

Social Justice Committee proposal to Hebrew Tabernacle Board

Resolution on LGBTQ+ Equality

We at Hebrew Tabernacle endorse this campaign and these principles from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism: The Reform Movement has been advocating for LGBTQ+ rights since 1965, when the Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) called for the decriminalization of homosexuality. Since then, substantial progress has been made in pursuit of LGBTQ+ equality: the 2009 passage of the Matthew Shepard Act expanded US Federal Hate Crime Law to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity; and in 2015 the Supreme Court declared same-sex marriage legal across all 50 states in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. Despite these gains, US federal nondiscrimination law omits the LGBTQ+ community from protection against discrimination in employment, housing, health care, and others. We must continue to advocate until the LGBTQ+ community is treated with full equality and dignity in society and under law and to respond to a backlash against these hard-won gains.

Why Should Jews Care

We are guided by a central belief that all human beings are created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the Divine image. As it says in Genesis 1:27: "And God created humans in God's own image, in the image of God, God created them." Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, said in an interview with Fox News, "As it says in Genesis, all humans were created in the image of God. And that means that every person, every soul, is a creature of God that looks like God, whether they are transgender or lesbian or gay, and so we welcome all of them." Each of us, created in God's image, has a unique talent, with which we can contribute to the high moral purpose of *tikkun olam*, the repair of our world. Excluding anyone from our community lessens our chance of achieving this goal of a more perfect world.

Current federal advocacy focus: Currently, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and gender non-conforming (LGBTQ+) people face discrimination and a political backlash is growing. Although NYS does have laws protecting LGBTQ+ people from discrimination and sexual orientation and gender identity, these are not explicitly protected classes under federal civil rights law, leaving the LGBTQ+ community vulnerable to discrimination in housing, education, credit, public accommodations, and federal funding. **The Equality Act (H.R. 5/S.393)** passed the House of Representatives on February 25, 2021. But, the Senate needs to act.

The Religious Action Center (RAC) has an Audacious Hospitality initiative, the Reform Jewish Movement's focused effort on Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion work in congregations. RAC has educational modules on LGBTQ inclusion and Jews of Color inclusion. Another Audacious Hospitality resource is RAC & Keshet's guide for making a congregation more inclusive for transgender and gender-expansive (including non-binary) individuals: https://urj.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/Keshet_RAC_Transgender_Inclusion_Guide_July_2021.pdf

Hebrew Tabernacle already includes adults and young people who belong to the LGBTQ+ community. We stand by our congregants; we welcome and stand by LGBTQ+ people.