



## 2013-2015 Torch Awards - Application

**Before you submit this application, please print out and review the "2015 Torch Awards Overview," available on the FJMC website.**

Please complete the following information. The font for all submissions should be Times New Roman. Please embed photographs of your program into this file. This completed document will be submitted to us as a Word file, named in the format: "FJMC TA 2015\_ChapterName\_ProgramName.doc"

Please email your completed application to: [torchaward.fjmc.2015@gmail.com](mailto:torchaward.fjmc.2015@gmail.com). If you have difficulty, please contact the Torch Award Co-Chairs for assistance at the above email address.

Clubs participating must be in good standing as of March 31, 2015 (Club dues and Membership list received by FJMC). Programs to be considered for an award must have taken place between April 1, 2013 and April 15, 2015. Entries must be received by April 22, 2015.

### Section 1: Title

Club Name:     Beth El Temple West Hartford Men's Club\_#217      
Current Contact:     Martin Melnick      
Program Name:     HMV Pew Report Series on American Jewish Community    

### Section 2: Contact information

Person completing form  
First Name:     Martin      
Last Name:     Melnick      
E-Mail:     marty.melnick@gmail.com    

Club President at time of Convention  
First Name:     Jacob      
Last Name:     Kovel      
E-Mail:     eaglewars@aol.com    

Current Club President  
First Name:     same      
Last Name:                                       
E-Mail:

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### Section 3: Category

Please choose up to two (2) selections. Please note, you can only win in one category. The co-chairs reserve the right to reclassify your program.

- Club Administration
- Community Outreach
- FJMC Other
- Fundraising
- Health and Wellness
- Hearing Men’s Voices
- Jewish Observance
- Israel / Masorti
- Keruv
- Men's Club Shabbat
- Programming for Younger Men
- Shomrei Ha’aretz
- Synagogue Service Project
- World Wide Wrap
- Youth Programming
- Shoah Yellow Candle
- I’m not sure, select for our club
- Best Overall Activities** \*\*To apply for this award, please see specific instructions in “2015 Torch Award Overview,” available on FJMC website\*\*

### Section 4: Program overview

Brief Summary - Please explain your program in 2-3 sentences.

In 2014 Pew Research published an eye opening report “A Portrait of Jewish Americans”. The report was so controversial especially for the Conservative movement that we created a HMV series to discuss the ramification for our families and synagogue life and future. The HMV series focused on the Past, Present and Future of our community and engaged male members of our synagogue, our Board of Directors and members of the general Hartford community.

Detailed Summary - Please answer the following questions. Be as detailed as possible.

- What were the goals of your program? Are there specific problems or challenges that it addresses?
- How does your program enhance the image of FJMC, your region, and your club?

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- What is its value in building or strengthening your club?
- Who is your target audience? (i.e. congregation at large, chapter, community)?
- How does your program support FJMC's mission, Involving Jewish Men in Jewish Life?
- Describe the source of your program and its unique aspects. Is this an original program or an adaptation or enhancement of a previous program (if so, which one)?
- Please attach planning and marketing materials, as well as budgetary planning so the program can be replicated by other clubs.

The goals of this program was to find a way using the very successful HMV program format to engage our synagogue Men and our Synagogue Board of directors to openly discuss the challenges presented to the Conservative movement and our Temple's future as presented in the Pew Report.

To build credibility for this original program and as a source to run this program we engaged Leaders of the Conservative movement to help format the topic and suggest questions for each of the three parts of this program. Input was received from Rabbi Simon (FJMC Executive Director, Rabbi Paul Drazen (USJC), Rabbi Jim Rosen (Beth El Temple) and Rabbi Avi Platt (University of Hartford), Rabbi Kerry Olitzky, Big Tent Judaism and the Jewish Outreach Institute

The three session of this program Past, Present, and Future are included in detail below so other clubs could easily duplicate this program. What was most impressive was the broad range of community members that attended all three sessions. The level of sharing, personal experiences and visions what is and what could be were far greater than originally anticipated. The HMV format turned out to be perfect so that every voice could be heard. The larger goal was achieved where Members of our board of directors was able to take feedback from our sessions to share with the full board.

Before every HMV program we have a social Dinner of cold cuts or a breakfast depending on time of day. Providing a meal increases attendance at each program and creates a great social bonding opportunity for the participants.

Creating and running this program incorporated each of the focals of the FJMC.

**Leadership:** Beth El Temple Men's Club was the first and I believe only club to take the lead in bringing this very controversial topic to the local synagogue level.

**Innovation:** Finding a way to successfully use the HMV format to engage men to openly discuss a very timely topic.

**Community:** Created a topic that brought out synagogue men that never attended other HMV programs and successfully engaged Synagogue Board members that usually do not attend Men's Club functions. Successfully received input from respected leadership of the conservative movement.

### Session I The Past

Past is past; present is shifting; and we must prepare for an unpredictable future.

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This three part series will be a discussion is issues raised in the newly released Pew Report.

What's amazing is that 94% of those 6.7 million Jews are proud of being Jewish, 80% say it's an important part of their lives and 75% have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people.

### Discussion will include:

1. Perceived rise in intermarriage
2. Growing number of "none's"
3. Given the data-what does it mean to have a lowering of religious identity as a mark of Jewishness?
4. How do we get people to act constructively on the high levels of reported Jewish pride?
5. How do we understand the meaning of "spiritual but not religious"?
6. How to address the survey response of children that are not joining synagogues or affiliating.
7. What do we do to serve as Jewish examples to our kids, friends etc.?
8. How do we help our families and ourselves grow Jewishly?
9. What can we do to help support the unique parts of Jewish life that can give us support, hope and meaning?
10. What about the future of Conservative Judaism given the numbers including the lessening of denominational and institutional ties as a whole?
11. The most important word in all of this: community. (Forget prayer, God, etc.) Community and camaraderie is what the synagogue can (and always has) provided. Should we focus on community and where we fit into the broader community?
12. Relational Judaism: Using the power of relational Judaism to transform the Jewish community.

### Rules

**Talk about yourself not others**

**Be respectful of all in the group**

**Confidentiality: What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. With Hearing Men's voices what is discussed and shared in this room stays in this room**

**I have an issue of Pirkei Avos - Ethics of the Fathers. Only the person holding this great teaching is permitted to speak. After your turn pass to the person to your left.**

**Today we have too large of a circle for everyone to speak on each topic but if you have something pertinent to the topic to share and you did not share raise your hand.**

Briefly introduce yourself and why this topic is of interest to you.

### Discussion 1- Past is Past

Talking about how things used to be, which Pew report clearly documents.

The Judaism we grew up with. Can you share your memories of Jewish culture and practice you observed from your grandparents and parents?

What did our grandparents and parents do to serve as Jewish examples to us, our kids, friends etc.?

Based on what you observed and experienced how did it shape your Jewish journey -Share pros and cons, etc.

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Very few families observe at home what is taught in Hebrew School. How did that disconnect affect you and your belief system

How different were our communities in our grandparent and parents time than they when you grew up?

Do you remember your grandparents or parents discussing the topic of intermarriage and what message did that send to you?

Our generation experienced miraculous victories Israel had over its neighbors. Did living through these shared experiences effect your Jewish Pride?

Did your grandparents and parents speak or express feelings of Jewish Pride?

If you have traveled to Israel share how the experience changed your relationship with Israel and your Jewish journey. If you have not traveled to Israel share the reasons you have not made a commitment to do so?

Next session

### Session 2 the Present

The past is past; present is shifting; and we must prepare for an unpredictable future. This three part series will be a discussion is issues raised in the newly released Pew Report.

Discussion will include:

- a. Perceived rise in intermarriage
- b. Growing number of "none's"
- c. Given the data-what does it mean to have a lowering of religious identity as a mark of Jewishness?
- d. How do we get people to act constructively on the high levels of reported Jewish pride?
- e. How do we understand the meaning of "spiritual but not religious"?
- f. How to address the survey response of children that are not joining synagogues or affiliating.
- g. What do we do to serve as Jewish examples to our kids, friends etc.?
- h. How do we help our families and ourselves grow Jewishly?
- i. What can we do to help support the unique parts of Jewish life that can give us support, hope and meaning?
- j. What about the future of Conservative Judaism given the numbers including the lessening of denominational and institutional ties as a whole?
- k. The most important word in all of this: community. (Forget prayer, God, etc.) Community and camaraderie is what the synagogue can (and always has) provided. Should we focus on community and where we fit into the broader community?

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Briefly introduce yourself and why this topic is of interest to you.

### **Discussion 2- The present is now**

#### **The Home Today**

1. Talking about how things are today, The Judaism we grew up with. Can you share Jewish culture and practice your observance and practice in your home and share how you feel it resonates with your children.
2. How do we get people to act constructively on the high levels of reported Jewish pride? Do you actively speak about Jewish Pride and connection to Israel in your home and how does that make you feel? What more can we do?
3. Up to 200 years ago the rate of intermarriage in the Jewish community was very small to nonexistent. Do you discuss the topic of intermarriage with your children and how does it make you feel?
4. The Pew table illustrates the general decline in religious identification among Jews with increasing proportions of each generation claiming no religious affiliation. Given the data-what does it mean to have a lowering of religious identity as a mark of Jewishness and how does that make you feel?

Did you have an experience in your life where you felt like you reconnected with your Jewish roots? Can you share the experience and tell us how it made you feel?

#### **Synagogue Life**

Last month on Shabbat Rabbi Rosen discussed the concept that each of us represent a nation of priests and light unto the nations. How does this concept relate to you and how does that make your feel.

5. We learned that there are a lot more Jews in USA than we thought any idea on how to get them to affiliate with any Jewish movement? What can we offer the growing number of "nones" close to 31% (which is religious disaffiliation)? How does recognizing this growing trend make you feel?
6. How do you see the shift in Judaism, especially within the Conservative movement and how we observe this in our synagogues, our homes, and our extended family? What can we do today to change this Conservative downward trend?

The JCC is drawing younger families to their activities. Can you share from personal experience what is the attraction and how we can bring those attributes to the synagogue? How does that opportunity make you feel?

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How do we understand the meaning of "spiritual but not religious" and how does that make you feel?

Pew reports that decline in attendance at a Passover service from 78 to 70% and a decline in observance of the Yom Kipper from 60 to 53%. Are these numbers surprising? Should we be alarmed? How do these trends make you feel?

7. Any suggestions on how to address the survey response of children that are not joining synagogues or affiliating and how does your answer make you feel?

What was your reason in joining a synagogue and tell us how you feel if it is relevant to the younger generation?

### Community

Studies have shown that attendance at Jewish overnight camp and birthright are effective in creating a connection with our youth that follows into adulthood. How strongly do you feel that our community should do more to encourage participation in these programs and how does that make you feel?

Based on what you observed and experienced how did it shape your Jewish journey -Share pros and cons, etc.

### And for the tough questions:

What do we do to serve as Jewish examples to our kids, friends etc.?

What can we do to help support the unique parts of Jewish life that can give us support, hope and meaning?

The most important word in all of this: community. Forget prayer, God, etc. Community and camaraderie - that is what the synagogue can (and always has) provided. If the focus of the past, present, and future is on providing community (and figuring out where we fit into the broader community) we should be OK.

3 session discussion might involve past, present, and future orientation discussions. This is one suggestion

The second session could focus on how Judaism, especially within the Conservative movement has shifted and how we observe this in our synagogues, our homes, and our extended family. This would likely involve much more discussion about intermarriage and the decreased role many have chosen to play in organized religion, as seen in our ongoing struggle to involve younger men in FJMC.

A third session might look forward, much as in A Christmas Carol, thinking are these trends shades of things to come, or things which might be. How can we influence our children, family life, community, and the broader Conservative movement to ensure that the future is far less bleak than might be extrapolated from the Pew Report?

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Intermarried marriages performed by our rabbi's

Intermarried non Jewish spouse in the cemetery

What about the future of Conservative Judaism given the numbers including the lessening of denominational and institutional ties as a whole?

Can Technology help connect with the younger generation with the Jewish community? Can you give an example of something that worked and how it made you feel?

### Session 3 the Future

#### Pew Research - HMY session Part Three

#### The Future of our Jewish Community

### What Could Synagogues Look Like in 5 Years and Beyond?

#### Rules

Talk about yourself not others

Be respectful of all in the group

**Confidentiality:** What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. With Hearing Men's voices what is discussed and shared in this room stays in this room. The exception tonight is that if you hear concepts that resonate with you please share with synagogue leadership. Keep the names of contributors to this session confidential.

I have an issue of Pirkei Avos - Ethics of the Fathers. Only the person holding this great teaching is permitted to speak. After your turn pass to the person to your left.

Today we have too large of a circle for everyone to speak on each topic but if you have something pertinent to the topic to share please raise your hand.

Briefly introduce yourself

Share why this topic is of interest to you.

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According to the PEW Report the biggest change in our Jewish Community is the large and growing percent of our population that is intermarrying.

*Tonight we will follow an outline created by two of the most forward thinking leaders in the conservative movement. You do not have to agree with them and that is why our discussion tonight could be very insightful and heartfelt.*

*The leaders are: Rabbi Charles Simon, FJMC, and Rabbi Kerry Olitzky, Big Tent Judaism and the Jewish Outreach Institute. The issues which are raised are matters which need to be discussed within our community.*

Five-year benchmarks and beyond are quite commonly employed to measure the progress and success of initiatives. Were a Conservative synagogue 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.

As we discuss each issue briefly discuss your interpretation and how does it make you feel. We have a very big agenda so please try to keep your comments to 60 seconds on each topic.

These are the categories we will discuss provided time permits.

### **Synagogue Culture**

1. Disparaging interfaith remarks from the pulpit or in the pews will not be tolerated. Intermarried 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 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.

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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 or 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. This would include the ability to be buried in a designated interfaith section of a Jewish Cemetery.

### 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 (children of a Jewish father) 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.

### Summary

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15. After discussion all of the topics tonight summarize your views and how does it make your feel.

Program Planning / Timeline - Please provide a timeline of the key tasks, participants, and responsibilities required in order to make this program work. This may be provided as an inserted table or you may replace and insert as an embedded Excel spreadsheet. Please be as detailed as possible, so that other groups may replicate your success.

Task	Committee/Assignee	Due Date
Review with synagogue Rabbi	Program Chair	Program approval
Review with Temple Board Pres	Program Chair	Program approval
Have Temple Pres agree to invite male board members		
Review Temple Calendar confirm 3 open dates		Planning
Create each program flyer	Program Chair	60 days before Program
Reserve room for program	Program Chair	60 to 180 days before
Submit room layout	Program Chair	30 days before
Get Publicity into Temple bulletin	Program Chair	30 days before Program
Distribute flyer to Temple board	Program Chair	30 days before program
Two Temple wide email blasts	Program Chair	Two weeks before Prog. 3 days before program.
Rabbi announcement on Shabbat	Club President	Shabbat before program
Order food for program / optional	Program Chair	two days before

### Section 5: Certification

**I certify that my club has not won a Gold Torch Award for essentially the same program in a previous year.** (Previous silver and bronze winners in this category that submit an enhanced application only qualify to be considered for a Gold Torch award.)

Certification: Initials: \_\_\_\_MM\_\_\_\_

### Section 6: Pictures

**Sample of one of three program flyers below**

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See below Program flyer placed on Temple Bulletin Board, Temple topics mailed to congregants and used in E-mail blasts.

Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2014

# Hearing Men's Voices

Part II The Jewish Community Today

## Pew Research "Major Shift in Identity of U.S. Jews"

Intermarriage rate 71% among non-Orthodox Jews



### Attention - Beth El Men!

We invite you to join us for a program under the umbrella of the Federation Of Jewish Men's Clubs' (FJMC) Hearing Men's Voices series. Our discussion will center on the topic "**Shift in identity of U.S. Jews and what it means for our children and grandchildren**" and is the second of a 3-part

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series on this topic. The focus is where we are today. And, it will be an opportunity to “hear our voices,” yours and those of other guys. We’ll share stories, get some advice, and primarily enjoy the fellowship of one another. So come to talk or listen or both, to eat, schmooze, and learn something.

**Membership in Men’s Club is not required and this event is free. Includes dinner!**

**Place:** Beth El Temple, 2626 Albany Ave., West Hartford

**Time:** 7:00pm - 9:00pm (Dinner and introductions, minyan, program)

**Cost:** No Charge

**RSVP:** Joe Springut at 860-676-9878 or [dr.EyesJoe@gmail.com](mailto:dr.EyesJoe@gmail.com) by Jan. 19<sup>th</sup> (Contact Joe if you need a ride).



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**Picture not shown:**

**After dinner each attendee is asked to take their chair and form a circle to begin the HMV session.**

### Section 7: Video

If possible, we ask that you please create a 3-5 minute video describing your program. Feel free to be creative in your submission, but try to include the following components:

- brief introduction, including name and goal of the program
- how did you encourage participation in the program
- how did you make the program meaningful to participants
- impact of the program to your club, synagogue and community

**DO NOT ATTACH VIDEO TO THIS APPLICATION.** Files are to be uploaded directly to YouTube, named in the following format:

“FJMC Torch Awards 2015\_ChapterName\_ProgramName\_#”

**Please review detailed instructions in the document “2015 Torch Award Overview.”**

**\*\*REPLACE/INSERT YOUR VIDEO URL(S) HERE\*\***

Video will be provided upon request