

**THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM  
COMMITTEE ON CONGREGATIONAL STANDARDS**



THE  
UNITED  
SYNAGOGUE OF  
CONSERVATIVE  
JUDAISM

***AL HA-DEREKH:***

**On the Path**

**A ROADMAP OF APPROACHES, SUGGESTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS  
OFFERING A SINCERE CONCERN FOR AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF  
NON-JEWS TO BECOME PART OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM**

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## **FROM KERUV TO ĒDUD**

The term most often associated with reaching out is *keruv*. This word and its actions are intended to bring a person closer to Judaism – a Jew or a non-Jew. It has been applied to the effort to attract, welcome and involve non-Jews in an interfaith marriage with a Jew. To *m'karayv* someone requires being non-judgmental, non-threatening, warm and caring. To *m'karayv* an individual occurs through experiencing the joy of Judaism in classes, holy day observances and family gatherings.

Conservative Judaism believes that making a non-Jewish person comfortable in a Jewish environment and welcoming him/her to Jewish experiences are initial steps.

Today we introduce the Hebrew word *ēdud* to the vocabulary of reaching out. *Ēdud* means encouragement with passion, devotion and involvement. We offer non-Jews and intermarried couples the *ēdud* environment of Conservative Judaism.

Wherever you read *ēdud*, let it resonate more fully than *keruv*. Whenever you hear about *ēdud*, understand the exceptional encouragement Conservative Judaism brings to the intermarried couple and family.

Please read our specific ideas, approaches and suggestions. We are proud of the expectations we place on ourselves as well as our outstretched arms -- *ēdud*, a new addition to our Hebrew lexicon.

*ĒDUD* = ENCOURAGEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

Living a life built on Judaism, on Jewish traditions, on Jewish learning, on Jewish observance, on Jewish ethical and moral values is living with joy. Conservative Judaism is passionately devoted to Jewish marriage, to Jewish children, and to Jewish families. Conservative Judaism is devoted to building kehillot (communities), to supporting Jewish education, to building Israel and to perpetuating Jewish life wherever there is a Jew.

Therefore, the Conservative Movement must address the issue of interfaith marriage. While we are committed to encouraging marriage within the Jewish community, when intermarriage occurs, we must reach out to both the Jewish and non-Jewish spouse and both of their families. This is the issue that we will explore in this document. We will use the term *keruv/ēdud* to describe our efforts and our expectations.

First of all we must reaffirm that single Jews and young Jewish couples should be welcomed to full and active membership and participation in Conservative synagogues.

When interfaith marriages occur, it is important that Conservative synagogue leaders ensure that the Jewish partner must remain a member of the synagogue and the Jewish community.

It is equally important that Conservative synagogues encourage the non-Jewish spouse to study and to participate in Jewish life with the eventual goal of *halakhic* conversion.

If the non-Jewish spouse, for what ever reason, does not convert, the Conservative synagogue, using all of its resources, must make every effort to assure that any children of this marriage are converted (where required) and raised, educated and integrated into Jewish life and the life of the Jewish community.

This document seeks to address how to increase the level of *keruv/ēdud* within the Conservative Jewish community. Our approach is to welcome both the Jew and the non-Jew. We affirm that we want them to be a full part of the Jewish community. We initiate *keruv/ēdud* because we believe that Judaism offers meaningful values; the joys of celebration; a sense of gratitude for each day of life; and a 4,000 year tradition with a contemporary, vibrant message of Torah learning, prayer and caring for humanity.

## **AL HA-DEREKH**

The reflection and research on *keruv*, which includes bringing a married couple to Judaism when one spouse is Jewish and the other is not, has been revealing, inspiring, and challenging. We are motivated by a sincere commitment to treat each person respectfully. We are motivated by a desire to establish a Conservative movement approach to *keruv* and ultimately *ēdud*.

What follows are the recommendations of the USCJ Committee on Congregational Standards for initiating a productive exchange and encounter posed by interfaith marriage. Our *keruv* respects differences. Our *keruv* honors Judaism's standards. The United Synagogue *keruv* initiative recognizes the role of *halakha* and our rabbis as *halakhic* decisors.

We offer a perspective on *keruv* and the need for *ēdud*. Direction and wisdom are offered to the interfaith married couple, to their parents and family of both faiths, and to their children. We offer ideas and approaches for the congregation, working under the guidance of the rabbi as *mara d'atra*.

We are calling this document *Al Ha-Derekh*. There may be different paths for each person and family. Forging new paths is not easy. These proposals seek to change some attitudes while upholding Conservative Judaism's *halakhic* norms. These ideas seek to embrace every Jew regardless of status, level of knowledge, degree of observance, or intensity of faith.

## **AL HA-DEREKH: A SINCERE AND WARM INVITATION TO INTERFAITH COUPLES**

United Synagogue affiliates throughout North America will be and already are welcoming, friendly, understanding, and empathic to interfaith couples. Our message affirms our passion for Judaism and love of people. We invite everyone to:

- Walk through our doors and experience the warmth of our community.
- Choose a port of entry that eases you into the synagogue's Jewish environment.
- Assume our best intentions and keep an open mind toward our policies.
- Adopt Conservative Judaism as your family's Jewish way of life.
- Participate in our religious services.
- Attend our adult education courses or family education programs.
- Join us for a Shabbat dinner or a holiday celebration, or just stop by for a cup of coffee.

- Join a United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism affiliated congregation.
- Join us and be part of our Jewish family.

### **CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM'S POSITION**

1. Conservative Judaism affirms the importance of Jewish marriages.
2. While we recognize and appreciate the opportunities offered to North American Jews to receive an education, to be employed in any field, discipline, industry, or profession, and to be able to meet people of varied interests, faiths, and communities;
3. And while we acknowledge the statistics that show the rate of interfaith marriage to be very high;
4. We believe a one-faith Jewish family is a desired goal.
5. We want to invite, welcome, educate, and encourage non-Jewish spouses to become proud, willing, learning, dedicated, observant Jews.
6. And we seek to assure that Jewish children of an interfaith marriage will be given every advantage offered by the Conservative movement.

### **AL HA-DEREKH: THE IDEAL FOUNDATION**

A sincere involvement in Judaism by a non-Jew who is married or engaged to a Jew includes:

1. a commitment to a Jewish household exclusively
2. a commitment to a Jewish education for their children
3. a commitment to the *halakhic* conversion of their children if the mother remains a non-Jew.
4. not being associated with a church, mosque, cult or non-Jewish religious community
5. not practicing the rituals, customs, or traditions of another religious faith.

### **AL HA-DEREKH: WHEN THE IDEAL FOUNDATION IS NOT PRESENT**

1. When the Jewish spouse seeks to maintain Jewish ties, synagogue affiliation, Jewish education for children, and Jewish opportunities for teenagers and college-age children, the community can provide support even if the non-Jewish spouse is uninvolved, disinterested, or apathetic, or declines, refuses, or is not ready to participate.
2. *Keruv/ēdud* can occur when only the Jewish spouse or parent seeks to be welcomed, encouraged and supported.
3. *Keruv/ēdud* can occur when occasions are afforded for the interfaith couple to walk into the synagogue and participate fully in Jewish life within the parameters of *halakha*.

4. *Keruv/ēdud* recognizes that the family may take their Jewish children to a celebration with non-Jewish relatives. We suggest that these occasions be primarily family-oriented and if possible not religious in nature.
5. Our *keruv/ēdud* respects the integrity of the couple and is sensitive to the unique situation of each family while adhering to *halakhic* observance and standards.
6. In matters related to interfaith couples, we never desire to exclude the family. Including and respecting people appropriately is a goal of *keruv/ēdud*, even as limitations are invoked.
7. *Keruv/ēdud* is still valuable even when a non-Jewish spouse practices another religion.

### **AL HA-DEREKH: RELATED TO SYNAGOGUE GOVERNANCE AND KERUV/ĒDUD**

A synagogue affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism offers membership only to Jews, whether they are Jews by birth or through halachic conversion. A non-Jew married to a Jew can be involved in the synagogue in specific ways. A non-Jew should always feel that he/she has access to the rabbi for educational or counseling purposes. The Jewish spouse should be encouraged to actively participate in the life of the synagogue, including responsibilities of leadership.

We walk on a tightrope with regard to a non-Jew's participation in the workings of the synagogue. On the one hand, active interest can be the "tipping point" for study and conversion. On the other hand, Conservative Judaism wants to make it clear that we respect the decision not to be a Jew. Therefore not to participate in Jewish leadership in even a limited fashion might be the better decision in your synagogue. We have the following suggestions:

1. A non-Jew **may** be an adjunct to some committees, in ways deemed appropriate by the synagogue rabbi and elected leadership. Those committees could include:
  - a. *Hesed*/Social Action
  - b. House/Grounds
  - c. Israel
  - d. Library
  - e. Publicity
  - f. Social events
  - g. Membership Outreach to Interfaith Couples
  - h. Fundraising
2. A non-Jew **may not**:
  - a. be a voting member of a synagogue
  - b. serve on the synagogue's board of trustees or directors
  - c. chair a synagogue committee, program, or project

3. A non-Jew *may* not be on the following committees, but the rabbi as *mara d'atra* may consider appropriate, limited involvement.
  - a. Ritual/Religious
  - b. Membership Outreach or Retention
  - c. Cemetery
  - d. Adult Education
  - e. Children's Education
  - f. Youth Activities
4. A non-Jew should be welcomed to the programs and activities in the synagogue's men's club and sisterhood.
5. Membership mailings from the synagogue should be addressed to the family to acknowledge everyone in the household who is interested in Jewish life.

***AL HA-DEREKH:***

**ACKNOWLEDGING THE INTERFAITH COUPLE AS AN ACT OF KERUV/ĒDUD**

1. Conservative Judaism recognizes the *halakhic* validity of a religious marriage between a Jewish man and a Jewish woman.
2. We recognize that loving marriages that have not been Jewishly affirmed exist between Jews and non-Jews.
3. A synagogue should offer learning opportunities; financial sensitivity; and openness to synagogue events for interfaith couples.
4. A synagogue can treat the family, for financial obligation purposes, as one person or two people; but the individual non-Jew is not a synagogue member.
5. The non-Jew may be offered a ticket for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as well as welcomed to attend all Jewish holiday observances.

**AL HA-DEREKH: INVOLVEMENT IN LIFE CYCLE CEREMONIES AS KERUV/ĒDUD**

*(Rulings of the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, the decision of the local rabbi and the minhag of the congregation guide the level of involvement in life cycle events.)*

1. The rituals, laws, customs, and observances surrounding the life cycle events – *simhat bat*, *brit milah*, *pidyon ha-ben*, Jewish education in the religious school or Solomon Schechter Day School, *bar or bat mitzvah*, graduations, *aufruf*, *hatuna*, *bikur holim*, and *aveylut* -- are propitious opportunities for *keruv/ēdud*, when both a Jew and a non-Jew can connect emotionally, intellectually, culturally, and religiously to Judaism.
2. When a child is born to a non-Jewish mother, both parents may be involved in the Jewish rejoicing. For example, a non-Jewish parent at a *brit milah* might stand with the Jewish

parent as the *mohel* fulfills the parental obligation, and possibly recite an English reading for the *brit*, and should upon the Hebrew naming affirm that a Jewish education will be given to the child. If the mother is the non-Jewish parent, then the *brit milah*, *l'shem gerut* also requires *tevillah* in a *mikvah*, in consultation with the rabbi.

3. At a *simhat bat*, both parents might be involved. At a synagogue ceremony, an *aliyah* to the Torah for the Jewish parent or grandparent precedes the “*mi Shebayrach*” for the naming. It is up to the rabbi to decide when and if and how the non-Jewish parent will participate. At a *simhat bat*, at a home, the non-Jewish parent may offer an English reading, for example, and actively participate in the ceremony, but may not recite a *bracha*, as guided by the rabbi.
4. At a *pidyon ha-ben*, the non-Jewish parent may possibly participate in the redemption of a son through an English reading. The exchange of *shekalim* and Hebrew liturgy follow the rabbi and the kohen’s instructions.
5. At a bar or bat mitzvah, both parents may be involved through the entire preparation, study and training of their child. *Bimah* limitations in a synagogue are established by Rabbinical Assembly responsa. For example, a non-Jewish parent might stand with a child when a “*she-he-che-yanu*” is offered and may participate in appropriate English readings or offer words of pride and congratulations, as determined by the rabbi.
6. A child’s Jewish wedding is an emotional and religious experience for parents. The clergy officiating at the *hatuna* will review the ceremony and the parents’ involvement. For example, the presence of the non-Jewish parent is encouraged at the *ketubah* signing, walking down the aisle at the *seudat mitzvah*, and at the celebration. The role of the non-Jewish parent at the *huppah* will be guided by the clergy. The success in bringing a Jewish child to the *huppah* is a joy for both parents.
7. A non-Jew may not be buried in a Jewish cemetery. The RA Committee on Law and Standards has issued responsa dealing with the burial of an interfaith couple or the non-Jew in a separate cemetery area. While the couple must consider the issues of a final resting place, the rabbi and synagogue leaders need to establish a sensitive but clear policy incorporating *halachic* proscriptions.
8. If the child of a non-Jewish mother is not (yet) converted, the rabbi, as *mara d'atra*, will determine the permissibility of attendance in religious school and the outside time limit requiring conversion in order to become a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. The Jewish parent is a member of the congregation. The effort of *keruv/ēdud* to guide the parents to decide for *halakhic* conversion includes discussions about:
  - a. what happens at a *brit milah* (to ease any concerns)?
  - b. what process occurs at the *mikvah* (to assure the safety and health of the child)?
  - c. where and when is a *simhat bat* held?
  - d. the special joy of choosing a Hebrew name.
  - e. the guarantee of a child being included in the Jewish community just like all the other children.

## **AL HA-DEREKH: CELEBRATING THE HAGIM AND SHABBAT AS KERUV/ĒDUD**

*We strongly encourage all Conservative Jews and their families to learn, to experience, and to find the spiritual and halakhic beauty of Shabbat and the holidays. The examples set forth here will encourage discussion. Based on RA responsa, the rabbi will help formulate final decisions.*

A non-Jew should be encouraged to attend religious services, holiday celebrations, and Shabbat observances with the Jewish spouse and Jewish family. These are crucial *keruv* opportunities to bring people closer to an appreciation and acceptance of Judaism and possibly an agreement to convert. Care must be taken so that the non-Jew does not feel threatened or manipulated in the process.

1. SHABBAT: Fifty four times a year, Shabbat. The weekly occurrence provides regularity, repetition and rejoicing in the unique Jewish way to acknowledge God as Creator, God as Redeemer and God as Lawgiver. Rituals with spiritual meaning, from preparation for Shabbat to the multitude of *mitzvot* throughout the day and concluding with *Havdalah*, offer countless opportunities. To invite and envelop a non-Jew and his/her family into the richness of the Jewish community and the centrality of prayer, learning, and the Jewish home are crucial elements in *keruv/ēdud*.

Shabbat, by its very nature, invites active participation for all ages. Synagogue programs for all members, as well as for interfaith families, will influence thinking, behavior and decisions to consider Shabbat's lifestyle personally and *halakhically*.

A focus on candles, wine and *hallah*; a concentration on Shabbat meals; a discussion on the nature of creating and resting; a gathering of Shabbat keepers with Shabbat seekers which joins observance to spirituality; a program for multiple generations of Jews and non-Jews – these can play vital roles in *keruv/ēdud*. *Shabbat Shalom*.

2. PESAH: A non-Jew can perform many of the holiday's rituals and traditions; for example, cleaning the home, joining in the search for *hametz*, participating in the seder, welcoming *Eliyahu*.

On the other hand, a non-Jew cannot recite the *kiddush*, lead any of the *brachot*, or oversee the seder *mitzvot* since there is no *hiyuv*, obligation, incumbent on him or her.

3. SHAVUOT: The *tikun leyl Shavuot* presents an excellent *keruv* opportunity for Torah learning, both for the non-Jew and for the entire family. As always, the dairy culinary delights should not be underestimated in the *keruv/ēdud*. The lesson of Ruth, a woman who chooses to follow her Jewish mother-in-law, is an inspirational story. Judaism welcomes people who seek to learn to become part of the Jewish people and find God in their lives.

4. TISHA B'AV: A non-Jew is not obligated to fast but may do so to connect with Jewish history. The historical context of *Tisha B'Av*, Jerusalem and the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash* presents the non-Jew with an opportunity to study *Aycha* and be present at the synagogue service. Creating a Jewish heart includes teaching an awareness of tragedy in our history.
5. ELUL: A month designed for self-evaluation, *heshbon ha-nefesh*, is a unique extended opportunity for *keruv/ēdud*. Books such as *Days of Awe* by S.Y. Agnon; *Entering the High Holy Days* by Rabbi Reuven Hammer; *Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days* by Rabbi Rachel Sabbath and Rabbi Kerry Olitzky; and *This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared* by Rabbi Alan Lew are valuable reading. Classes for intermarried couples during *Elul* can lead to a High Holy Day experience for the fully Jewish family.
6. SELIHOT: The non-Jew can attend services on the night of *Selihot* to encourage further self-reflection. The service is often preceded by a program, and its spiritual mood is a worthwhile *keruv/ēdud* focus.
7. ROSH HASHANAH/YOM KIPPUR: The non-Jew's attendance at the *tefillot* in the synagogue can be a meaningful experience. Participating in Torah study and the *Tashlich* service, hearing the shofar blowing, the rabbi's message, and *Kol Nidre*, attending *Yizkor* and understanding the *haftarot* is time wisely invested by a non-Jew. The home celebrations of these *yamim tovim* are excellent *keruv* occasions. Hearing *Kiddush* and *hamotzi*; tasting apples with honey, seeing *yom tov* candles and enjoying a holiday meal with friends and family enhance a non-Jew's closeness to Judaism.
8. SUKKOT/SHEMINI ATZERET/SIMHAT TORAH: *Keruv/ēdud* surrounding these *hagim* include *sukkah* building, *sukkah* meals, the multifaceted messages of *lulav* and *etrog* from midrashic sources, and the joy of singing and dancing as the Torah reading is completed.
9. HANUKAH: The holidays celebrated in December present a challenge to non-Jews married to Jews and to their families.

Chanukah's messages are clear and unambiguous: religious freedom means the ability to live as a Jew; military victories are won in order to give dignity to minorities; Judaism has an Israel-centered focus; Jews will fight for our right to be distinct. These values should be emphasized to the interfaith couple or family.

10. TU B'SHEVAT: Arbor Day finds its roots in the Jewish commitment to protecting soil, water, and trees. Hearing this message as a universal value with a Jewish particularistic posture is vital. The Tu B'Shevat seder can feature Israel, Zionism, music and Israeli products. A connection to Israel can be strengthened in this observance for Jews and non-Jews alike.
11. PURIM: The joys of Purim are *Megillat Esther*, costumes, groggers, and hamantaschen, combined with the serious *mitzvot* of *matanot l'evyonim* (gifts to the poor), *mishloach manot* (sharing with friends), and the celebration *seudah*, or meal. The Purim celebration

and the recurring lesson in anti-Semitism offers a powerful opportunity for *keruv*. In every generation Hamans arise to attempt to destroy Jews and Judaism. The synagogue community reaches out and says, “Join us. March through history with us. Suffer the vicious slanders. Feel the boot on our necks.” If you do, then you will also come to experience the strength and dedication of Jews who love the joy of their Judaism. *Keruv/ēdud* is never sweeter than when Purim is lived by the Jewish people and includes sincere converts.

### **AL HA-DEREKH: THE STATUS OF JEWISH CHILDREN**

The children born to a Jewish mother are Jewish. Boys must have a *brit milah* and both girls and boys are given a Hebrew name to be brought fully into the covenant of Judaism. They do not require immersion in a *mikvah*.

If their mother is not Jewish, the children of an interfaith marriage can become Jewish, according to *halakha*, through the positive actions of their parents. The efforts of a rabbi, *hazan* or Jewish educator, the Jewish grandparents and the Jewish community to encourage the *mitzvot* of *brit milah*, baby naming, and *mikvah* at birth and to celebrate their fulfillment is a significant act of *keruv/ēdud*. Synagogues and their rabbis often develop their own schedules for when in a child’s life these *mitzvot* should be performed.

1. *Brit milah* occurring on the eighth day of life with a *mohel* officiating confirms that the ceremony of the covenantal circumcision is for the purpose of conversion.
2. The *mikvah* ceremony may follow as soon as possible, with the approval of the baby’s pediatrician;
3. The *mikvah* can occur before the child begins formal Jewish education;
4. The *mikvah* must occur before the child’s bar or bat mitzvah. There is no conversion without *mikvah*.
5. Jewish education begins with the taste of *kiddush* wine on the first Shabbat after a child is born. Jewish learning is built on such experiences and by creating a memory bank for the child. Jewish education continues through storybooks, home celebrations, a caring synagogue community, grandparents’ involvement, and the understanding love of both sides of the family.
6. When a commitment to conversion has been made, the children of an interfaith marriage can be enrolled in a Jewish early childhood program followed by religious school or day school, up to bar or bat mitzvah.

The Jewish teenager should continue with formal Jewish classroom time in day school or Hebrew high school that should be complemented by youth activities with other young

Jewish adults. Both parents can be engaged in these educational settings. In the absence of continued formal education, Kadima and USY should be encouraged even more strongly.

### **AL HA-DEREKH: KERUV/ĒDUD DURING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

1. The early childhood director, in consultation and with direction from the rabbi, can extend a sincere welcome to interfaith couples with an invitation to see the program, visit the school, describe the curriculum, and explain the importance of this setting for *their* child.
2. Both parents are excellent candidates as volunteers for the many requests made by the early childhood program -- helping with Shabbat and holidays, chaperoning trips, working on crafts projects and music programs. *Keruv/ēdud* opportunities abound to welcome the family to the Jewish community as part of these early years.

### **AL HA-DEREKH: KERUV/ĒDUD DURING A CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL YEARS**

There are two choices for Jewish education in the Conservative movement – congregational religious schools and Solomon Schechter day schools.

Religious schools meet on weekday afternoons and on Sunday and/or Shabbat mornings. The United Synagogue's School of Excellence mandate offers congregations different options to fulfill Conservative movement standards.

Solomon Schechter day schools offer a dual-curriculum, full-day, coeducational program most often from kindergarten through eighth grade. Solomon Schechter high schools provide Jewish and general studies through twelfth grade.

1. The cooperative spirit between the synagogue and the religious school or day school also can engage the non-Jewish parents in a child's education in a way that benefits the *keruv/ēdud* process and involves them in a Jewish learning community.
2. *Keruv/ēdud* to interfaith couples who might consider a Solomon Schechter Day School education begins by minimizing their anxiety and fears and conveying in a positive manner the many opportunities afforded by a day school. Their child will be accepted and included in the school community. No child will be singled out for embarrassment. Every child will be encouraged to thrive and succeed academically. The school will foster a respectful attitude as the family endeavors to balance the school's Jewish values with the values of their home. This relationship is a challenge that requires a partnership between clergy, the principal or educational director, the teaching staff, the administration, the parents and the child. We are confident that it is achievable.
3. Children of a non-Jewish mother will receive the same education in the same classroom as all other children in the school once both parents have made a commitment to the commandment "You shall teach your children" (Deuteronomy 6). The rabbi will determine when a

conversion is required. The issue of conversion will be openly discussed at the time of admission to the school. It is understood that preparation for conversion is a process that takes time. Experiencing Jewish life through the school programs and the synagogue are essential aspects of the process.

The Solomon Schechter Day School Association subscribes to the views expressed in this document with regard to *keruv/ēdud*. Conversion of a non-Jewish child who is admitted to the school is the goal. While the target for completion of the conversion is one academic year it is understood that some families need more time. This decision will be made in consultation with the *mara d'atra* of the school. In the spirit of "*al ha derekh*", Schechter schools appreciate that families embark on a Jewish journey in choosing a day school education for their children, and work to ensure that the path will be full of joyful discoveries and positive Jewish experiences.

4. Whenever possible, parallel education for a parent, as *keruv/ēdud*, should follow his or her child's curriculum on a regular basis, including all subjects – *Ivrit*, Torah, *chagim*, rabbinic texts, history. Parents will be encouraged to take advantage of Jewish learning opportunities at the school, synagogue or in the community. The school will foster an environment where openness prevails and the non-Jewish parent feels free to ask about any and all Jewish practices, routines, and regulations in order to learn more about Judaism without embarrassment or inhibition.

As *keruv/ēdud*, a school will enlist the non-Jewish parent in various activities of the Parents Association and the parent will be encouraged to participate, as all other parents, in chaperoning class outings, school-based holiday celebrations, and other projects and programs of the school.

5. A school needs to be aware of the financial constraints that might exist due to the non-Jewish parent's limited interest in a child's Jewish education. The Jewish child of an interfaith marriage should be extended special consideration when necessary. The school will encourage the parents to enroll their child in a Jewish education program. Sincere efforts will be made to prevent a child from falling through the cracks.
6. A synagogue's adult education curriculum includes specific courses for an interfaith married couple. Learning and asking; learning and adopting; learning and exchanging ideas; learning and living – all are active *keruv/ēdud* processes which can bring a person closer to Jewish core values.

### **AL HA-DEREKH: KERUV/ĒDUD THROUGH KADIMA/USY/KOACH**

A child's bar or bat mitzvah often affects parents emotionally and religiously. Often it awakens their interest in studying the child's Torah portion or haftarah reading, or in composing a speech based on Jewish values. The religious services and the celebration that follows bring family and friends into the sanctuary and then into a Jewish social setting. This can stimulate an interest in Jewish life. *A proactive outreach to the Jewish children of an interfaith marriage can assure*

***their continuing connection to Judaism.*** The outreach needs an extra push from the synagogue's educational director, youth committee, youth director, as well as the young person's peers.

1. Offer free membership in Kadima as well as USY for all b'nai mitzvah for the first year.
2. Talk to the parents of the bar or bat mitzvah to explain the programs, the opportunities, and the socialization. Tell them that their child will be accepted in Kadima and USY. Provide them with brochures and other materials about the synagogue's youth programs as well as movement-wide opportunities.
3. When it is warranted, congregational leaders should look discreetly for opportunities to include scholarships for conventions, *kinusim*, encampment, USY on Wheels, and Israel pilgrimages to Jewish teenagers of an interfaith marriage.
4. The college outreach committee is an excellent place for interfaith parents to volunteer their time and interest when their child goes to university. Information about signing up for KOACH, what KOACH is, what KOACH does, the annual KOACH *kallah*, and KOACH on campus should be made available.

### **AL HA-DEREKH: ISRAEL EXPERIENCES AS KERUV/ĒDUD**

The child of an interfaith marriage should be given a Jewish environment at home, in a Jewish school, and in informal Jewish youth activities. Visits to the state of Israel will strengthen those personal ties to Judaism when a young adult matures.

Opportunities in Israel include:

1. Celebrating a bar or bat mitzvah (either after or before marking the occasion in your synagogue);
2. Visiting Israel with a Solomon Schechter Day School class;
3. Visiting Israel with USY or Ramah Seminar;
4. Visiting Israel with KOACH through the Birthright program;
5. Studying and experiencing Israel in the first year of college with the NATIV program;
6. Spending the junior year of college abroad in Israel;
7. Taking a family tour of Israel with your congregational rabbi or *hazan*.

The Israel trip as a pilgrimage reaffirms a child's love for Israel. A family visiting Israel on a tour can awaken the desire to establish a one-faith Jewish family, where both parents are Jews. Tours exploring Jewish history and heritage in the United States and Europe are also meaningful experiences for a family. The interfaith couple should consider studying at the United Synagogue's Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center in the "Conservative Yeshiva".

## **AL HA-DEREKH: KERUV/ĒDUD THROUGH CAMP RAMAH**

A constant and consistent message that summers at Jewish camps, especially Camp Ramah, is a part of *keruv/ēdud*. Campers who are integrated as a normal process of camp life experience Judaism as a daily life filled with prayer, study, Shabbat and *kashrut*; in the arts, in the bunk, on the sports field, and with friends. Before camp starts, staff and counselors could benefit from training to sensitize them to the presence of children who might have a non-Jewish parent.

1. Synagogue-affiliated Ramah parents should get in touch with interfaith couples to encourage them to send their children to Ramah.
2. When it is warranted, give scholarships to Jewish children of interfaith couples. That is an act of *keruv/ēdud* that can make a difference in the child's life and the family's connection to Judaism.
3. Invite interfaith couples to visit Camp Ramah on the summer visiting day or another designated date. A joint venture between current and potential Ramah parents requires special *keruv/ēdud* to assure everyone of the crucial place of camping in forming a Jewish adult.
4. The congregational clergy should tell the director of Camp Ramah when a child's parent isn't Jewish.

## **AL HA-DEREKH: KERUV/ĒDUD WHEN A YOUNG ADULT CHOOSES A COLLEGE**

All young men and women should be concerned when selecting a university. Students go to college for a quality education, new friends, and the opportunity to set adult goals for themselves. Students are influenced by texts, classes, professors, and college friends.

The synagogue can help both parents and high school students look at colleges. The following factors are to be considered:

1. Percentage of Jews on campus
2. Formal classes offered in Judaica and Hebraica
3. Jewish student organizations with religious observances -- including KOACH (Conservative) and Hillel (all denominations)
4. Kosher meal plan or dining room
5. Distance from home to allow occasional visits for Shabbat and holidays with family.

Non-Jewish and Jewish parents can encourage or insist upon a university ambiance that will increase the possibility of meeting interested, involved, committed Jews; having social relationships with many Jews; and finding Jews as partners in marriage.

### **AL HA-DEREKH: THE RABBI, THE CANTOR AND KERUV/ĒDUD**

1. The clergy and synagogue leadership play a vital role in *keruv/ēdud*. A welcoming attitude and friendly demeanor is essential to establishing a significant connection to both the Jew and the non-Jew even before they are married. Private counseling can affect the future of the marriage.
2. When a young person becomes engaged to marry a non-Jew, the rabbi and cantor can invite the couple to meet at the synagogue or other appropriate locale.
3. Conservative clergy do not officiate at interfaith marriages. Still, the couple should know that they have open-door access to the rabbi and the cantor.
4. Free synagogue membership for all couples for up to two years is a crucial step in *keruv/ēdud* to newlyweds. Both spouses can be enriched by many meaningful opportunities from the synagogue and the Jewish community, and this can create a bond to Judaism. In an interfaith marriage, both are encouraged to participate but only the Jewish partner has the status of member.
5. The rabbi and cantor can offer guidance in establishing a culturally and religiously meaningful Jewish home. They can provide classes exploring the centrality of the *mitzvot*; Jewish music and art; the rituals related to *shofar*, honey dish, *sukkah*, *lulav*, *chanukiyah*, *megillat Esther*, Pesach plate, *afikomen*, *seforim*, *siddur*, Tanach, Etz Hayyim Chumash, each of which contributes to the joy of Jewish living. They can provide a setting for discussing theology, studying Jewish texts, and guiding seekers and searchers for God in their lives.
6. The rabbi and the cantor should make a special point of inviting the couple to Shabbat dinners, communal Pesach *sederim*, *sukkah* dinners, Shavuot study, Purim celebrations, Tu B'Shevat seders, and the spectrum of Jewish experiences. Funding for these project should be set aside by the congregation in support of *keruv/ēdud*.

### **AL HA-DEREKH: KERU/ĒDUD LEADS TO KEDUSHAH**

The outreach to non-Jews married to Jews is intended to assure the survival of the Jewish people. Judaism is built around the principles of love of fellow human beings, love of Torah, and love of God. Converts contribute to Conservative Judaism already by serving as rabbis and cantors, teachers, leaders, mentors and members.

Each *mitzvah* is a building block for establishing a society of *kedushah*: a sacred, sanctified life for each person and all of us.

The goal of *keruv/ēdud* is to offer a Jewish life which is a pathway to a loving relationship to God through the *mitzvot* as sacred deeds and brings *kedushah* to each moment for Jews and those who cast their lot with the Jewish people.

The reason for *keruv/ēdud* to Jews and non-Jews is because we believe that Judaism's message is eternal and requires messengers in the many forms of a family and in the transmission from grandparents and parents to children.

In each generation, a Jew is obligated to see him or herself as if the world's moral and ethical existence rests on his or her shoulders. We need more representatives like the biblical Ruth, a Moabite by birth, who marries a Jew. Despite her husband's untimely death, Ruth decides to follow her mother-in-law, Naomi. Before leaving Moab for Bethlehem, Ruth speaks the poetic declaration of faith, "Your people are my people and your God is my God."

### **AL HA-DEREKH'S PHILOSOPHY: KERUV/ĒDUD NEVER ENDS**

We reiterate that an interfaith marriage is not a fixed condition. No marriage is a fixed relationship. Active *keruv* should continue with ongoing invitations to the non-Jewish spouse, who eventually can be brought into the Jewish journey. This may lead to conversion. Synagogues, synagogue schools, day schools, and camps can open the door to conversion. If it is the conversion not of the parent but of the child, this too will benefit Jewish continuity.

### **OUR HOPE**

Conservative Judaism will continue to create a welcoming and inviting atmosphere that beckons people toward becoming Jews. Conservative Judaism intends to reach out to intermarried couples and to potential converts. The future of Conservative Judaism will be determined to a significant degree by learning, by observance of *mitzvot* as understood by our tradition, and by our passion for living as Jews. People will join us because of our sincere love of God, of Torah, of the Jewish people, of Israel, and of humanity.

### **AL HA-DEREKH: SELECTED INITIAL SYNAGOGUE STEPS**

1. Establish a *keruv/ēdud* committee for the synagogue. Include clergy, educators, social workers, members who are intermarried, and other interested people.
2. Gather members of the congregation who have converted. These *gerei tzedek* can often be effective in speaking to families of interfaith marriages about how meaningful it is to be a

Jew . They should be employed to encourage study and to help overcome resistance to conversion.

3. Create a distinct grouping of parents and grandparents of intermarried couples to offer support, to provide a forum of exchange, to establish strategies, and to be proactive with both generations.
4. Create a grouping of people – teenagers, college students and older adults – to address questions of dating non-Jews. Include all interested voices.
5. Create a membership outreach committee that develops approaches to publicize, welcome, and integrate new members who are intermarried couples.
6. Establish a grouping of righteous non-Jews who are supportive of creating a one-faith Jewish family but who are not contemplating active conversion to Judaism. What are their interests and needs? What limitations will they experience?
7. Create a forum for conversion issues and questions about how to convert.
8. Establish a programming subcommittee to integrate intermarried couples, to welcome non-Jews, and to allow families to navigate Jewish life.
9. Organize workshops with a limited scope of sharing a particular aspect of Judaism, i.e. a kosher kitchen, holiday foods/recipes, pulpit decorum, navigating "around the Torah" reading, ethical end-of-life issues, appropriate language, Jewish entertainers, Jewish camps, Zionism/Israel, Jewish organizations. Each session should be between 45 and 90 minutes.

► THE DOOR IS OPEN, THE WELCOME MAT IS OUT, THE TIME IS NOW.

**This document, written by Rabbi Moshe Edelman, incorporated the research and input of members of the subcommittee and of the committee on congregational standards. It was further reviewed and revised after input from USCJ regional directors, USCJ central staff, subcommittee members and members of the USCJ board of directors. Contributions to the editing of the content came from various national organizations of Conservative Judaism. Carnot Nelson is the chairman of the subcommittee and Eugene Zinbarg is the chairman of the standards committee.**

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