

Dear Friends,

I knew many members of our congregation several years before coming to the North Shore as a rabbi. These members were constants at the annual conventions of the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot. The Feiners, the Blumenthals, the Berlins, the Kessners and the Berleys were vocal participants in the arena of an emergent movement that offered a progressive, inclusive, Peoplehood-based form of Judaism with a new school for training rabbis, which they supported in spirit and from pocket. Two decades later, Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, founding president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and RSNS rabbi (lucky us!) paid tribute to our congregation in his autobiography, which was presciently titled *Reconstructing Judaism*. In this book, he acknowledged the role our community had played in encouraging his dreams and in helping to finance those dreams realized in the establishment of the College. We were a congregation of 125 membership units at the time.

It is remarkable to see how far the movement has come since then. The College will celebrate the fiftieth year of its founding this spring. At the same time, congregational affiliates to our movement have grown from fewer than thirty to more than 100 in number. While providing a home for Jews who might never have affiliated, our congregation, stronger in membership, remains a pre-eminent presence in our movement. Our contributions have been many, most especially in the people who have entered the rabbinate. Rabbi Jodie, one of the first “home grown” Reconstructionist rabbis of her generation, followed in the footsteps of Rabbi Nancy Fuchs Kreimer, who grew up next door to Harriet and Sid (z”l) Feiner. Samantha Safran followed Jodie a decade later, and now Solomon Hoffman, who was in the first graduating class of Gan Shalom, will enter the college in the fall.

You have all been a part of it. Whether you are a long-term member of the synagogue or if you’re one of the “new kids on the block,” whether you have read the complete works of Mordecai Kaplan, studied with Ira Eisenstein or haven’t yet figured out what Reconstructionism is all about, you have played a part in this ever-new evolution of a 3000-year-old tradition.

Presently we will have two opportunities to bear witness to where we are as a movement and discern our future direction. As previously announced, Rabbi Deborah Waxman, president of Reconstructing Judaism, will be with us the second Shabbat in May. A complete schedule of the weekend is appended to this letter. In November, representatives from our movement’s affiliates will meet in Philadelphia for a three-day long convention that will include varieties of workshops and a Shabbat experience. I hope that many of you will join others from Reconstructionist congregations across North America for this weekend of study, fellowship and song. In the interim, I look forward to seeing you in the course of Deborah’s visit a fortnight from now.

Warmly,  
Lee