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**A
Guide for
Implementation**



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An Internet-based program to help Reform synagogues
welcome Jews who have recently moved

A project of the Union for Reform Judaism—CCAR
Commission on Outreach and Membership



www.synagoguematch.org



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Background

We live in a mobile society, and social scientists, as well as our own experience, tell us that mobility is one of the factors that negatively impact synagogue affiliation. “Through a move, community ties are broken and are not often re-formed in the new place of residence. Lack of familiarity with new surroundings and a lingering sense of loyalty to old ties may retard new involvement. Commitments to new places of residence may be weaker, especially if further mobility is anticipated.” (Sidney and Alice Goldstein, *Jews on the Move*, SUNY Press, 1996)

This phenomenon is obviously of great concern both to individual Jews who may remain disconnected from community and to synagogues that miss out on tapping the potential energy of new members. The Union for Reform Judaism–CCAR Commission on Outreach and Membership, whose mission is to help Reform synagogues actively welcome and involve Jews in their communities and to inspire Jews to find a synagogue home, has designed an important new tool to address this need.

Goal **Synagogue Match: Connecting Jews Who Move**

is an interactive Internet program that enables Reform synagogues to take the initiative in welcoming Jews who move, thereby helping to counteract the negative effect that mobility can have on synagogue affiliation. With the help of this program, Jews who move will find an open door to renewed involvement in Jewish life.

Program

The link between Jewish newcomers and Reform congregations is made through the website, www.synagoguematch.org. A temple administrator or lay volunteer compiles the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and other pertinent data about congregants who are moving and enters the information on the website. **Synagogue Match** accepts the information, sorts it by zip code, and forwards it by email or fax to up to three Reform congregations that are closest to the individuals’ new homes, up to a radius of thirty-five miles. (If no congregations fall within that area, the program will search for the nearest one.) Congregations that receive the name and address of a newcomer to their area designate a “matchmaker” to follow up by writing to and/or phoning him or her to extend a personal welcome and invitation.

Who can participate?

Synagogue Match works for anyone moving to a new location in North America that has a zip or postal code. Individuals and families with a prior Reform affiliation are a natural constituency. Look especially for the following:

- Congregants who are moving;
- Unaffiliated young adult children of congregants, particularly those completing college or graduate school and settling in new communities; and
- Jewish friends or relatives of congregants who are moving to a new community and may be interested in an invitation from a local synagogue.

When I first moved to the Bay Area, I felt rather isolated as a stay-at-home mother of twins. I distinctly remember one frenetic Friday afternoon when the doorbell rang and another young mother appeared to drop off a challah on behalf of Temple Beth El. Suddenly, there was an island of calm and caring in my home. Some twenty years later that “young mother” is my best friend, and I point to that encounter as the main reason for my active involvement in my synagogue today.

Ros Plishner
Temple Beth El
Berkeley, CA

SEVEN EASY STEPS TO MAKING A MATCH

1. Designate a person at your congregation to be the synagogue “matchmaker.” This individual can be a Membership Committee volunteer, an administrator or another staff member, or anyone who is well organized and motivated. He or she will carry out or coordinate the tasks that follow.
2. Insure that congregants know about **Synagogue Match** through regular postings in the temple bulletin, Shabbat service announcements, college or young adult programs, etc.
3. Collect the names, new addresses, and phone numbers of those who have recently moved or are about to move. **Please note:** *No match can be made without a U.S. zip or Canadian postal code.*
4. Log onto the web site at **www.synagoguematch.org** no later than a week after you have received a name. Follow the simple instructions for entering the information. That completes this part of the match.

Next...

5. Check the congregation’s e-mail (or fax, if no e-mail address is available)* regularly for incoming matches. Remember that up to three local congregations will receive the information about each participant.
6. Send a welcome letter or personal note and follow up with a phone call or even a visit. Keep the membership packet in reserve for now.
7. Remember that your aim is to make newcomers feel you are pleased that they are with you. And when you perceive real interest on their part, tell them more about what your synagogue has to offer and invite them to join.

YOUR PARTICIPATION COUNTS!

If every Reform congregation, including yours, takes part in **Synagogue Match: Connecting Jews Who Move**, then

- Your congregants who are moving away will encounter a warm welcome in a Reform synagogue in their new neighborhood;
- Your congregation will assist Reform Jews moving into your community in making new Jewish connections; and
- Reform Judaism will be strengthened throughout North America!

*E-mail or fax: **Synagogue Match** only processes information received from the website and only forwards participant information by email or fax. If your congregation has recently added or changed email or fax facilities and these numbers are not on file with the Union for Reform Judaism, please fax that information to Robin Riback at 212.650.4259 or email her at rriback@urj.org. We recognize that every congregation may not have direct access to this technology, but we hope that in such cases, a congregational leader’s email or fax will be used until the temple obtains this capability. That leader will receive all Union broadcast email or fax messages.



Especially for the SYNAGOGUE "MATCHMAKER"



While the tasks for the implementation of this program are in and of themselves simple, the impact you may have on the lives of those who are moving both into and away from your congregation can be profound. Isaac Mayer Wise, the founder of the Reform Movement in America, once wrote: "Israel lives in its congregations!" Thank you for the part you will play in enriching many Jewish lives and many congregations.

The materials and suggestions that follow have been designed to make the program as easy as possible. You will discover, however, that there is plenty of room for creativity, particularly in the ways in which you welcome newcomers. Please feel free to adapt any of the materials to your own needs and those of your congregation.

COMPILING NAMES AND NEW ADDRESSES

To make matches you will first need to gather the names and new addresses of people who are moving.

Adapt the following bulletin notice and publish it frequently. Also insure that the registration form that follows is easily and regularly available to your congregants.

Please note: **Synagogue Match: Connecting Jews Who Move** is an Internet program. Information can *only* be entered into the system at the web site, **www.synagoguematch.org**. Individuals can enter information about themselves, and the "matchmaker" can post information as it comes into the synagogue.

For the Temple Bulletin



MOVING?

Moving to a new city? Have friends or family who are relocating? What about "kids" who are recent grads or embarking on a career far from home? A Reform congregation in your new community is eager to extend a greeting.

Synagogue Match: Connecting Jews Who Move is an Internet project developed by the Reform Movement to inform synagogues about your move and insure that you receive a warm welcome at the other end of your journey.

There are two ways to sign up. You can go directly to **www.synagoguematch.org** and complete the simple form on-line. Or you can fill in the information requested and return it to the temple office at [address and/or phone].

It is a *mitzvah* for Jews to reach out in welcome to strangers. Thank you for helping Reform congregations throughout North America fulfill this obligation.

Name(s) _____

 New address _____

 City _____
 State/Province _____
 Zip/Postal Code _____
 Approximate moving date _____

*Optional information that will help provide
a warmer welcome*

New phone _____
 New business phone _____
 Email address _____

Age range 22-30 31-40 41-50
 51-64 65 and over

Household
 Individual Couple
 With preschool children
 With school-aged children
 With teens

Please remember:
No "match" can be made without a zip/postal code for the new address.

Feel free to copy form.



Registration Form for Synagogue Use

MOVING?

Synagogue Match: Connecting Jews Who Move can insure that Reform Jews who are moving to a new city will be welcomed upon their arrival by a nearby Reform congregation. To participate, or to sign up friends or relatives, just click on www.synagoguematch.org. See the sample below:

Synagogue Match - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Please complete this form which will enable Reform congregations to extend a welcome to you or another person who is moving.

I am making this request for:

Myself A Relative A Friend A Congregant

Person 1:

First Name Last Name
Age range: 22-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 65 and over

Person 2:

First Name Last Name
Age range: 22-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 65 and over

Receiving

As soon as information about someone who is moving to your neighborhood has been entered, **Synagogue Match** will notify your congregation by email or fax.

New Message - Microsoft Outlook

To: Temple Har Tikvah

From: Synagogue Match

Subject: A Synagogue Match for You

Synagogue Match: Connecting Jews Who Move wishes to introduce Annette and Ira Cohen, moving to 7 Main Street, Newtown, ZZ 00000, in September 2000. Please welcome them and send information about your congregation to them at that address.

Contact Information
Home 555.555.5555
Work 111.111.1111
Email Cohen@makebelieve.com

You will be welcoming a couple, ages 31-40, with preschool children. They were referred by Temple Chayei Mishpachah of Oldtown.

Suggestions from the Union for Reform Judaism-CCAR Commission on Outreach and Membership for welcoming newcomers can be found at www.urj.org/outreach/.

It's a *mitzvah* for Jews to reach out in welcome to strangers. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of Reform Judaism.

Synagogue Match: Connecting Jews Who Move is a Reform Movement project developed by the **Commission on Outreach and Membership** of the **Union for Reform Judaism** and the **Central Conference of American Rabbis**.

WELCOMING NEWCOMERS

Tips for Success

Rarely will a newcomer feel overwhelmed by too much attention. Once you receive a referral from **Synagogue Match**, it is critical that you make a connection with the newcomer in a thoughtful, warm way, with a specific plan in mind. Consider the following approaches:

- Respond promptly when you are informed about a newcomer's arrival. (See sample letters that follow and adapt them appropriately, or write your own.)
- Include a brochure or a small packet of information about your congregation with your welcoming letter.
- Follow up with a phone call, either from the "matchmaker" or another appropriate volunteer. Remember that listening and conveying caring and interest will make all the difference. Consider following up further by e-mail or by delivering a welcome basket.
- Plan opportunities for the newcomer to meet informally with your clergy, perhaps during a Sunday brunch, a midweek dessert and coffee get-together, or a newcomer *Hawdalah* service.
- Encourage the individual to attend a Shabbat service, a prospective-member event, or a young adult program.
- Consider introducing newcomers with special interests or at the same stage of life to congregational members with similar interests. Create a "buddy" system. Ask newcomers if they'd like to receive the synagogue bulletin.

Whether you choose to draw from the suggestions above or create your own unique approach, make sure to follow up after a week or so to see how the newcomers are doing. Once you've made a strong, positive connection, that is the time to invite them to become more involved and join the synagogue.

God loves the stranger, providing food and clothing for each one. You, too, must love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:18-19

SAMPLE LETTERS

The following letters can be adapted for your use, depending on the particular individuals whom you are welcoming and on the programs that are available at your congregation.

For General Use

Dear Ira and Annette:

Shalom! We at Congregation Shaarei Ha-Am received your name through **Synagogue Match: Connecting Jews Who Move**.* I'm writing to welcome you to Newtown and to encourage you to visit our congregation, which serves as a dynamic center for Jewish life and learning, inspiration, and social action for the surrounding community. Enclosed you will find a copy of our newsletter and an introductory brochure, telling you about our congregation.

Many of us have moved here from other parts of the country. We know that finding a new home and settling into new jobs and a new community can be enormously stressful as well as exciting. It is our hope that here at Shaarei Ha-Am, you will make friends who can help ease the transition for you and that you will find our programs enriching and our worship meaningful.

One more thing: This coming Sunday at 11 A.M., Rabbi Baruch Haba is hosting a brunch at his home for newcomers to our community. We do hope you will be able to join us. I'd be pleased to meet you there and will call you in the next few days to fill you in on all the details. Again, we extend a warm welcome to you. Jewish life in Newtown can be rich and rewarding. We would love to share this life at Shaarei Ha-Am with you. Please don't hesitate to call or email me at the numbers below if you have any questions about the congregation or the community.

Best of luck to you and *shalom*,
Molly Matchmaker
222.222.2222
Mmatch@haam.org

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For Families

Dear Tom and Nancy:

As a member of Temple Chayei Mishpachah, I'm writing to welcome you to Newtown and to invite you to visit our congregation, which is a center for Jewish life and learning here in the Newtown area. By the way, we received your name from the Reform Movement through **Synagogue Match: Connecting Jews Who Move**.^{*} We are delighted that you're here. Enclosed you will find our newsletter and an introductory brochure, telling you about our congregation.

Family life is a central focus of our community. Temple Chayei Mishpachah provides many options for family worship and education, among them a biweekly Tot Shabbat, a monthly family education program centered around the holidays, and an active religious school. We very much hope that Temple Chayei Mishpachah will become a home to you and your family. A member of our congregation, whose children are close in age to yours, will be calling you shortly to extend a personal welcome and to tell you more about our programs.

In the meantime, please don't hesitate to call or email me regarding any questions or concerns that you might have, whether they are about the synagogue or the area.

Best of luck to you and *shalom*,
Molly Matchmaker
222.222.2222
Mmatch@haam.org

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For a Young Adult

Dear Sam:

Just a quick note to welcome you to town. I'm a member of Congregation Har Tikvah here in Newtown. **Synagogue Match: Connecting Jews Who Move*** notified us that you have moved to our area. I myself arrived here two years ago and was made to feel very welcome at Har Tikvah. As a result, I want to help continue that tradition by extending a warm greeting to you.

I'm enclosing a bulletin and temple brochure, which will give you an idea about our congregation. Mainly, though, I wanted to let you know about some of the young adult programs we have and to invite you to try them out. [Describe program of interest.] FYI, Har Tikvah is also part of the Reform Movement's New Jewish Connections program and offers a very low-cost membership for young adults ages 22-30, as well as interesting events and a great group.

I'll give you a call in the next week or so to see if I can answer any questions you may have and entice you to attend our next event. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to call or email me at the numbers below.

I look forward to talking to you soon.

Max Matchmaker
Max@makebelieve.org
555.535.2334

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM THE UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM

The Life-Cycle of Synagogue Membership: A Guide to Recruitment, Integration & Retention, UAHC Press, 1991, new edition

A comprehensive resource for strengthening all aspects of synagogue membership activity. \$12.95 plus shipping and handling. To order from the URJ Press, call toll free 888.489.8242, fax 212.650.4119 or visit www.urjbooksandmusic.com.

***Looking to the Future: Re-Envisioning Your Membership Committee**

A booklet designed to assist synagogue membership committees in creating vibrant memberships from recruitment through integration to retention.

Beyond Shalom

An in-depth resource for the orientation of those designated to respond to phone inquiries from newcomers. To order from the URJ Press, call toll free 888.489.8242, fax 212.650.4119 or visit www.urjbooksandmusic.com.

***What's Missing from Our Congregation?...You!**

A brochure describing the value of synagogue membership that can be personalized for each congregation and included in a membership packet. \$10 for 50 copies



*For any of the above resources, write to the Union for Reform Judaism—CCAR Commission on Outreach and Membership at Union for Reform Judaism, 633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017; call 212.650.4230; or email outreach@urj.org.

A Project of the Union for Reform Judaism—CCAR Commission on Outreach and Membership

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