

Reform Judaism Around the World

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Did you know that there are Reform Jews all over the world (though in most instances they refer to themselves as “Progressive”)? And that we are all part of the international umbrella organization, the World Union for Progressive Judaism? The following is a brief update on the exciting developments that have been going on in our Movement worldwide over the past year:

- The Union for Progressive Judaism, which covers Australia, New Zealand and Asia, in cooperation with the CCAR, completed a World Union edition of Mishkan T’filah, specifically aimed at the Southern Hemisphere. This prayer book will be shared by South African congregations as well.
- The European Union for Progressive Judaism reports that our founding congregation in Barcelona, Atid, has moved into a new building, and a new Barcelona congregation is being welcomed into the EUPJ.
- The Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam, Germany, is celebrating its tenth anniversary and ordained three new rabbis this year. The Leo Baeck College in England ordained eight, and the Levisson Institute in Holland will soon have three ordainees as well.
- Five youngsters from Budapest and Warsaw attended summer camp at the URJ’s Kutz Camp in Warwick, NY.
- Netzer, the international Progressive youth movement, held a summer camp for about 100 youngsters in Spain.
- New Progressive Jewish Centers opened in Moscow and St. Petersburg, offering religious, educational and cultural activities, and plans are underway to purchase property in Minsk.
- A Kiev congregation celebrated its 18th anniversary as a congregation and 15 years of running kindergartens in the city. Over 60 children are enrolled in this program at two sites.
- 16 HUC-JIR students conducted seders in 18 cities throughout the Former Soviet Union, and some 5300 people participated in seders held in various Reform communities in the FSU. (OVER)

- 971 young people in the FSU participated in Reform summer camp programs. These camps teach children about Judaism, from a Reform perspective, so they can go home and teach their parents.
- A Russian-Hebrew version of the Plaut Torah Commentary should be completed in time for Simchat Torah this September.
- Six new Israeli rabbis were ordained from Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem, bringing the total number to 70 Reform rabbis in Israel, most born and ordained in Israel.
- Thousands of Israelis attended High Holiday services at Reform congregations throughout Israel.
- The Reform Movement's Mechina program, a gap year program for Israeli high school graduates before joining the army, was recognized at a public ceremony by the city of Tel Aviv-Jaffa for excellence in volunteering. The program was established in 2003 by the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ) and has been recognized by Israel's Ministry of Defense since 2008. There were 44 participants last year.
- Representatives of Progressive congregations and communities in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile met in Cordoba, Argentina, to create a new regional board for South America.
- The Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean (UJCL), covering Central America and the Caribbean, held its 12th biennial conference in Panama City, Panama.

The World Union supports all of these activities around the world through regional bodies, and with donations by those who want to strengthen Reform and Progressive Judaism. In many parts of the world, Reform Judaism faces serious challenges, and support is always welcome.

You can get much more information, and find a Reform/Progressive congregation to visit while on overseas trips, by visiting the World Union website: www.wupj.org.