



INVOLVING MEN IN JEWISH LIFE

The President's Biennial Report



FJMC CONVENTION  
JULY 13-17, 2011

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# The President's Biennial Report

Dear FJMC leader,

It has been two years since I assumed the presidency of the FJMC. Since then a great deal has occurred most of which is summarized in the reports that follow. I do, however, want to highlight some of our efforts and place them into the proper context.

At the 2009 convention I shared my vision of enhanced service to our clubs. I am proud to say that most of this has been accomplished. In the past two years nearly 70 percent of our clubs have been visited, the level of our training programs has been improved, and a number of new initiatives have been launched. I'm particularly proud of our leadership team, they demonstrated both creativity and a necessary resourcefulness that enabled us to overcome tremendous financial challenges.

We entered the fiscal year 2010 with less operating capital than anticipated and needed to utilize our reserve funds to replace our aging computer network. In addition, our website was woefully out of date and in need of redesign. We made it work! Volunteers stepped forward to upgrade our website and to service our network. This relieved us of costly maintenance agreements and helped us to return to a balanced budget. At the same time, thanks to the ingenuity of our volunteers, new communications vehicles like the *Unraveller* and *Mentschen* produced new income. Thanks to your collective efforts we are once again on solid financial footing.

We were affected by the downturn in the economy in a different way. Many of our clubs felt they needed to reduce their per capita commitments in order to provide additional financial support to their synagogues. We listened to our clubs and instituted a system that assisted those clubs to increase their membership and internal fund raising in order address their challenges successfully.

I am also extremely proud of the way we broadened our international exposure. As a result of our efforts at the World Zionist Congress and the relationships we formed, Masorti Jews in Australia, Sweden, Europe, and Latin America came to understand and appreciate our message. I am pleased that representatives from a number of countries have joined us at this convention and that so many more of them participated in the Worldwide Wrap and Yom HaShoah observances. For the first time, Men's Clubs have formed outside of North America – in Santiago, Chile, and Mumbai, India. I expect that this process will continue to develop as a result of our efforts to spread Yom HaShoah, tefillin awareness and volunteer expertise in the future. We look forward to building and strengthening these relationships in the years to come.

I am proud of what has been accomplished in the past two years and invite you to read the reports of our committee chairs that follow. Then you too can bask in the glory of what our volunteers are doing to involve men in Jewish life.

Yours in Brotherhood,



Mark Berlin  
International President

## Executive Director's Report

Mark Berlin's term was highlighted by a process of inward strengthening and outward expansion. The outward effort focused strategically on expanding our influence internationally, obtaining additional coverage in the Jewish press to position the FJMC and the Conservative/Masorti Movement in a positive light, placing the issues of volunteerism, Men's Issues and the environment on the agenda of our Movement. Each of these efforts was supported through the *Keruv*, *Shomrei HaAretz* and Hearing Men's Voices initiatives.

Expanding our influence internationally occurred as a result of a mission to Panama, the donating of nearly one hundred sets of *tefillin* to Masorti congregations in Central and Latin America, Europe, Australia and Israel, the encouragement of participation in the World Wide Wrap and *Yom HaShoah* commemoration.

The *Keruv* initiative enhanced our reputation in North America, generated increased financial support and directly impacted on a large number of congregations. The creation of Mentschen and the *Unraveller* expanded the awareness of the FJMC to different audiences.

Inward strengthening occurred as a result of increased visitation and training and the creation of a new effort designed to grow the FJMC and the Conservative/Masorti Movement younger. Thanks to an initial grant from the FJMC Foundation of Jewish life, sixty-nine men 45 years and younger were brought together for a weekend of motivation and training. This initiative, *Hador haba* (the next generation), is a long-term effort that hopefully will succeed in attracting young men to our synagogues in the future.

During this two-year period I was fortunate enough to publish a book devoted to Volunteerism and several essays that received wide coverage and further positioned the FJMC as an organization where ideas are generated and plans to address them are created.

Finally, and I think it is mostly a result of the image FJMC leadership has cultivated, I have been forced to spend more of my time working with the various arms of the Movement. This is an effort that is equally frustrating and rewarding as we learn to work together to build a stronger Conservative/Masorti Movement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Berlin', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'M'.

**FJMC Officers  
and Executive Committee  
2009-2011**

**President**

**Mark Berlin**  
(Potomac, MD)

**Michael Mills**

**First Vice President**  
(Cincinnati, OH)

**Kenneth Elfand**

**Vice President**  
(Woodland Hills, CA)

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**Vice President**  
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**Robert Kaplan**

**Vice President**  
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**Bruce Sicherman**

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**Myles Simpson**

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**Richard Gray**

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**At Large**  
(North Plainfield, NJ)

**Ed Margolis**

**At Large**  
(North Miami Beach, FL)

**Joel Shrater**

**At Large**  
(Thousand Oaks, CA)

**Joe Swerdlow**

**At Large**  
(Cherry Hill, NJ)

**Norman Kurtz**

**Honorary President**  
(Buffalo Grove, IL)

## **PART I: FJMC Programs and Activities**

### **Hearing Men's Voices**

Despite the lack of an official "portfolio" for Hearing Men's Voices during the past two years there has been a great deal of activity both on the club and FJMC levels.

Hearing Men's Voices programming has been a staple at clubs throughout North America. Format and venue has varied with larger events tending to take place at synagogues (sometimes sponsored by regions) and smaller groups meeting at private homes or at taverns or restaurants. Many of these sessions have used the materials provided in the six Hearing Men's Voices publications while others have gone beyond the FJMC material and have created new areas for conversation and discussion. A simple "Google" search on Hearing Men's Voices reveals dozens of such events.

During the summer of 2010 a small group of men met as a think tank to look at priorities for men's programming. Rabbi Simon participated in this mini-retreat. As a result of that effort, Convention 2011 will have a substantial focus on the challenges of being a Jewish man today with major addresses by Dr. Ron Wolfson and Rabbi Brad Artson as well as numerous breakout sessions to explore these issues and to participate in more traditional HMV groups. Hearing Men's Voices was also an enormously well received portion of the 2011 Geffen Institute, this year devoted to *HaDor HaBa*-the coming generation of male leaders of the Jewish community.

A further activity of the ad hoc group for men's programming during the past two years was the development of an online forum for Jewish men called "*Mentschen*". Originally published as a monthly, "*Mentschen*" is now a dynamic blog with readers and subscribers from around the globe. "*Mentschen*" will play an important role at the upcoming convention as well.

During the coming year, HMV advocates known as "*Mentschen*" will be trained beginning at the convention, to visit clubs in their regions and elsewhere promoting men's programming and activities. It is anticipated the Hearing Men's Voices will again be a formal portfolio during the 2011-13 administration to allow for these plans to reach fruition.

### **Community Service Week**

In 2010, FJMC launched an exciting new program known as Men's Club Community Service Week to help round out our club's yearly activities.

Much like Men's Club Shabbat and World Wide Wrap, the program designated a week for all of our clubs to do a community service project on one day during that week. For this kickoff year, that week was November 8-14, 2010.

Clubs performed *mitzvot* of their own choosing that worked best for their club, synagogue, or community. Much like WWW, a website was set up to have clubs sign up and share their community service project.

Club projects included Community Career Night, Habitat for Humanity, and Chevra Kaddisha. Several clubs registered on the website while many more participated in the program on their own.

### **Shomrei Haaretz**

The *Shomrei Haaretz* (Stewards of the Land) initiative this year has brought in new programs through new partners and has re-configured ongoing programs in response to the need to change vendors. New programming with Greenfaith, a non-sectarian environmental group, has included webinars on Jewish environmental advocacy topics and an Energy programming module for clubs and

synagogues that will be first shown at Convention 2011. The Greenfaith initiatives have been done as movement programs with USCJ and WLCJ. Relationships with Hazon are also being developed.

New vendors and resulting improved products have been pursued for our solar Ner Tamid and Eco-Candles for Shabbat and Festival candles. The candles now burn brighter, cost less per candle and are provided in clear cups so that they have a more formal look when used with glass cups on top of candlesticks. Several important environmental topics are being explored at convention by a group of conservative rabbis convened by Rabbi Simon.

Several solar Ner Tamids have been placed at Conservative / Masorti Congregations in Israel through FJMC and with a subsidy collected from FJMC officers carbon offset donations for their travel to meetings.

A new initiative to promote collection of rechargeable batteries by clubs is being kicked off at convention. Collection boxes and return postage are covered by an organization set up by battery manufacturers.

A new direction for Men's Club Shabbats is being developed with *Shomrei Haaretz* themes. Clubs are invited to consider supplementing their existing Men's Club Shabbat with these themes or to have additional *Shomrei Haaretz* themed Shabbats at Hanukkah or other times of the year. Information will be distributed at Convention.

Other products available through the FJMC store are green water bottles and biodegradable plates and tableware.

Get up to date on Shomrei Haaretz products and news at [www.fjmc.org/sh](http://www.fjmc.org/sh). Sign up for the Shomrei Haaretz newsletter at [sh@fjmc.org](mailto:sh@fjmc.org).

### **Sefer Haftorah**

The Sefer Haftorah is a scroll having the outward appearance of a Torah scroll, but it contains all the haftorot chanted during the year, written by one of the finest scribal groups in Israel. The Sefer Haftorah scroll, unlike the Torah, has the vowels and the trop cantillation, which facilitate the chanting of it. The Sefer Haftorah is now ending its 8th year of travel. It continues to travel the continent, spending every Shabbat at a different synagogue or Club.

In the last few years there has been one small problem. The number of requests to host the scroll had dwindled, dropping from a high of 78 clubs at the beginning to this past round of 28. In the past six months prior to setting a new schedule a letter would go out to Regional Presidents asking them to contact their clubs and come back with the number of clubs in their region wanting to host the Sefer Haftorah.

After a discussion with Rabbi Simon, the committee took his suggestion of telling the Regional President how many weeks he will have the scroll and let him fill that time frame. Using this approach we filled 75 weeks on the current schedule.

The only other problem has been the shipping box. We had a specially made box which was heavy and expensive to ship. Over time the box became unusable. Now, when this happens, we ask the club to take it to a shipping store and ask them to make a box that would work. Very little weight and expense. It has worked very well.

### **World Wide Wrap**

The World Wide Wrap (WWW) is one of the annual signature events of the FJMC. During each of the past two years, the tenth and eleventh year of the WWW, we surpassed each previous year's records for: (1) the number of registered FJMC-affiliated clubs; (2) the number of nonaffiliated registered synagogues; (3) the number of individual tefillin-donning participants; and (4) the number of countries, and continents, where registered, organized Wrap programs took place. Our Tefillin Scholarship Fund, based upon tzedakah raised on the morning of the Wrap and submitted to the FJMC, increased both years, and with the funds raised, the FJMC sends *tefillin*, *mezuzot* and other materials to Masorti groups in need around the world. The promotional material which we've created for the Wrap continues to increase the program's visibility, as shown by reporting of the WWW in an increasing number of secular and Jewish press. Multiple arms of the Conservative movement include our event on their calendars.

In 2011, the Wrap registered 240 clubs, with 10,284 participants, in 18 countries, on 5 continents, and raised \$1,962 for the Tefillin Scholarship Fund.

### **Build a Pair**

The "Build a Pair" Program is a comprehensive and fun learning program to introduce to fifth and sixth graders the joy and mitzvah of Tefillin in Jewish life, and is often held in connection with the World Wide Wrap to get younger members of our community involved, often with their fathers. These all-inclusive Build-a-Pair kits are made "in a small workshop, hidden in the man-cave under Ira Ungar's home in Pittsburgh, PA". They are shipped to Religious School Principals and Men's Clubs as literally a "program in a box" with the entire curriculum provided.

Three components interplay to explore the religious significance, the construction, and the practice of "laying" Tefillin. Students practice writing their Hebrew names and the SHEMA to insert into pre-made wooden Tefillin-like boxes. Students decorate the boxes in any creative way they wish, allowing for personal expression. Finally, students either compete or cooperate in writing a "WRAP" song to sing at the "FJMC Worldwide Wrap". The "Worldwide Wrap" is a yearly event held on Super Bowl Sunday and sponsored by the FJMC. This Sunday morning program reintroduces Jewish men to the significance of "laying" Tefillin. The "Build a Pair" Program attracts parents to the FJMC program, introducing them to the mitzvah, and allowing them to see their children WRAP Tefillin and sing their "RAP" song.

During the past two years, Build-a-Pair continued to enhance its program. Better quality wooden boxes, improved "no-slip" elastic straps, and more programming suggestions to reinforce the education of past participants were some of the improvements. Over the past 11 years, Build-a-Pair has reached almost 10,000 students in over 125 congregations around the world.

### **Keruv Initiative**

During the past two years, as in the earlier part of the decade, the FJMC Keruv Initiative expanded its reach, altered its focus (reflecting new realities) and has begun to change the approach of other conservative institutions. Indeed, interfaith outreach, in large part due to the efforts of the FJMC, has become a regular topic addressed by contemporary Jewish institutions and thinkers.

Rabbinical trainings and lay trainings have continued and a new emphasis has been placed upon teacher and educator training. The effort begun with a Teacher Training in Baltimore in 2010 designed to sensitize teachers to more effectively work with children who have intermarried parents. Seventy teachers and religious school leaders attended and excellent press coverage was received. A similar training took place in San Francisco last January as part of an initiative to develop an awareness of the FJMC and to build or reinvigorate clubs in Northern California. Other teacher

trainings have been held at Adas Israel in Washington, DC and Phoenix, the latter as part of a Keruv weekend.

Most recently a Rabbinic Keruv think tank took place in Berkeley, California. A targeted one day training was held in Westchester County this spring to train replacements for an existing program, with the rabbi of that synagogue in attendance. Both Lay & Rabbinic Trainings were held in 2009 in Atlanta and Chicago, a two day Keruv presentation was given in May 2010 to rabbis, cantors and educators in training at the JTS, a first for students at the Seminary.

Advanced Keruv trainings for working consultants have been held in both 2010 and 2011 at the Pearlstone Conference Center, providing and opportunity for our consultants and Keruv leadership to review our efforts and expand and refocus our training strategies and opportunities.

Given the accelerating nature of on-line activity, we have concluded that it is essential to work with individual synagogues to ensure that their websites (the first place prospective members now look for information about membership) welcome intermarried families in clear and convincing fashion. To that end, a YouTube video was created, to demonstrate "What Constitutes a Welcoming Website in the 21st Century". The video, which appears on the FJMC website, is engaging, constructive and clear.

Additional videos have been created, one by Rabbi Leonard Gordon of Mishkan Tefilah, in the Boston area and another, a brief interview and dialog featuring our Executive Director, Rabbi Charles Simon and Rabbi Kerry Olitsky, the Executive Director of the Jewish Outreach Institute. The latter video can also be seen on the FJMC website.

As we have noted in the past, the FJMC Keruv Initiative includes women among its Consultant-Lay Base as well as non-Men's Club affiliated men. We also have successfully worked with professional women of the Jewish Professionals Outreach Network to enhance our trainings and impart new skills to our lay consultants. One member of that group, Lynne Wolfe, continues to serve as valuable staff member, maintaining contact with consultants, calling and arranging for seminars and keeping consultant resource center up to date.

We are participating with other arms of our movement to reach consensus on specific items, notably participating in the redraft of the USCJ "interfaith" document. We have three FJMC members on the inter-arm committee and we are working diligently to create materials that reflect a more contemporary and FJMC inspired point of view. While inter-arm efforts may not always be successful, the solicitation of our participation and the focus we bring to the discussion only enhances the influence of the Federation and those who believe that interfaith outreach (as articulated by the FJMC Keruv Initiative) remains one of the most important efforts underway in conservative Judaism.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not comment upon the continuing difficulties facing all Jewish organizations on the fundraising (development) front. We must continue to focus our efforts to achieve the greatest results in a difficult financial environment. The inclusion of teacher and educator training recognizes the importance of creating sensitivity at the religious school level and also provides additional and persuasive reasons for foundations being solicited to step up and maintain or even increase funding.

### **Yellow 'Shoah Candle' Program**

The 2011 Yellow Candle program, another signature program of the FJMC, continued to expand its scope, despite the shrinkage of both CJ and Reform Judaism. The program was able to reach 25 more customers (+10%) than in 2010. The number of participating organizations increased; a new, shorter Program Guide and Program Implementation Guide were created, both available as pdf's;

internet store ordering became a reality; the website was improved; and accounting, order and sales information improved significantly. For the first time, candles were sent internationally to Costa Rica and El Salvador, marketing improved with Facebook and LinkedIn groups, and publications in both CJ Magazine and other Jewish publications.

A new product, the Ner Katan "six-pack", was developed to increase Holocaust awareness, and is being aimed at individuals, for Kristallnacht and for Yizkor memorials. FJMC developed a list of over 1100 potential customers. In 2011, only 30% of our customer list sent in orders, which, hopefully, can result in additional further growth in future years.

Although program revenues declined by 6%, this was offset by orders received from the increased number of customers. Purchasing costs were held down for the current year. Total program costs declined by 18%, and for this reason, net income to FJMC increased by nearly 18%.

### **Yad Shel Chai**

The Yad Shel Chai program supports creating a culture where young people, and your Men's Club members, will regularly read Torah at Shabbat services and minyan. The Yad can be used to reward synagogue youth and adults for continuing to read Torah, beyond the B'nai Mitzvah singularity. It can be integrated into a program to enhance Torah reading skills, and encourage ongoing Torah Study.



The program improves visibility for the Men's Club/Brotherhood in the synagogue, and has long term benefits for the participant and the congregation. It is a simple to manage program with easy record keeping forms available. It represents a program with long term benefits for minimal cost and administrative energy.

During the past two years, the Yad was redesigned, from a brightly colored wood to a silver beaded yad, and can be customized with the recipient's name and the newly designed and casted fjmc bauble. The connection between recipient and Men's Club is established. Award certificates are available to download for men and women recipients.

### **The Unraveller**

One of the ways the FJMC has developed of advertising the *Sefer Haftarah* scroll is the weekly *Unraveller* e-mail newsletter, but it has grown to much more. When we started the *Unraveller*, we were offering *haftarah* commentaries, along with information about the FJMC's *Sefer Haftarah*. The first item on the top left page of each issue is the current week's location of the *Sefer Haftarah*. We hope that would encourage people to visit those synagogues when the *Sefer Haftarah* is coming for a visit and we also include the next location to help people plan ahead.

After writing the entire first year's commentaries, Rabbi Simon decided not to repeat the cycle. The *Unraveller* has continued on to a new *mishnah* commentary each week, written by a variety of Rabbis, Cantors and lay people and has included video segments at times. The mailing list is currently at 1147 participants.

The *Unraveller* information about various FJMC *Sefer Haftarah* items, FJMC events and items of interest to our members are included. We are using the *Unraveller* as a vehicle for publicity and at this time, it's the only regular weekly newsletter we have, HaShofar being a monthly event. It is edited each week by a committee leader, David Goldis.

One of the unique (to the FJMC) parts of the *Unraveller* is the ability to sponsor an issue. Sponsorships are \$118, and we can definitely promise you and your members that they will have the date that they desire, as the sponsorships are non-exclusive. We haven't missed a week yet in over 15 months of publishing and we hope to continue this record well into the future. Recent articles have touched on topics as diverse as the Wiki Leaks, Kippot and Creation, all from a Masorti/Conservative viewpoint. We've got some interesting topics lined up and don't be surprised when the audio and video issues appear. This is not the typical weekly newsletter. We're working hard to have a cutting edge Jewish publication, and we are getting there.

The *Unraveller* has had over 80 sponsors as of May 1, 2011 and raised nearly \$10,000 for the FJMC since it began on October 17, 2009.

## **2011 Biennial Convention**

### **Background**

The Biennial Convention is a microcosm of the FJMC. Convention includes the major elements of training, programming, ritual, camaraderie, communications, IT, finance, marketing, and club and regional interaction, combined and consolidated into a well-integrated 5-day experience by an army of dedicated volunteers who are committed to involving men in Jewish life.

### **Actions and Accomplishments**

Planning for the 2011 convention began immediately after the 2009 convention, as potential sites were identified and the following objectives were formulated:

- Provide training for club and region officers on building and strengthening clubs and regions, conducting programs, and developing leaders
- Showcase new FJMC Initiatives and disseminate related programming
- Facilitate networking and camaraderie, and ensure everyone has fun
- Recognize and honor worthy individuals, clubs, and programs
- Increase knowledge of FJMC and the Conservative Movement
- Involve men in Jewish Life by participation in rituals and religious services, promotion of Jewish ethics and core values, offering *tikkun olam* activities, and providing study opportunities for intellectual and spiritual growth
- Provide a forum for FJMC to conduct required governance activities
- Provide a source of income for FJMC

A Planning Guide was prepared which includes a committee-based organization structure to handle the multiple activities that needed to be performed, detailed task statements to clarify roles and responsibilities, and schedules showing the major milestones and due dates. Committee chairs were recruited to lead the major committees, and where necessary to lead subsidiary committees. The overall Convention Committee, including the local Committee from the Host Region, now consists of more than 60 members representing 14 FJMC regions.

Based on a set of criteria related to the size and dates of convention, services offered, pricing, availability of regional and local men's club support, etc, multiple candidate venues were reviewed, several were visited, and a final site selection was made. A detailed budget was prepared which included pricing, forecasts of attendees, estimates of expenses, etc.

The Convention program evolved over a period of many months, from the conceptual stage to the details of keynote and breakout sessions, training, ritual activities, speakers, awards, entertainment, regional events, etc. Registration was opened 6 months prior to convention. Efforts in the months leading to convention were focused on working with regions to register key members, promotion of

journal ads, and managing the myriad operational details to ensure a successful convention where everyone's expectations would be exceeded.

## **Part II. Region and Club Services**

### **Background:**

The mission of Region and Club Services is to optimize the training and development of current and future leaders of our regions and clubs while increasing Club enrollment. This is accomplished under the leadership of the Chairman of Regions through ongoing contact with the Regional and FJMC leaders to continually support and guide the regions to implement the FJMC mission through our clubs.

### **Actions And Accomplishments:**

#### **Contact with Regional Presidents**

A personal relationship was formed with each of the regional presidents to determine how best the FJMC might help. From a regional perspective, strengths and development areas were established. Clubs that could both use help and could help others were identified. The Chairman of Regions spoke to each Regional President at least once every 3 months to understand their goals and progress and to provide help when needed. This process was used as a forum to work transition of their successors who were included in the call. Regional needs and successes were conveyed to FJMC leadership to provide the appropriate regional and club training. A mentoring program for the regional presidents was established with some advisors assigned to support individual regions and others to develop geographically isolated areas. Regional teleconferences were held to share successes.

#### **New Club Enrollment**

A list of potential new clubs was established with each Regional president. Twelve new clubs were affiliated in 2009-11. During the past two years thirteen clubs have been disaffiliated, mainly because of the merger of congregations or the dissolution of clubs, but we have more than made up for that with the thirteen new club affiliations in ten different regions.

Beth El Men's Club, Yardley, PA (MAR)  
Or Hadash, Sandy Springs, GA (Anshei Darom)  
Aventura Turnberry JC, Aventura, FL (FL)  
Sons of Israel, Briarcliff Manor, NY (HV)  
Forrest Hills JC, Forrest Hills, NY (NYM)  
Shaare Tikvah Beechwood, OH (KIO)  
Chisuk Emuna, Harrisburg, PA (SBD)  
Midway Jewish Center, Syosset, NY (NYM)  
Temple Beth Tzdek, Amherst, NY (LKONT)  
Shaarey Tefila, Carmel, IN (KIO)  
Anshe Emet Men's Club, Chicago, IL (MW)  
Shir Chadash Men's Club, Metairie, LA (FL)  
Pasadena Jewish Center & Temple, Pasadena, CA (Western)

In addition to the establishment of twelve new clubs, we established a new region, the International Region, to allow for affiliation for clubs outside of North America, which has two clubs already affiliated. The discussion of additional international expansion is discussed below

Centro Comunitario B'nai Israel, Santiago, Chile  
Magen David Synagogue, Mumbai, India

### Dues Committee

The Committee's goals were to co-ordinate the billing and maximization of the collecting of club dues and putting in place an efficient, effective and timely system to help clubs with dues issues that may arise.

Dues were billed on a timely basis and a system was put in place to collect these dues early from the clubs. In these difficult economic times we have been able to maintain our level of dues collection, which not only benefits the clubs through dues rebates to the Regions to service the clubs, but also to provide the FJMC with much needed funds to carry out our administration, existing programs and the development of new programs.

An efficient, effective and timely system to deal with dues issues was developed and implemented which allowed clubs to continue to operate while we provided them with ways to strengthen their programs and build their membership.

### Quality Club Award

Improvements were made to this FJMC award program. Changes in the criteria were made to increase community service programs and a clearer application process among others. This award is presented on a yearly basis to new winning clubs on a 15 year engraved perpetual plaque that can be displayed in their synagogues and referred to as a winner on their letterhead. These plaques and engraved plates for past winners were presented by the Regions at a Regional event in 2010 and will be presented at the FJMC Convention this year. Special recognition will be given to those clubs that have won the award each of the 5 years of its existence this year.

Quality Club Awards for 2009-10 were presented to fifty-seven (57) clubs. This was up from fifty-three (53) from the previous year and from fifty-one (51) the year before that. For 2010-2011, a record fifty-nine (59) clubs were award winners. Seven clubs won for the first time, and fifty-two have won multiple times. Seventeen clubs have won in all of the first five years of the program.

### Torch Awards

Torch Awards will again be presented to individual clubs for outstanding programming in 13 different categories. New this year is the category for Programming for Young Men (ages 21-40). The quality of each program is judged on the individual quality of the program and given either a Gold, Silver or Bronze award. There may or may not be an award at each of these levels. All applications will receive at least a Certificate of Accomplishment.

### Ma'asim Tovim Awards

Each Region is given the opportunity to honor one of its members at each Convention with the Ma'asim Tovim Award. This award honors the tremendous accomplishments of each man as a doer of good deeds for the Region and the FJMC.

## **Club Visitation**

Goals were to develop, carry out and record the results of a club visitation program involving personal contact with the Boards of our affiliated clubs with the purpose of addressing any club issues, providing them with practical solutions to their problems, and identifying future leaders. A Club Visitation Report (CVR) format was developed not only as a guide to help the visitor facilitate the discussion but also to help us gather information on the club.

This program envisioned FJMC Regional mentors, trained consultants and International leaders doing the visits. It soon became evident that with clubs in 16 Regions in Canada and the USA and a limited travel budget that Regional leaders were also going to be required to carry out club visits.

Some clubs were located in remote areas and they were very appreciative when we arranged for an International leader to visit their club as part of his overall travel plans.

Even though some clubs felt a visit was not necessary or we were unable to arrange a visit we did visit over **160** of our clubs. For those clubs that were visited the visitor was well received, the personal contact was invaluable and many clubs told us it strengthened their ties with the FJMC.

A computer generated system was developed to capture the information obtained from each club visit, including the identification of future leaders for the club, Region and International level and will serve as a future basis to carry out follow up visits as well as providing important information when we have dealings with the club.

Mark Berlin, the outgoing International President deserves a great deal of credit for the success of this program. He visited more than 60 clubs in 15 of 17 regions and travelled, at a personal sacrifice, more than 46, 000 miles. He is the only International President in the more than 80 years of the FJMC that took it upon himself to do this type of club visits.

## **International Expansion**

The FJMC's large presence at the World Zionist Congress in June of 2010 included a well-received presentation to the Masorti Olami (World) meeting prior to the start of the actual congress.

During the visit in Israel, we used the time to specifically target the national Masorti organizations of the United Kingdom, France, Sweden, India, Israel and Australia. Each of these groups has expressed interest in the FJMC and we will continue to work with them through our Masorti contacts and Rabbi Simon to establish men's clubs in each of the countries.

The FJMC began to look towards global expansion with the first World Wide Wrap in 2000. One of our first international groups was Kehilat Nitzan, in Melbourne, Australia. Groups in Sydney and Gold Coast in Australia, along with groups in India, Korea, Japan, South Africa, France, UK, Sweden, France, Germany, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Mexico, have joined them in recent years at the Wrap. This "first line" of expansion will also target Panama and Peru, along with greater involvement in Europe.

One of our challenges is the cultural and synagogue organization differences between our mainly US based members and the rest of the world. Items and roles that are the norm in the USA are not found in other countries or may be different and contradictory. One example would be the Argentinean custom of the "country club" where members have weekend homes. The synagogue in the city becomes important only on weekdays and on Yom Tov, as virtually the entire membership is at their clubs and unavailable for Sunday activities. This requires us to adjust our programming offerings to meet these needs, rather than expect them to conform to ours.

In many countries, even the idea of a men's club is foreign, as the synagogue itself may be viewed as the "men's club" and somewhat of an anathema to the Masorti ideal of an egalitarian congregation. This is a challenge that can be overcome, and the programs that they find useful will be more along the line of men's issues in Hearing Men's Voices rather than a Sunday morning breakfast with a speaker. Even the difference in seasons between the northern and southern hemispheres will cause programming challenges. As an example, in the southern part of the globe, the World Wide Wrap happens right in the middle of the summer holiday season and many synagogues are completely shut down.

Given all this, we have had some measure of success over the past 2 years. As stated above, the FJMC has expanded to South America and Australia. Our Australian contacts are working hard to establish their organization and have gone so far as to begin to set up a national organization to govern their group of clubs. Differences in culture and law will require different methods for establishing the idea of the men's club around the world. We must remain flexible and work within these differences if we are to grow.

Michael Abadi has worked hard at establishing clubs as our Latin American shaliach, which is beginning to bear fruit and Michael has proven that direct contact is essential when we are working on growth. We will need to visit our potential members to encourage growth and affiliation and we will need to determine what that affiliation means in terms of programming and finances. We may not see a return on this investment for up to a decade, but we feel confident that it will be a very important part of the FJMC in the future.

We expect to have members and clergy from our new and potential clubs at the convention in July. We will have special events and areas set aside, and hope to have our International region participate as an equal in regional events.

To conclude, this is an exciting area of growth for the FJMC and will lead to increased and varied membership in our organization. It will not happen overnight, but we can now truly say that we are the International Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs.

### **Part III. Administration & Support**

#### **Operations & Movement Integration (Transition) 2009-11**

We established an Operations Committee as part of the FJMC structure during Mark Berlin's presidency. This committee is responsible for providing operational support to the FJMC including and includes a number of sub-committees (chairs noted): Financial, Bi-laws/Policy (Neustein), Fundraising (Swerdlow), IT (Sicherman), Communications (Gottesman), Store (Schrater), Secretary/Program Manager (Grey), Office (Kasman) and Strategic Planning (Mills/Mentle). The team has been meeting monthly to both coordinate our effort and seek opportunities to improve our effectiveness/efficiency. The following is a summary of the key activities of this team.

**Office** – We establish a performance improvement process for our employees. In the first phase we conducted performance assessments for Jocelyn Maskow and Jennifer Gersch. These solicited input from people recommended by each, with additional people added by me where a broader perspective was needed. The review covered: 1. Results/Results Not Delivered, 2. Skills & Capabilities (including strengths and areas for additional development) and, 3. Performance Issues. The second phase is to establish a work and development plan to establish job priorities to maximize the utilization of the individual's skills, and address development opportunities and performance issues. This effort was underway when Jocelyn resigned in June, 2010, to take another position. We have not completed the development plan for Jennifer.

We took a very proactive and professional approach to find a new Office Manager. Peter Gotlieb and David Kaplan were brought in to lead the process. They established and posted a role description and received a considerable number of resumes. After an initial screening, they narrowed the candidates to four of which we interviewed two. Jeremy Kasman accepted our offer late in August, 2010 and began working in mid-September. Jeremy has worked as a synagogue administrator, amongst other positions, and brings a lot of valuable experience to the FJMC.

**Office Restructure** - Shortly after Jeremy came on-board, we chartered an effort to restructure the office. The objective of this work is to improve the office's customer service, quality and productivity. This effort covers a number of areas including: Customer identification and need assessment, Information system/data management optimization, decision making/priority setting, financial management responsibilities and finally a better definition of the role of our staff and volunteers. Jeremy is leading this effort with Richard Gray, Art Spar, Peter Gotlieb and Bruce Sicherman. The initial work has focused on simplification of our financial systems. We are targeting to complete this effort by early 2012.

Other areas of work/accomplishments for the Operations Team are being covered by reports of the committee members mentioned above.

**Strategic Plan** – Our first strategic plan was completed approximately 6 years ago and has become the framework for the past 3 administrations. Two years ago we began an effort to update the plan. We began this effort by establishing a number of teams working within the portfolios of responsibility of our Executive Committee. These included: Regional & Club Services (Elfand), Programming (Greenspan) and Operations, covering all the areas mentioned above. The effort began with an assessment of how they did against prior goals and objectives and recommended areas for future focus/improvement. We then revisited our Mission, overall Objectives and measurable goals. We completed the effort with each team establishing strategies and action plans to help achieve our overall objectives/goals.

Some key highlights of the new plan are as follows:

**Overall Mission** – Proposing eliminating the word 'Jewish' from men is based on our Keruv objectives of being welcoming and inclusive of all (men).

**Objectives** – Added an objective of strengthening our financial capabilities. This is in recognition that it is becoming more difficult to maintain a balance budget given our current economic environment that becomes a top priority for the organization.

**Goals** – We have added a number of new measures including: number of Quality Clubs to measure our overall performance and identification/enrollment/training of young leaders and placement in leadership roles. We will continue to measure club/member enrollment, participation in the Movement and balancing our budget on a 2 year cycle.

**Strategies** – These are broken down by Regional & Club Services, Programming, Operations and Long Range planning. Some highlights are:

- **Regions and Club Services** – We will continue to focus on servicing/supporting every one of our clubs, providing training/training materials and enrollment of new members/clubs. We plan to re-charter our regional advisory team to become a critical think tank seeking ways to address our key issues and opportunities. We will continue to mentor our regional presidents while insuring every club is visited and frequently contacted.
- **Programs** – we will continue to focus on excellent delivery of our existing programs. Additionally, we will renew our Hearing Men's Voices initiative, see a five (5) year breakthrough plan for our Yom Hashoah and Shomrei Haaretz programs and map the future role and direction for Keruv. We will also assess Israel Advocacy as a potential new program.
- **Operation** – much of this will be the evolution of the work begun by our operations team this past two year. Key focus areas will be: continue the restructuring of the office seeing better 'customer service' with equal or better productivity, making the store a significant profit center, continue to improve our internal communications while establishing processes and procedures for external communication, complete the simplification and optimization of our financial and IT systems. Improving our revenue

by \$100,000/year is a critical strategy to maintain a long-term balance budget and will become a key portfolio of our next administration.

- Long Range Planning & Direction Setting –We will establish a number of ‘think tanks’ to work with our committees to help make breakthrough improvement. For example, our business development/marketing think tank will use marketing tools and approaches to help us better market the FJMC both internally and externally, increase the business/revenue from our store along with that of Yom Hashoah and Shomrei Haaretz. A development think tank will address future leader identification, enrollment, development and mentoring. We will begin a program to strengthen the leadership skills of our Executive Committee. The new regional advisory team will also be part of this effort.

Our plan is to make the strategic plan a living part of our organization with a form update every four (4) years.

### **Document and Storage Access**

For over 10 years, FJMC minutes and committee reports have been recorded electronically. These have now been placed in a document archive in Google documents. The records are stored with coding for the meeting date as well as grouping by topic and are fully searchable through Google search. The documents are maintained in a password-protected area which is available to Board of Directors and Executive Committee members.

A single entry point model to expedite finding information about FJMC activities and functions has been prototyped. The intent is to provide a structure so that club leaders can intuitively find the answers to questions about people and activities associated with FJMC.

### **Fundraising – FJMC Foundation For Jewish Life, Inc.**

Background: The Mission of the FJMC Foundation for Jewish Life is to support and advance the programs and initiatives of FJMC within the Masorti/Conservative Movement worldwide.

The FJMC has been on the frontline of the development of innovative programming that has addressed issues facing the modern Jewish community. The purpose of the Foundation is to fund and stimulate programs that respond to the changes and the opportunities facing Conservative/Masorti Jews. This will enable FJMC to continue its long history of providing creative programming.

Actions and Accomplishments:

#### **Foundation Finances**

The Foundation raises funds through direct donations and from legacy giving bequests. All donations are kept in endowment funds, which are carefully managed to ensure growth of principal. Fortunately, during the recent economic downturn, none of the Foundation’s funds lost value. Funds for worthwhile purposes are provided as grants, using the earnings accrued on the endowment funds. The Foundation’s net assets have grown to approximately \$320,000.

## Grants Awarded

At the 2009 FJMC Convention the Foundation has reported making grants to the Jacksonville Jewish Center Men's Club for the deployment of their *Yad Shel Chai* program (which encourages post-B'nai Mitzvah youth to continue to read from the Torah by awarding them an FJMC *Yad* after they complete 18 Torah readings) and to the FJMC 2009 Convention to sponsor the Men's Wellness activities. At the 2007 Convention, the Foundation reported that it had provided two annual grants of \$5,000 each to Camp Ramah in the Berkshires to support their Breira Program for special needs children.

This past two years the Foundation has made several grants. Among them are the following:

- 1) A \$2,500 grant providing supplemental funding enabling the Midwest Region FJMC to: a) conduct a pilot project on helping the newly formed Chicago Jewish Young Men's Group create a sustainable organization and range of programs that engage 21-25 years old unaffiliated males to become more involved in Jewish Life and b) create a how-to manual for other men's clubs to achieve similar results in another city.
- 2) A \$10,000 grant to FJMC to fund its Dor Haba initiative by using the funds for:
  1. the 2010 LDI weekend which was modified from previous years to serve as a Dor Haba retreat weekend for up to 100 selected men between the ages of 35 and 45; and
  2. for Convention 2011 Dor Haba programming.
- 3 A \$2,000 grant to Adath Israel in Cincinnati Ohio to pilot a Men's Club garden project enabling the men's club to work with the Hebrew School to develop an environmental project involving a sustainable vegetable garden.

## Strategy for the Future

The Foundation has an ongoing legacy giving campaign that was launched at the 2009 Convention. This campaign encourages potential donors to name the Foundation in their wills (or other documents) or as a beneficiary in their life insurance policies. As the Foundation's endowment funds grow through legacy gifts combined with direct donations, it is anticipated that the investment returns each year will become a significant source of income for FJMC, thereby assuring its future and enabling FJMC to continue to meet its objectives of strengthening Men's Clubs, involving Jewish men in Jewish life, and serving as an active participant in the Conservative/Masorti Movement.

## Information Technology

FJMC's Information Technology committee is responsible providing and maintaining the technology that allows for the efficient and cost effective support for our volunteers and staff. Over the last two years we have moved back to using our members to take full responsibility for the maintaining our website and computers which run the FJMC's office. The I/T committee is the enabler providing support to many of the other F JMC committees.

Significant accomplishments include:

- Rebuilt our website to allow it to be easily updated by individuals who don't need website development skills.
- Established a site to maintain information about clubs to allow our leaders to have a snapshot of club activities
- Established a library of FJMC documents

- Expanded our website to accept orders for candles and payments for the Leadership Development Institute
- Implemented computer software which allowed online video and audio for both committee work and education
- Integrated our web store with our bookkeeping system to simplify order processing. This allows an order to be entered on our website, prints the shipping labels and posts the order directly to QuickBooks.
- Integrated our website with the membership system so we can have current information about clubs and their officers posted on the website, which is the same information which the main office has.
- Moved the email from our office server to a much more reliable and usable Gmail environment

The I/T committee is working on the Information Master Plan to integrate the information we have to improve service to our clubs. Based on our Master Plan we will implement applications to make better use of the information we have.

## Fundraising

Joe Swerdlow was appointed to be the chairman of the new FJMC Fundraising committee in May of 2009. This was a new committee and chairmanship. The need for a chairman for fundraising came about because of problems resulting from the 2009 FJMC Convention in Philadelphia. The FJMC incurred financial losses at this convention that the organization hasn't been able to recoup.

Fundraising had been handled by Rabbi Simon in the following ways: Obtaining grants, the FJMC 100 and sponsorship for the new publication "The Unraveller." As an organization, fundraising has not been our strong point. It has not been an easy task. Unfortunately, people who we reached out to for help - turned us down. We did have sponsors and had some people join the FJMC 100, but not at the level needed to consider fundraising a success.

Past history of the FJMC 100. In the year the convention takes place there has been the most support due to the fact that men join during convention registration. This year is no different. The other problem is that people think that when they renew their membership in June, they think they have joined the FJMC 100 for the next 12 months. FJMC members must remember we are not on a calendar year but on a fiscal year that runs from September to August of the following year.

The FJMC 100 now has three levels.

- The regular level is still \$100 to join.
- The *Chai* level is \$180 and
- The double *Chai* is \$360. At the Double *Chai* you will become a member of Foundation, and you must join at the Double *Chai* level for four years.

This year, before convention registration started, we had seven (7) members. After registration, we had 21 people join at \$100 and 3 join at \$180.

The *Unraveller* was started in 2009-2010. You can sponsor the *Unraveller* in honor of, in memory of, or as a thank you for \$118. That year every week edition had a sponsor. We also had requests to sponsor more than one week and we adjusted the amount, and charged \$180 for two weeks. There were five (5) people who took us up on this. For 2010-2011, we've had 31 individual weeks sponsored at \$118 per week.

Last year, the FJMC received a donation of a Torah from Northwest Suburban Hebrew Congregation, Chicago, Illinois. The FJMC has designed a Torah Mantel with the help of Rabbi Simon and Stan Greenspan and we will dedicate the new FJMC Torah at Convention 2011. Past President Jerry Agrest and his wife Estelle, will dedicate the Torah mantel.

In consultation with Tom Sudow, the FJMC Fund Raising Chairman for the incoming administration, we will dedicate the whole Torah. The Executive Committee voted unanimously to dedicate the Torah to Executive Director Charles Simon, who joined the FJMC's staff in 1982. Pricing proposed is:

- One of the five books, exclusive (in that only one of each book will be dedicated ) - \$5,400;
- A major section, exclusive (i.e., Creation, Ten Commandments, Exodus from Egypt, etc.) - \$3,600;
- \_\_\_\_\_, a yet to be determined dedication at \$1,800;
- Parsha, exclusive - \$540;
- Maftir portion, non-exclusive - \$360;
- Other Aliyah (non major event), non-exclusive - \$180;
- Word - \$36, and a Letter - \$18.

Both the current and incoming Chairmen feel that we could raise a substantial amount just with this new initiative. Tom Sudow will be working with the marketing committee to come up with ways to market this program, and will be recruiting people in each region to help with this.

## Communications

Effective communications is critical to the success of our FJMC mission. The media we use furthers the FJMC mission and enhances the potential impact of our organization & initiatives. Our goal is to provide quality information in a consistent and timely manner to both our internal and external users. As the costs of publications and mailings have increased, we've been redirecting our publications to the electronic media, email, blog and the web.

Our publications are as follows:

**CJ /Kolot Voices of Conservative / Masorti Judaism:** Editors are Dr. Michael Brassloff & Dr. Evan Rumack. CJ ("Conservative Judaism") is a joint quarterly publication between FJMC, Women's League for Conservative Judaism (the organization which most synagogue Sisterhoods are a part of) and the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism, that helps unite the voices of Conservative / Masorti Judaism. Not only have the articles about the FJMC given our organization greater exposure within the Conservative / Masorti movement, but have helped to foster dialogue and cooperation between the organizations in striving for our common goals.

**Hashofar:** Editors: Jeff Moss & Michael Eisner. Hashofar is a monthly electronic publication, highlighting the programs of the FJMC throughout the year. Hashofar circulation reaches our entire membership and is one of our main vehicles for communicating with our members. During 2010, we redesigned the publication for easier readability, and have received very positive feedback on the redesign.

**The Advantage:** Editor: Dave Edwards. The Advantage is a bi-monthly publication directed to club presidents, that contains contains program ideas as well as new and developing initiatives, and reinforces the yearly programming schedule of FJMC programs. A hard copy is distributed to presidents in regular mailings, and is also available for download on our website.

**Mentschen:** Editors: Dr Bob Braitman and Arthur Spar. Mentschen is an online forum for Jewish men, discussing issues of importance and concern to Jewish men. As the on-line publication has

'found its footing' it has continued to attract a growing number of readers. "Mentschen" is the FJMC's global forum for thoughtful, timely and cutting-edge dialogue about Jewish life. Each month "Mentschen" contain essays and opinions. Articles have included the full range of opinions, commentaries, observations, editorials, satire and humor generally found in the op-ed section of a quality newspaper or magazine, on-line or in print, but dealing with issues of importance to Jewish men, such as "A Father's First Mitzvah," "The Shrinking Male Member: An Essay," "Maintaining healthy relationships with family, friends and mates," and more, and welcomes your observations and concerns.

**News Doctor:** Editors: Dr Joel Kurtz and Bill Chronister. The News Doctor is a monthly electronic publication directed towards club presidents that provides generic articles for publication in synagogue newsletters which assists clubs in promoting their programs.

**The Unraveller:** Editor: David Goldis. Weekly email of commentary on the *haftorahs* and *Mishnah* includes the current location and other news about the FJMC Sefer Haftorah. Copies of the commentary are sent to the email of those who have signed up for 'free home delivery.' Copies of commentary are posted on the FJMC website. To sign up for automatic delivery,

**THE FJMC Website (www.fjmc.org):** In January and February 2010, as a result of considerable expenses being incurred by a professional website maintenance company, the website (www.fjmc.org) was moved to an open-source software platform, Joomla, where FJMC volunteers could maintain and update the site without the costs associated with updates and data maintenance. Allan Kahan was named Webmaster, and with a group of volunteers, all the pages were migrated to the new software, and the requisite links created. Two new stores were set up, one which handled shipping included items such as Shoah Yellow Candles, and so, for the first time in a number of years, ordering of almost all the items which the FJMC sells could be done on-line.

Working closely with VP Bruce Sicherman, IT, we developed systems which drew regional and club officer information from the FJMC's own database, which allowed more accurate and timely posting of this important information, and devoped simplified URL's for program promotional material.

As our FJMC programming has developed, so has our website, with the addition of pages for new programs. Pages are updated, at no cost to the organization, in hours or days, rather than the weeks or months which had been the case. A recent addition has been the slide-show feature of the front page, which allows us to highlight more than one program, and a click on the slide brings the viewer to the applicable page of the site where they can learn more.

We have built a foundation so that in the coming administration, enhancements being planned for the website are a 'refreshing' of the look of the site; addition of more audio and video content; easier navigation on the site; a merging of the two stores into one, allowing better reporting and control for the office; and making it more attractive for visitors and our membership.

### **Financial Health of the FJMC**

The FJMC's finances continue to be on solid ground. We continue to maintain a conservative investment policy and our monies are primarily invested in safe FDIC insured bank accounts. We also have a modest investment in a GMAC bond that matures on 11/15/13. As we predicted in our last Biennial report, that GMAC bond's value has recovered most of the value of our initial investment and we remain optimistic that we will ultimately receive full value upon maturity.

The FJMC's sources of income remain stable and our expenses are within acceptable and expected parameters despite the setback of our last convention not having met its budget projections and a difficult global economic climate. Our FJMC professional staff and our committees have all tightened

our fiscal belts. As a result, the FJMC continues to meet and maintain our high level of quality programming, as well as our administrative, fixed, and support expenses without incurring any debt or invasion of acceptable reserves.

In addition to dues revenue, the FJMC continues to count upon donations from individuals, major grants, fund raising programs, the generous support of the FJMC Foundation for Jewish Life and sales from our store, which includes, our yellow candles program, tefillin, publications, and other items related to our many programs. Although gross sales for our Yellow Candle program have shown some decline, they remain strong as have tefillin sales.

Our Keruv program continues to offer its high level of inspirational programming and training and continues to be entirely funded by donations.

# ***Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs***

## **MISSION**

***The Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs  
Involves men in Jewish life by  
building and strengthening Men's Clubs  
in the Conservative/Masorti Movement.***



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