

## Israel Discourse Advisory Committee

### Report to Board of Trustees

August 14, 2018

Meeting on July 16, the Israel Discourse Advisory Committee (IDAC) began its work for the new organizational year of 2018-19. It was noted that the committee will be doing so under the congregational leadership of a new president, Ziva Raney, and a new interim rabbi, John Franken, both of whom are now ex-officio members of IDAC. Committee Chair Norm Loewenthal noted that he would be meeting with Rabbi Franken the following day to brief him on the background, purposes and work to date of the committee. [That meeting has since taken place]. Norm indicated that he is also serving on the search committee for a new senior rabbi and that he would keep the goals of IDAC in the discussion of the synagogue's needs in this process.

Regarding the visit of Durham Mayor Steve Schewel and interested members of the City Council, IDAC continues to seek a major role in the planning and conduct of this important Israel-related event. The committee envisions a facilitated discussion, which should be open to a range of concerns that may be raised in the aftermath of the Council's resolution on "rejecting the militarization of our police force" and related matters. However, the current tentative schedule of an early August date for the visit was viewed as too soon in terms of the time needed to plan and to adequately articulate and publicize the purposes of the event. It was also seen as less than ideal in terms of summer vacation schedules and the fact that past president Steve Simon and IDAC Chair Norm Loewenthal will both be away at that time. Further, committee members felt that there is no particular urgency about holding the event as soon as early August. Late September, following the High Holy Days, was viewed as preferable.

Ziva indicated that she would ask Jennifer Rudinger to consult with the Mayor about possible dates in late September. She also said she would consult with Steve Simon about his perspectives on the meeting and, noting that Beth El Synagogue has made a similar invitation to the Mayor, with Beth El President Debbie Goldstein about holding a joint event (an alternative would be to publicize our event to Beth El members). The sense of the meeting was that IDAC could work on planning for the event when it next meets in late August.

Ziva explained the idea of creating a "sister synagogue" relationship with a Reform congregation in Israel, an idea advocated by Rabbi Josh Weinberg, President of ARZA. Such a relationship would be a way to support the Reform movement in Israel, to foster understanding about one another and one another's circumstances and concerns, to create learning opportunities for our youth, and to serve as a basis for travel programs to Israel. The committee responded positively to the idea, feeling that it would be problematic only if a proposed sister synagogue were in the occupied territories, but felt that more should be known about the program, including possible financial aspects, before proceeding. Information about the sister synagogue program can be found at <http://www.reform.org.il/Eng/Domim/Domim.asp>.

It was noted that the Federation course on Jewish Values and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is now being publicized in Judea's e-notices, with an indication that JRC is a co-sponsor (as approved by IDAC at its last meeting). The course will begin with an introductory session on September 27, with

the 12 course sessions of 2 ½ hours each extending from October 11 to May 9. The opportunity for Rabbi Franken to participate in the teaching of the course, as suggested by IDAC at its previous meeting, is included among the topics to be covered by the rabbinical transition committee. The Jewish Values course is one of a number of significant events, along with the Mayor's visit and Bruce Jentleson's "learning and reconciliation" course being planned through the Adult Education Committee, that should substantially enhance the level of thoughtful discourse on Israel-related matters in the coming year.

Concerning IDAC's earlier recommendation about member identification of Judea affiliation in public settings and documents, it was noted that the Board has not yet acted but that the sense of the recommendation was included in a message from Steve Simon to the congregation. Ziva indicated that she will be creating a working group to consider this issue in the broader context of member responsibilities in general (distinct from the responsibilities of those in leadership positions). The Board had not yet acted on the question of display of flags in the synagogue.

The committee will next meet as planned on August 28.

Submitted by Norm Loewenthal, Committee Chair