

# Keruv Training

Welcoming interfaith families into  
our Conservative Temples



New England Regional Training Session

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# Statistics

- Professor Sylvia Barack Fishman of Brandeis University, in her study, “Choosing Jewish,” published by the American Jewish Committee, states that in the American Jewish community today:
- More than one-third of American Jews are married to non-Jews.
- Close to one-half of recent “Jewish” marriages are between a Jew and a non-Jew.
- Of all the Jews who are co-habiting today, over 80% of these partnerships include individuals of non-Jewish origin.

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- Yet until recently, the issues surrounding intermarriage were rarely acknowledged in Conservative synagogues.
  - Moreover, intermarried families who chose to affiliate predominantly were choosing Reform congregations where outreach programs were more common and synagogue policies often were more appealing.



# The FJMC Keruv Initiative

- Keruv (“bringing near/welcoming”) programming provides opportunities for congregants to explore issues relating to intermarriage in a safe and supportive environment.
- The establishment of a synagogue Keruv Committee fosters a culture change which makes the congregation more appealing to potential members with diverse backgrounds.



# The FJMC Keruv Initiative

- The FJMC KERUV Initiative is about welcoming and accepting people as they are.
- **It is not about conversion.**
- **It is not about preventing intermarriage.**
- **The goal is to support families to raise Jewish children**
- Different constituencies
  - Interfaith families
  - Families where a partner has become a Jew by choice
  - The parents of children who are in interfaith relationship



# Assumptions of the Keruv Initiative

- Each Congregation has a unique culture.
- A rabbi/lay team is essential to effect cultural change.
- The rabbi's authority as Mara d'Atra (Master of the House) is underutilized.
- Congregational transformation must develop from the rabbi's place of comfort.
- The process of Keruv, of welcoming people when we simply are not used to welcoming, is a challenge.
- **Nevertheless, it is vital and a key to the survival, growth and emotional well being of the Conservative Movement in the 21st century.**



# FJMC Keruv Program

- The FJMC Keruv initiative is based on a lay/professional partnership that began in 2001
- Since then, FJMC has brought together groups of rabbis to learn and to think about the issues that are occurring in their communities and within their member families.
- With the help of academics who study the dynamics of intermarriage, rabbis are challenged to examine how they respond to synagogue members and their children when intermarriages occur.



# FJMC Keruv Program

- Rabbis are invited to recommend a man and a woman to be trained as FJMC Keruv consultants.
- During the course of a weekend of training, these volunteers are taught to partner with their rabbi and to provide strategic support to their fellow congregants
- While the consultants are provided with a support network and an annual weekend of additional training, the rabbi/lay team works in their own way to address community needs.



# Action Steps

- Talk to the leadership of your Men's club to see if there is support for implementing a Keruv program
- Meet with the leadership of the Temple to talk about the initiative and garner support
- Have the Temple president form a Keruv committee and then meet with the Rabbi
- If there is any level of support contact FJMC and ask to participate in the next Keruv training session

# Questions

