



August 10, 2010

Dear Rabbis and Jewish Community Leaders:

We are delighted to announce the launch of the *Year of Civil Discourse (YCD) Initiative*, an innovative joint project of the Jewish Community Relations Council and the Jewish Community Federation, in partnership with the Northern California Board of Rabbis. The focus of YCD is to elevate the level of civil discourse in our community on controversial matters.

We are happy to announce that with the generous support of the Jewish Community Federation Endowment Fund, the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, and the Walter and Elise Haas Sr. Fund, we will be able to offer a variety of opportunities for you and your institutions to participate in the Year of Civil Discourse Initiative, such as:

- developing a cohort of people to participate in Project Reconnections, customized for your institution or cluster of smaller institutions applying together
- engaging in the Rabbis' Circle, which will provide support specifically to rabbis
- becoming trained or appointing someone in your institution or cluster to become trained to facilitate difficult discussions among community members with divergent viewpoints
- providing you other civil discourse resources for your institution or cluster.

Over the course of the past year, many of you have expressed interest in building the capacity of your membership to have more respectful, vibrant, and engaging conversations about Israel and other contentious issues that impact our community. In that context, many of you have asked if we could bring to your institution our Project Reconnections, which actually was the genesis and catalyst for this expanded Initiative. If you are not familiar with Project Reconnections, we invite you to read the attached feature article from The Jerusalem Report about this innovative project and its impact in our Jewish community and the description of the project components.

We invite your institution, or a cluster of small institutions, to apply now to participate in the Project Reconnections component. We will partner with each of the 6 institutions that are selected by our Needs

Assessment Committee, which represents the diversity of voices in our community. Each institution that is selected will be supported in assembling a diverse cohort of 15-20 members and leaders, who will engage in a year-long, intensive dialogue and deliberation effort that is crafted just for your institution and facilitated by our outside facilitator.

The actual dollar value of this program is \$14,000 per institution. There will be no charge for hosting Project Reconnections; it is a generous gift to the community from our funders. Institutions are responsible only for any venue rental, catering, and materials production related to their participation. Institutions are invited to make a voluntary contribution at the end of the year to support continuing civil discourse efforts into the future.

Enclosed is a brief application, which we encourage you to submit. Selections will be based on institutions or clusters of small institutions which:

- have the greatest need to participate
- come from diverse geographic locations within the Bay Area
- have a diverse enough population to make an impact
- have the internal support of its leadership to commit to the full process (see attached description).

Institutions not selected to host Project Reconnections will have the option of accessing other components of the *Year of Civil Discourse Initiative*. Our desire is to assist in some way, as many institutions as possible.

Our vision is to work together to increase our community's capacity to have respectful, vibrant, informed conversations about Israel and other controversial matters. Please join us in this *Year of Civil Discourse Initiative*.

The attached application should be returned to Rachel Eryn Kalish, Project Facilitator, by end of the day Sunday, September 26, 2010. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call Rachel Eryn at (415) 488-1884 or email her at JCRCeryn@aol.com. Thank you. We look forward to working together.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Gorovitz
CEO
Jewish Community Federation

Rabbi Douglas Kahn
Executive Director
JCRC

Rabbi Marvin Goodman
Executive Director
Board of Rabbis of Northern CA