish tradition places a premium on the importance of welcoming guests, in Hebrew *hakhnasat orcheem*. In fact, it is considered a mitzvah (a commandment) to welcome guests into your home.

In the following biblical passage, the patriarch Abraham sets a standard for welcoming guests: "Looking up, [Abraham] saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground, he said, 'My lords, if it please you, do not go on past your servant.'" (Genesis 18:2-3) With a great sense of urgency he ran to the three men to offer them food, drink, and shade to rest in.

When we welcome guests into our congregations, schools and institutions, there is the expectation that our values will be apparent in what our guests see (the environment), what they hear (our language), and what we do (activities). It is also the hope that we create an opportunity for both our guests and ourselves to feel comfortable with one another – to relax, share a meal, pray, and learn. However lovely this experience may be, by welcoming guests there is the inherent expectation that they will at some point leave.

Considering the principle of an open tent, in Hebrew, *ohel patuach*, we must reach beyond the work of welcoming and open our doors, hearts, and minds to make possible for those who are seeking a Jewish life, the opportunity to co-create what it means to be a part of a Jewish community. When we invite people into our congregations the hope is that we do so with the intention of building lifelong meaningful sacred relationships.

In this section, we take a closer look at points of first contact. In what ways can we create a culture of inclusion and acceptance? How do we create a welcoming physical environment? How can our greeters and ushers create an atmosphere of welcome? What role do our members play in strengthening connection and meaning among each other? Along with online and on-the-ground trainings, these resources are meant to support and guide you in the beginning steps of practicing Audacious Hospitality.



Open Tent
Ohel Patuach אוהל פתוח

First steps in creating warm and welcoming environments.

A Welcoming Culture

Community policies and leadership set the tone for audacious hospitality, but peer-to-peer relationships determines the culture of community. Ideally welcoming guests to our communal space is a sacred obligation embraced by every member of the community. The reality is that when we are tired or distracted, it takes real effort and intention to reach out to people whom we don't know or don't know well.

Ten Simple Practices to Try at Your Next Synagogue Gathering

Smile – A friendly face can go a long way to helping everyone feel that they can participate fully in the life of the congregation. As Shammai taught, greet every person with a cheerful face (Pirke Avot 1:15).

Widen Your Circle – Adopt the practice of greeting everyone you pass, or everyone who comes within a few feet of you. A simple “hello” or “Shabbat Shalom” will do the trick.

Take 5 – Try to spend the first five minutes after the formal program or service ends talking to people you don't already know, whether newcomers or long-time members you haven't yet connected with.

Be a friend – Informal schmoozing time can be especially awkward for anyone who doesn't have a friend by their side, especially newcomers to your community. The transition time between the end of the formal service or program and informal coffee hour is when people are likely to dash for the door. Help them feel more socially secure, by deciding to be their friend for those few minutes.

Naming Names – Not sure where to begin? Try a straightforward, “Hi, I'm...what's your name?” Repeat their name back to them to be sure you heard it right and to help it stick with you. Maybe you're sure you've met before but you're not sure of their name. Honesty really is the best policy. Preface your introduction with, “I'm sorry I've forgotten your name...” or “Tell me your name again...” If their name is difficult for you pronounce, admit it, apologize, and practice till you get it right. Chances are you're not the first person to trip over their name.

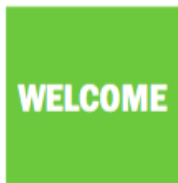
New-ish? – Not sure if they are new to the community or just new to you? Preface your introduction with, “I’m not sure if we’ve met before…” or ask, “Have we met before…?” When you are introduced to someone, try, “Nice to see you” rather than “nice to meet you,” just in case you’ve actually met each other before (or several times before!)

Don’t Ask, and Don’t Tell –Don’t assume you know or can tell someone’s gender identity, family make-up, religious, racial, or cultural background. People will share what they want to, when they want to, in the way they want to.

What’s next? – Not sure what to say next? Consider offering a small piece of relevant information about yourself and the congregation. For example, “I’ve been a member here for a long time. I love our Rabbi.” Or, “I moved here about a year ago.” Or an innocuous statement like, “I love when the choir participates.” Share something positive or neutral. Please don’t bond over a shared complaint.

Introduce – Introduce them to someone else you know, or offer to introduce them to lay leaders or your Rabbi or Cantor, e.g. “Have you met our Rabbi? Would you like me to introduce you?” And, yes, it’s okay, if they decline your offer.

A little goes a long way –After you’ve had an initial conversation, give them space by saying “nice to talk with you” or similar, as you leave.



Open Tent Ohel Patuach אוהל פתוח

First steps in creating warm and welcoming environments.

Reaching Beyond Your Four Walls

Expanding your congregation's reach with programs held in public spaces.

Your congregation can engage a larger number of individuals and families by offering programs both in synagogue spaces and in public places. For many, experiencing and expressing their Judaism in a synagogue or formal institution does not meet their needs and becomes a barrier to finding community and connection to Jewish life. Congregational activities held in public settings (e.g. a park or coffee shop) are an effective way to invite the Jewish community to be more visible and accessible to a wider audience.

“Public Space Judaism,” a term originally coined by Big Tent Judaism, is consistent with the understanding that expressing our Jewish values are not limited only to synagogue and the family home, but are expressed in how we interact with the wider world. For those whom entering a synagogue is a barrier to their participation, activities held in communal spaces are inherently more welcoming.

Opening the Jewish community means not only that we invite people to join us for activities at our synagogues, but also that we meet them where they are.

These types of opportunities are especially important for interfaith couples, families with young children, people in the 20's and 30's, and people who identify with groups that historically have been marginalized and not readily welcomed into congregations such as Jews of Color, Jews who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or those with physical, emotional, neurodevelopmental or neurocognitive disabilities.



Open Tent
Ohel Patuach אוהל פתוח

First steps in creating warm and welcoming environments.

Six Ways to Make Your Community Event More Successful

In addition to being thoughtfully planned and well-organized, the most successful programs consider the following:

- 1. Planned with input from the cohort the program is intended to reach**
 - Remember this phrase: “Not about us without us.”
 - Invite those who you hope to reach out to and engage with at the event to plan the event – e.g. those in interfaith relationships, multiracial families, millennials in their 20s, or gender non-conforming teens

- 2. Publicized your event**
 - Create a Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram account for your congregation
 - Create an event page in social media
 - Take out an ad in a local community newspaper
 - Post flyers in schools, community centers, market areas, dog parks, etc.
 - Add your event to neighborhood, township, or professional listservs
 - Tell your friends and their friends to spread the word!

- 3. Designed to foster relationship building and networking among those who attend**
 - Have volunteers (greeters) to actively help make connections among people in attendance
 - Hand out fun pre-made postcards inviting people to learn more about one another (make it a game!)
 - Suggestion box eliciting feedback for future events
 - Hang poster boards or cover a table with butcher paper and provide markers inviting people to answer fun questions or draw picture

4. Accessibility

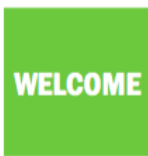
- Is easily accessible geographically – public transportation options, as well as, geographically diverse
- Does not require pre-registration
- “Open house” hours that is convenient for people’s schedules
- Free or inexpensive - consider partnering with a local organization or business to offset costs of food, drink, supplies, etc. and cast a wider reach to publicize

5. Do not assume Jewish background, knowledge or experience

- Have flyers, handouts, poster boards, blackboards that explain key terms/or concepts that support the theme of what you are doing
- Your event does not distinguish between insiders and outsiders, members and non-members
- All are welcome and treated as part of one large community
- Encourage people to bring a friend if they are concerned about not knowing anyone or feeling unfamiliar

6. Include opportunities for follow up

- Collect contact information at the event by inviting people to register and be entered in a prize drawing
- Simply have a sign-up sheet if people want more information on upcoming programs
- Create postcards or flyers with leaders in your community such as clergy, lay leaders, or members who would be good to have a follow-up conversation



Open Tent
Ohel Patuach אוהל פתוח

First steps in creating warm and welcoming environments.

Greeters and Ushers – A Self-Reflection

Greeters and ushers have long been a staple of congregational life. Often they are members of the synagogue board, committee members, or other congregants who play a role in their congregation's leadership and religious life. Greeters and ushers are often placed outside of the synagogue entrance, at the front door, in the lobby, and at the entrance of the sanctuary and social hall. They serve as a point of first contact with new members, prospective members, and outside visitors, as well as with veteran members and old friends. Despite this commitment to engagement, it is not uncommon to hear members new and old alike say, "no one ever says hello to me." How can this be? At times, being a greeter and usher may focus more on policing to monitor synagogue decorum and ensure safety than actually working to create a culture of connection and meaning between congregants. Consider the following questions to begin (re)thinking the role of greeters and ushers in you congregation.

What role do greeters and ushers play in creating a culture of welcome and connection in your synagogue?

1. Why do people come to our synagogue?
2. How do we want our visitors/members to feel when they first enter the synagogue or sanctuary?
3. In what ways – both verbally and non-verbally – do we convey a sense of welcome and belonging?

4. How do we prepare ourselves for doing the work of greeting?

5. What assumptions do we make about those who choose to come to our synagogue?

6. In what ways can we be inclusive to all and not assume a level of knowledge about Judaism, while at the same time differentiating needs?



WELCOME

Open Tent
Ohel Patuach אוהל פתוח

First steps in creating warm and welcoming environments.

Five Qualities of Effective Greeters

The role of “greeter” is to encounter people *panim el panim* (face-to-face) and *yad b’yad* (hand-to-hand). To meet people face-to-face and hand-to-hand means that you are building a genuine and authentic connection with that person. It means that in the moment of greeting and connection that you are fully present – opening yourself to receive their need and holding space for their potential vulnerability. Beginning to take inventory on what qualities allow for effective greeters – ones who contribute to a welcoming congregational culture and lay a foundation for the rest of the congregation to connect and create meaning with one another.

The following attributes are identified as foundational qualities greeters must possess for creating cultures of authentic welcome.

- 1. Accepting the Other:** The unconditional acceptance of whomever walks into the synagogue is the hallmark of a culture of community. Everyone is made in the image of God. Everyone deserves to be accepted into the community. By offering a handshake and a smile, the gestures say, “You are welcome here.” Even if the congregant or visitor responds coldly, it is the task of the greeter “to receive” the person, whatever her/his state of mind is at the time.
- 2. Recognizing the Other:** It takes very little effort to say a good word to people as they come into the sanctuary. In addition to the appropriate greeting of the day (“Shabbat Shalom,” “Chag Sameach”), add a word or two of a personal nature— “How are the kids?” “How’s your Mom doing?”—to recognize the other.
- 3. Uplifting the Other:** Sometimes people come to the synagogue in search of encouragement, comfort, and peace. Perhaps they have had a frustrating week. They may be coming to say Kaddish for a loved one. Show tenderness and kindness to those who come to shul.
- 4. Teaching the Other:** By greeting everyone warmly, you will establish a “climate” of welcome in the group that assembles. Your model of greeting may very well be “picked up” by others in the group. The modeling can be encouraged from the pulpit by the rabbi inviting everyone to “turn and greet” one another at some point during the service.

5. Attending to the Needs of the Other:

- The physically lost - be on the lookout for those newcomers who don't know where anything is in the building. They may be embarrassed to ask where certain things are—the restrooms, the junior congregation, the babysitter. They may be nervous about asking for or putting on a yarmulke or tallit.
- The physically challenged - people who are disabled may need special help in getting settled into the sanctuary.
- Children - be ready to assist children to get comfortable in the service. Some synagogues even provide quiet toys and books to use during the service. You may want to remind parents that a babysitter or “crying room” is available if needed.
- The elderly - the frail elderly may need a helping hand or guidance.

What other attributes can you identify that make for an effective greeter?

In the space below we encourage you to brainstorm your ideas, discuss as a group, and/or feel free to share your process and responses with us in the [Audacious Hospitality group in the Tent](#).

Office Staff and Volunteers – Beyond Shalom

Your Synagogue's Office Guide to Connecting with Warmth and Welcome

In many congregations, office and administrative staff are often the first point of contact for many callers and visitors. Those who work in the office, from the receptionist, to the rabbi, religious school, and early childhood administrative assistants are engaged in a sacred endeavor. They have the unique opportunity to touch and at times change the lives of people in your community. The person who answers your telephone, responds to email inquiries, and greets visitors who enter your building is an ambassador representing your community. The warmth, welcome, and knowledge that your staff provides creates a perception of your congregation, and sometimes, even of Judaism itself.

Beyond Shalom: Your Synagogue's Guide to Connecting with Warmth and Welcome is a resource and training for office staff and volunteers that can be offered as a brief lunch-and-learn, a breakfast discussion or a more intensive 2-3 hour training. The approach is one of empathy and understanding, with an emphasis on how to make sure staff have what they need to respond effectively and compassionately to a call or visit and to know when to refer to clergy or senior staff.

Beyond Shalom: Your Synagogue's Guide to Connecting with Warmth and Welcome, was a joint project of URJ and NATA. Though this publication is no longer made available from the URJ it is available through [Behrman House publishing](#) and continues to support the work of Audacious Hospitality. Let us know if you opt to purchase this publication. If there is enough interest, we may offer a larger program or training.

Sample Content to Support the Work of Office Staff and Volunteers:

1. Opening the Door: An introduction to the crucial role synagogue and school office staff can have in opening the door to Jewish community (pages 8-11).
 - ✓ Offering a warm first welcome
 - ✓ Answering the phone
 - ✓ Accentuating the positive
 - ✓ The angry caller

2. An activity: "Knowing the Heart of the Stranger: How it Feels to Call a Synagogue" (pages 12-13).
 - ✓ Explore numerous feelings people have when calling a synagogue
 - ✓ Engage in practice case scenarios

3. Case scenarios and discussion questions (pages 14-25). Topics include:

- ✓ General membership questions
- ✓ Prospective member
- ✓ High holiday tickets
- ✓ Religious School
- ✓ B'nei Mitzvah
- ✓ Membership and dues
- ✓ Lifecycle events for nonmembers
- ✓ Millennial programming
- ✓ Empty nesters
- ✓ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer
- ✓ Financial questions
- ✓ Jewish education
- ✓ Birth rituals
- ✓ Conversion
- ✓ Weddings
- ✓ Death
- ✓ Role of the partner or family member of another faith background

4. Two brief text studies for Pirkei Avot (pages 33-34).

- ✓ Text provided
- ✓ Discussion questions

5. Appendix with additional resources (pages 30-73). Resources include:

- ✓ Suggested training outline (one-day session & lunch and learn)
- ✓ Call referral chart
- ✓ Intake interview for new members
- ✓ Intake interview report memo
- ✓ Becoming a Jew: Questions about Conversion
- ✓ Introduction to Sanctuary Etiquette
- ✓ Intermarried? Reform Judaism Welcomes You

Watchfulness and Assessment – An Overview

The process of becoming a congregation that engages in the practice of Audacious Hospitality requires careful examination of previous “business as usual” practices.

To open our doors and create a more fully integrated and inclusive Jewish community – one which represents a full range of multiple and intersecting identities and needs – we must prepare ourselves to engage with Jews or those seeking Judaism whose race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, income level, physical, mental, or developmental ability, and family makeup may not be familiar or part of our congregation’s self-image or (perceived) majority identity.

Historically, many of our congregations and communities have limited experience supporting those individuals and families who live on the margin of Jewish life. However, as contemporary demographics continue to shift and we heed the call to open our doors to those who have otherwise been turned away from Judaism, we are required to make the necessary preparations within ourselves and our congregations to do the sacred work of creating and cultivating Jewish community.

This section provides you with a number of resources to guide you in taking an honest inventory of how you as an individual and your congregation collectively works to create spaces of welcome and inclusion. Though we often have an urgency to jump right in and address the need for change, we must take the time to fully evaluate and assess the readiness to do the deeper work of Audacious Hospitality. From our physical environment to our online presence, the way in which we communicate a sense of belonging among one another, to how we identify our own internal and institutional prejudice, all creates a safe and sacred space to fully engage in creating a community and world of wholeness, justice, and compassion.

Audacious Hospitality Idea Checklist/Congregational Self-Reflection

Sample Resource from the Forthcoming Audacious Hospitality Toolkit

Overview

This assessment is a starting point for reflection, conversation, and action within your congregation. It is not an exhaustive list. In a growing number of categories, there is a corresponding resource in the Tent or in the Audacious Hospitality Toolkit (forthcoming). This Audacious Hospitality Idea Checklist/Congregational Self-Assessment is intended to help your leadership team identify steps toward Audacious Hospitality (AH) over the next year and the years to follow. It allows you to both build on your existing measures and initiate new ones.

	Connecting with (New) Members	Yes	No	Not Sure
Create a Personal Welcome	We have established a system so that all inquiries are followed up on with a warm, personal phone call or alternative contact.			
	We have a system whereby we offer to sit with new individuals/families at Shabbat or holiday services.			
Begin Gatherings with Conversation	All gatherings and meetings are intentionally viewed by leadership as opportunities to meaningfully connect congregants with one another.			
	We begin gatherings with a question for people to discuss in pairs. (Example: asking people to share hopes for the new year at Rosh Hashanah; giving them something to remember about one another so they can continue to discuss when they meet again during the year.)			
Connect Members	We have a mentoring or buddy program to help new members connect to another family/individual.			
	We suggest that families/individuals attend services and temple activities together.			
New Members for Three Years	We recognize that becoming a “member” of a congregation is a long process that involves building relationships, as well as attending services, programs, and enrolling children in religious school.			
	Accordingly, we treat new members as though they are being “recruited” for three years or until they have made new friends and are meaningfully engaged within the congregation.			

	Connecting with (New) Members (cont.)	Yes	No	Not Sure
Checking in	We have a process or system that ensures that each member receives a personal contact with a/the _____ every _____.			
	We remember to follow up with congregants on a regular basis.			
Member Engagement Plan	We have a plan to strategically engage members. We're taking into account the diversity of identity and family structure (singles, single-parent families, families without children, same sex couples, etc.)			

	Interfaith/Intermarried Families	Yes	No	Not Sure
Welcome	We welcome interfaith families on our website, in the temple bulletin, in electronic communications, and on social media.			
Programs	We teach our (interfaith) families how to celebrate Jewish holidays in their home.			
	Transliteration and translation are consistently provided with all printed prayers and blessings.			
	The stories of each holiday, along with a vocabulary list and suggestions for how to celebrate with children, are included in religious school materials.			
Opportunities to Make New Friends	We provide opportunities for interfaith couples and families to meet other families, such as parent education days or a special evening in the Sukkah.			
Resources	"Intermarried: Reform Judaism Welcomes You" is displayed in our temple and school office.			
	ReformJudaism.org is recommended on our website, in our temple bulletin, and in electronic communications.			
	Our library has books for interfaith couples/family and those new to Judaism.			
Reach out to your community	We offer open programs, such as Tot Shabbat, holiday learning sessions, Hanukah parties, and the Purim carnival to the community.			
	We share our congregation's events and programming news on social media and in local newspapers.			
	We offer "Taste of Judaism" and "Introduction to Judaism" classes.			

	Encouraging the Exploration of Judaism	Yes	No	Not Sure
Communicate	Our website states, "We welcome individuals who are interested in exploring Judaism."			
Reach out to Your Community	We offer "Taste of Judaism" and "Introduction to Judaism" classes.			
	All of our classes that teach about Jewish holidays are open to the community.			
	Our "Tot Shabbat" services are open to the community.			
	We use social media to communicate our outreach efforts.			
Reach out to Your Congregants	We share information about URJ Introduction to Judaism classes.			
	Individuals who have converted to Judaism are thoughtfully invited to share their stories, such as on a panel that highlights different Jewish journeys.			
Create Conversations	Conversion students are offered the option of completing the process at a Shabbat service.			
	We offer a "Mazel Tov" in our temple bulletin to those who convert, if they choose to be acknowledged in this way.			
Make Resources Available	We make reference to ReformJudaism.org in our temple bulletin and electronic communications.			
	We download, photocopy and display "Becoming A Jew" from The Tent.			
	Our temple library includes books on conversion, basic Judaism, and the celebration of Jewish holidays.			

	LGBTQ Inclusion	Yes	No	Not Sure
Reaching Out	We have reached out to LGBTQ organizations in our community.			
	We created, or are building, partnerships with these organizations.			
	Our website proudly represents LGBTQ inclusion.			
Celebrate	We celebrate Gay Pride month in June and acknowledge it in our publications and from the <i>bimah</i> /pulpit.			
	LGBTQ members are represented in our lay leadership and/or staff.			
	LGBTQ members are also visible within our community by sharing their stories in blogs and programs.			
Conversation	We have conversations with temple leaders, staff, and teachers about LGBTQ sensitivity and inclusion.			
Registration Forms	We ensure that all intake, temple membership, and school registration forms account for gender diversity and transgender members. For instance, we use adult/parent in place of gendered terms.			

	LGBTQ Inclusion (cont.)	Yes	No	Not Sure
Schools	We offer training workshops to early childhood educators and religious school teachers to create a more inclusive experience. For example, if a student is genderqueer or has same sex parents.			
	We have books and multimedia resources in the library that are inclusive of LGBTQ families and Jews.			

	Embracing Racial and Ethnic Diversity	Yes	No	Not Sure
Diverse Images and Language	Pictures on our temple website (photographs) and in communal spaces (posters, books) reflect Jewish racial and ethnic diversity.			
Begin a Conversation	We have taken time to thoughtfully consider and explore aspects of racial diversity in our congregation and the Jewish community.			
	We have dedicated time and attention to discussions and training about racial and ethnic diversity, and racial justice with our board and leadership groups.			
Programming	Our congregation’s programmatic calendar is reviewed with the appropriate lay and professional leaders to ensure that our offerings are representative of the diversity of the Jewish people.			
	Scholars, authors, creative artists and leaders from diverse racial and ethnic Jewish backgrounds are invited to offer programs at our congregation. We plan congregational programs that focus on the experiences of Jews of Color (an author night, film viewing, musical program, worship service, etc.).			
	We make known our interest in having Jews of Color included as partners in planning events.			
Learning & Discussing	We choose books and readings by authors who tell Jewish stories outside the white/Ashkenazi experience.			
	We participate in the “Embracing Racial Diversity” conversation in the Tent to share ideas, questions, and resources about embracing racial diversity in our synagogue.			
Tikkun Olam	We participate in community efforts to advance racial justice. We are participating in the Religious Action Center’s 3-year racial justice campaign, “Reflect, Relate, Reform.”			

	Welcoming Jews With Disabilities	Yes	No	Not Sure
Awareness & Training	We've had (or begun) discussions among temple leadership about the many issues involved in making our congregation welcoming to individuals with disabilities.			
	There is a system in place to ensure that staff and key lay leadership are made aware of congregants with special needs.			
	Ushers and/or designated individuals are prepared regarding appropriate ways to greet and meet the needs of individuals with special needs			
Accessibility	Our congregation has ramps so that people in wheelchairs can enter.			
	There are places for people in wheelchairs to participate in Shabbat and holiday services.			
	Seating is <i>reserved</i> for individuals with physical challenges, and seating is arranged to allow extra space for individuals using wheelchairs.			
	Accommodations are made to move the podium and microphone to floor level to be accessible for someone with physical challenges, when <i>bimah</i> /pulpit is not accessible.			
Hearing Assistance	Individuals who are hard of hearing are welcomed and encouraged to sit up front.			
	Our congregation provides hearing devices.			
Visual Aids	We provide the <i>Mishkan Tefilah</i> app that allows people to read prayers in large fonts or we offer large printer prayer books.			

	Audacious Hospitality	Yes	No	Not Sure
Understanding Audacious Hospitality	Our congregation has a clear understanding of what Audacious Hospitality is.			
	Our clergy and temple leaders have engaged in a discussion about incorporating AH as a practice within our congregational life.			
	We've taken time to develop a comprehensive list of all of our congregation's various constituencies (generational, diversity, lifestyle/times of need).			
	We have begun to thoughtfully consider who of these constituencies is and is not fully included in our congregation's policy, program, and culture.			
Website	Our website reflects the goals and priorities that we have set.			
	It includes language and pictures that represent our goals for AH.			
Consistency	Our AH priorities have been communicated to all temple staff members including administrative and building staff, religious school teachers and staff, auxiliary groups' (such as WRJ and Brotherhood) leadership.			
Programs	Our temple programming reflects our AH priorities.			
	Our programming promotes engagement among congregants new and old.			
Resources	We have access to resources that support our AH goals.			
	URJ AH brochures and resource sheets are displayed, along with other inclusive marketing materials in your temple office and/or lobby.			
	The temple library has books about interfaith couples, becoming a Jew, and Jewish racial and gender diversity.			
Next Steps	We have set goals and chosen priorities for our congregation for and aligned with AH.			



Creating a Welcoming Physical Environment – Building Assessment

Overview

Everything in the physical environment, from the design of your lobby to parking lot signage, sends powerful messages about your community's values and priorities. A thoughtfully designed space can foster meaningful conversation and opportunities for relationship building. Help guests feel comfortable by anticipating their needs and help them feel competent by providing clear directions and information about communal practices.

Preparing for the Building Assessment

Identify a small group (such as clergy, lay leaders, professional staff, board members, members of the membership, and/or someone not at all familiar with your synagogue) to work together on this assessment. As a small group, reflect on experiences you've had visiting a new or unfamiliar space, e.g. a synagogue that is not your own, a house of worship from another faith tradition, a camp open house, or a back to school night.

1. What helped you feel comfortable?
2. What would have helped you feel even more comfortable?
3. In general, what helps people feel welcome and comfortable when they enter a new or unfamiliar space?

In pairs, visit each area of the synagogue space and make some notes about that space.

Each pair might try to consider the space from the perspectives of different visitors, e.g. a first time visitor, someone who does not have a Jewish background, a single parent attending with young children, an older adult, or member of a historically marginalized group such as a Jew of color, or person who identifies as LGBTQ.

1. What aspects of this space are inviting?
2. What aspects of the space feel limiting or challenging in any way?
3. What questions, if any, does the space prompt for you?

	Building Exterior	Yes	No	Notes
Parking Lot	Parking lot is well-lit.			
	Appropriately spaced, reserved spots, clearly marked with the Handicap Access symbol close to accessible entrances.			
	There are designated guest or visitor spots.			
	If there is offsite parking, there are vans or shuttles to transport congregational members and guests to the main building.			
Exterior Entrances	There are clear signs directing people to the proper, well-lit entrance, with clearly marked pathways.			
	For doors that are locked, there are clear instructions as to how to gain access.			
	Main entrance, or clearly marked side entrance to building, accommodates a wheelchair.			
	Assistance is provided for all events when the door does not open easily.			
	There is a welcome sign posted that expresses that you are glad they have arrived.			
	<i>Mezuzot</i> (or a second <i>mezuzah</i>) are placed low so they are accessible by someone using a wheelchair.			

	Building Interior	Yes	No	Notes
In the Lobby/Interior Entrance	Upon entering the synagogue, there is a someone to greet and welcome you (designated greeters, a person at a desk in the lobby area, etc.)			
	Clear signs directing guests and visitors where to check-in and how to get there.			
	Seating is available for people to mingle before or after services/event.			
	There beverages and/or snacks available to visitors.			
	There a private and quiet location for parents to feed/nurse babies (that isn't the bathroom).			
	If Hebrew signage is used in the building (whether in Hebrew letters or transliteration), there are translations and explanations also posted.			
	Additional informational materials about your congregation and community (including upcoming events) are available.			
	Pastoral materials are easily available to contact clergy.			
Restrooms	There an all-gender restroom available and is it labeled as such.			
	There are baby-changing tables available in all restrooms and/or restrooms accessible to all identifying where the changing tables are located.			
	There step stools for young children in every restroom.			
In Sanctuary/ Worship Space	There signs that briefly explain ritual items like <i>kippot</i> and <i>tallitot</i> and their significance and communal expectations regarding their use.			

<p>You provide a written explanation of highlights of the sanctuary space and worship experience.</p>			
<p>Seating is reserved for individuals with physical challenges and seating is arranged to allow extra space for individuals using wheelchairs.</p>			
<p>Individuals who are hard of hearing are welcomed and encouraged to sit up front.</p>			
<p><i>Tallitot</i> and <i>kippot</i> are easily accessible to people with physical challenges.</p>			
<p>Accommodations are made to move the podium and microphone to floor level to be accessible for someone with physical challenges, when <i>bimah</i> is not accessible.</p>			
<p>You provide copies of “An Introduction to Reform Sanctuary Customs” (PDF copy here).</p>			
<p>You have available a basket of quiet “fidgets” and picture books, or a “busy bag” for young children.</p>			

A Welcoming Website Checklist

Creative ideas and best practice for your congregation's website

There's no such thing as a blind date anymore. Before their first in-real-life (IRL) encounter, you can be sure that each potential partner has Googled the other and checked out their social media profiles. It's no different with people who are seeking a congregational relationship, whether for a single program or long-term commitment. People will check out your website before they meet you in person, and therefore, your congregational website will be the first point of contact for many individuals and families.

Take a close look at your website, including all the pull-down menus and pages to assess if your website conveys messages of welcome and an open tent. You might ask a member of a congregation in another community or your neighbor who is from another faith background to take a look at your site for you.

Here are some things to consider so that your website leaves a lasting impression that encourages an in-real-life meet-up:

1. Up-to-date and accurate information:

- Is your contact information – phone number and email up-to-date?
- Is your “about us” page up-to-date and reflects your congregation's current clergy, leadership, and staff?
- Is your calendar up-to-date and includes upcoming holidays, special events, volunteer opportunities, board meetings, and more?
- Do you use social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram to share and invite people to programs and events?

2. Website navigation:

- Does your website take a long time to load?
- Do your menu pages allow for easy navigation?
- Is there a “new visitors, start here” navigation feature?
- Is there a lot of clutter on your home page?
- Is there a call to action inviting people to contact you to learn more about your community?
- Are links easily accessible, such as direct link to email, to contact the executive director, school director, clergy, or office staff to schedule a conversation?
- Is your website easy to read with large-enough and dark-enough font?
- Is your website ADA compliant? See [here](#) for a checklist.

3. Website content that reflects a culture of inclusivity:

- Does your website encourage through words or pictures an invitation to come visit and try out a Shabbat, holiday service, or special program?
- Does your congregation have a tag line that reflects your values?
- Are your values and/or mission statement prominently displayed?
- Are the core values of the congregation reflected in the website content?
- Consider the mood and feelings you hope your website will evoke from those viewing it for the first time. For example, does your website evoke joy, warmth, welcome, comfort?
- Have you considered posting on your homepage a brief (maximum one minute) welcome video from clergy, staff, and members of the congregation?
- Are there photos of real people (not stock photos or pictures of an empty sanctuary or lobby)?
- Do you have pictures of individuals and families having fun, learning about Judaism, celebrating Shabbat and Jewish holidays, engaging in social justice activities?
- If you weren't already familiar with Judaism could you imagine being comfortable visiting and participating in your congregation?
- If insider Jewish language is used (e.g. mitzvah, NFTY, *yahrzeit*), is it explained?
- Will individuals and families find themselves reflected in your language?
- Does the language make it easy for newcomers to imagine themselves as part of the community?

- Is there a specific statement of inclusivity? Note that general statements of welcome (“open to all”, “everyone welcome!”) usually aren’t sufficient to make someone feel welcome. Consider something more specific, along the lines of: “Our community welcomes interfaith couples and families, individuals exploring Judaism, LGBTQ individuals and families, singles, couples, people of all ages and backgrounds.”
- Do your images back up your inclusive language?
- Do your images reflect the full diversity of the Jewish community, including people of diverse racial heritages, people of all ages, families with varied configurations, and people with physical disabilities?
- Would LGBTQ individuals see themselves reflected in pictures on the website?
- Do the pictures of families reflect diverse family configurations?
- Do the pictures reflect singles of all ages?
- Does your website reflect your handicapped ramps, and other ways that you welcome people with disabilities?
- Does your website Include profiles of a diverse group of congregants?
- Would interfaith couples think of your congregations as a place that they would be welcome, could find new friends, and learn about Judaism?
- Would individuals interested in exploring Judaism find opportunities to learn about Judaism such as Taste of Judaism, and Introduction to Judaism?
- Would multi-racial families choose your school as a place that their children would be welcome?
- Do you have a “membership” tab on your website? Some people find “membership” to be an off-putting term as it suggests an insider-outsider distinction. If you have a membership tab on your website, consider re-naming it, e.g. “About Our Community, “your Temple family” or “Get to Know us!”
- Do visitors understand that they are always welcome, even if they have not (yet) joined with dues? Invite membership without listing specific dues on your website. Build the relationship before requiring a commitment.



A Friendly Congregation: A Self-Assessment

Sometimes we aren't even aware of how we view people, either positively or negatively. This may create barriers to how welcoming and inviting we are as a congregation. In other areas of the toolkit, we will delve more deeply into best practices of working through biases. For now, a quick assessment of who you feel most welcoming towards is a first step in the Audacious Hospitality process.

In the following list, put a check mark next to the descriptions of people you feel would receive a warm welcome and put an X by the people you don't think would receive a warm welcome at your congregation.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female who is not fashionably dressed | <input type="checkbox"/> Sephardic family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Latino/a | <input type="checkbox"/> Musician |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Articulate, well-educated person | <input type="checkbox"/> Deaf person |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Person with mentally disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male with earring in one ear | <input type="checkbox"/> Child with facial deformity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Someone especially talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower-income male | <input type="checkbox"/> Single mother |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Older female | <input type="checkbox"/> Political liberal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A smoker | <input type="checkbox"/> Teenager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Israeli | <input type="checkbox"/> Immigrant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Person with cancer | <input type="checkbox"/> Professor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single male over 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Person with bad breath |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single female over 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Older single male |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> Gay couple |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family on public assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-English speaking person |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed male | <input type="checkbox"/> Person with unkempt hair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Person very quiet and meek | <input type="checkbox"/> Political conservative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family with crying baby at worship service | <input type="checkbox"/> Blended family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African-American | <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender Woman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unmarried pregnant teenager | <input type="checkbox"/> Woman who dresses provocatively |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced female | <input type="checkbox"/> Person who sings operatically |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Person in wheelchair | <input type="checkbox"/> Person with many visible tattoos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Persons with hygiene problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing mother |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A recovering alcoholic | <input type="checkbox"/> Gender non-conforming teenager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> An obese female | <input type="checkbox"/> Family with two moms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single male under 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Camp director |
| <input type="checkbox"/> An interracial couple | <input type="checkbox"/> Child with Autism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Person who sings poorly | <input type="checkbox"/> Teenager with facial piercings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retired persons | <input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith couple |
| <input type="checkbox"/> An obese male | <input type="checkbox"/> Person with a developmental disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower-income female | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor |

Mystery Guest – An Audit

One strategy to gain feedback on how your congregation is engaging in the work of Audacious Hospitality is to welcome a “mystery guest” or “secret shopper.”

Mystery guests are people from outside of your congregation and perhaps outside of your extended community who visits your synagogue without anyone’s knowing and provide honest feedback and insight as to the strengths and challenges of your congregation in creating a culture of welcome and inclusion.

Guidelines for Inviting the Mystery Guest(s):

1. If possible, arrange with a member of another congregation to invite someone to be a mystery guest.
2. Explain to your mystery guests that the people of the congregation want to be more welcoming and hospitable to seekers and those on the margins of Jewish life, but they first need to know in what ways they must change.
3. Give each mystery guest a copy of one of the audit sheets on the next pages, and provide a self-addressed stamped envelope for them to return the audits.
4. Instruct them to fill out the audit at home, not during the services.
5. Ask the mystery guests to visit the synagogue sometime within the next month just as if they were regular visitors.
6. Consider giving a gift certificate in appreciation for mystery guests’ time. At a minimum, send thank-you notes and, of course, invite them back to the synagogue to check up on the progress the congregation is making.

Results of the Mystery Guest Audit:

1. In addition to receiving the written response of your Mystery Guest, ask this person to be available for a follow-up discussion at your next team board or staff meeting.
2. Begin to build a short list of things you can do immediately to respond to the findings of the Mystery Guest Audit.
3. Set goals and priorities, as well as make assignments or solicit volunteers, to address the longer-term findings of the Audit. Consider a working group and/or committee.
4. Where possible, enlist the support of the entire congregation as a part of the Audacious Hospitality initiative and welcoming lifestyle you want to develop among all the members of your congregation.

Mystery Guest Audit Checklist

TASK	YES	NO
Exterior		
1. Was the synagogue easy to find?		
2. Was there visible signage from the road guiding you to the building?		
3. Was there ample parking?		
4. If needed, was there reserved handicap spots available?		
5. If offsite parking, was there van-service available?		
6. If visiting at night, was there appropriate lighting?		
7. Where the pathways to the entrance clear and free of obstruction?		
8. Was there a handicap accessible entrance?		
Entrance		
1. Where you greeted when you entered the synagogue (by a greeter or by a member of the congregation)?		
2. Did you feel welcome and a sense of belonging with the greeting?		

3. If there were bulletin boards or brochures, did they have images of people who looked like you?		
4. Is there a private area for parents to feed/nurse a baby (that is not a bathroom)?		
5. Is there additional informational and materials available about your congregation and community (including upcoming events)?		
6. If Hebrew signage is used in the building (whether in Hebrew letters or transliteration), are there translations and explanations also posted?		
7. Were members of the congregation friendly?		
Restrooms		
1. Are there all gender restrooms that are labeled as such?		
2. Step stools for young children were available in every restroom?		
3. There were baby-changing tables available in all restrooms and/or restrooms accessible to all identifying where the changing tables are located?		
Sanctuary/Worship Space		
1. You were provided with a written explanation of highlights of the sanctuary space and worship experience?		
2. Seating was reserved for individuals with physical challenges and seating is arranged to allow extra space for individuals using wheelchairs?		
3. Individuals who were hard of hearing are welcomed and encouraged to sit up front and/or provided with a hearing assisted device?		
4. <i>Tallitot</i> and <i>kippot</i> were easily accessible to people with physical challenges?		
5. Accommodations were made to move the podium and microphone to the floor level to be accessible for someone with physical challenges, when the <i>bimah</i> is not accessible?		
6. A basket of quiet “fidgets” and picture books, or a “busy bag” were available for young children?		