

# What Could the North American Conservative/Masorti Synagogue Look Like in Five Years?



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Five-year benchmarks are quite commonly employed to measure the progress and success of initiatives. Were a Conservative/Masorti synagogue in the United States to choose to respond positively to demographic change implied by intermarriage, these are some of the issues that will have to be thoughtfully considered and employed.

## **Synagogue Culture**

1. Disparaging remarks from the pulpit or in the pews will not be tolerated. Religious school children raised in Jewish families will be encouraged to share their experiences in the classroom. The conversation among synagogue leaders will move *from* who one is marrying *to* how one is raising children.
2. Staff members and volunteer leaders in interfaith relationships will not be discouraged nor penalized.
3. Youth group participants will be welcome to bring friends to events irrespective of their religious backgrounds. Youth leaders will not be limited in their relationships.

## **Administration and Program**

4. Teachers will be sensitive and respectful of children who have intermarried parents and strongly support their efforts to raise Jewish children.
5. Synagogue application forms will reflect the religious traditions of people married or partnered to Jews in an equal and non-judgmental manner. Celebrations of those who have intermarried will be affirmed in synagogue publications without distinction. Those who wish to honor their children's choices with a Kiddush or other celebration will be encouraged/welcomed.
6. Educational and social programming will be designed to engage people of different religious traditions.
7. Youth group events will be viewed as an opportunity to bring people close to Judaism and will not be governed by the fear that they promote interfaith relationships.

## **Life Cycle**

8. Aufrufen (pre-marital blessings) and "Keruv aliyot" (recognition of the decision to have a Jewish family) will serve as an important step to integrate intermarried couples into the community.

9. Clergy will be able to attend and participate in some capacity in the interfaith weddings of congregants and their children.
10. Clergy will officiate at funerals and burials of their members and their families who are part of the community irrespective of their religious backgrounds.

### **Ritual**

11. An adult partner or grandparent from another religious tradition will be able to participate in the life cycle events of their family and their family members.
12. Patrilineal children will be welcomed in the synagogue and will undergo a "completion ceremony" in anticipation of b'nai mitzvah (rather than a "conversion ceremony").

### **Governance**

13. People of different religious traditions will be permitted to sit on synagogue boards as voting members.
14. People who are part of the community will be considered full members of the synagogue and will be permitted to vote on all issues.