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**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What is Coloradans for the Common Good (Formerly CO IAF)?**

Coloradans for the Common Good (CCG) is a broad-based, non-partisan group of organizations affiliated with the national *Industrial Areas Foundation* (IAF), the oldest and largest community organizing network in the country with over sixty projects in the USA and overseas. For over forty years, IAF projects have been actively fighting for social justice in their local communities.

B’nai Havurah membership in Coloradans for the Common Good (CCG) supplements the generous acts of kindness and charitable activities of the Tikkun Olam committee. Seventeen B’nai members proposed membership in CCG to the Board of Trustees in 2017 under the Positioning B’nai policy. It was the first organization approved by the Board under this policy.

**Why the name Industrial Areas Foundation?**

The unusual name Industrial Areas Foundation came from the work of Saul Alinsky, the famous community organizer in the 1930s. Alinsky worked in the industrial areas of Chicago protecting workers from horrific conditions in meat-packing plants. From his work, the Foundation was established and the name was kept for historical reasons.

Each IAF project has its own name, manages its own organization, and determines which issues to address. For example, the Las Vegas IAF Project is called “Nevadans for the Common Good;” in Boston the IAF project is called “Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO);” and in Iowa it is called “A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy (AMOS).” In Colorado’s front range, the IAF organization is called Coloradans for the Common Good.

**Who belongs to Coloradans for the Common Good?**

CCG is comprised of diverse institutions and entities (churches, synagogues, community non-profits, neighborhood groups, teachers’ associations, etc.) – ***CCG is an organization of organizations***. A few examples of local organizations that are members of CCG are: NAACP Denver Branch, Calvary Baptist Church, Colorado Education Association, Denver Classroom Teachers Association, Jefferson County Education Association, Trinity Presbyterian in Arvada, Taking Neighborhood Health to Heart, Washington Park United Church of Christ, and many more.

**What is CCG’s agenda?**

CCG equips and trains ordinary people to act effectively for social justice. The partnership of religious congregations and civic organizations working together at a local level creates a new capacity for leadership development, resident-led action, and relationships across lines that often divide our communities.

In addition to a coalition working locally on social justice issues, Colorado IAF is committed to the ongoing training and development of leaders from member organizations to enable them to strengthen their own institutions. One-to-one relational meetings and meetings with small groups of our own members help engage our community and create a stronger congregation. B’nai Havurah already benefitted from this training at its 2016 and 2017 Board retreats and at several IAF sponsored leadership trainings since then.

**What are the issues CCG is addressing?**

The social action agenda for CCG is a product of its member organizations’ concerns. B’nai Havurah has established a Core Leadership Team of CCG-committed leaders who have heard the concerns of our membership and of others in the Denver metro area. Potential issues are presented to representatives from the entire CCG organization. Those leaders then vet the issues and decide whether to endorse them for joint action.

For example, in 2019, CCG actively and successfully engaged in the Denver Classroom Teachers Association contract negotiations and strike for changes in DPS’ compensation plan. In addition, CCG worked closely with a coalition of non-profit organizations to advocate for expanding workers’ rights as the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment considered and proposed changes to the Colorado Wage Order (minimum wage and overtime protections).

The social justice successes nationwide are also impressive. Three examples of the hundreds of victories by IAF projects are:

* Secured access to free pre-natal care for hundreds of uninsured pregnant women in Story County, Iowa, by initiating a partnership with Broadlawn Medical Center, Free Clinics of Iowa, and Des Moines University.
* Developed Project QUEST, a nationally recognized community-based economic development program serving San Antonio. It places unemployed and underemployed high school graduates in a supportive, long-term job training program for high-skill, high wage jobs available in San Antonio.
* Building on a four-year effort, Los Angeles IAF leaders and allies shaped, pushed for, and passed Measure M, raising $120 billion for rail, busses, and highways which will create thousands of jobs and make getting to work easier, particularly for underserved populations.

**What is Reconstructionist and/or Jewish about joining Coloradans for the Common Good?**

A major tenet of B’nai Havurah’s Statement of Principles is to **repair the world through social action**. An important way to act on that principle is to join with others taking action in the public sphere.

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) Tikkun Olam webpage specifically suggests “Ingredients to Synagogue Social Justice Initiatives” that are consistent with participation in CCG. The following are a few selected points from its webpage:

* Social justice work is done with a *partner agency* (usually non-profit and community based) that is experienced with the problem and/or population the synagogue is intending to work with.
* *Training* is provided for leaders on building strong partnerships.
* Partners are *large* and *diverse* enough to meet your need.
* Volunteers have opportunities to engage in *advocacy efforts* to change public policy.

Reconstructionist and other Jewish congregations and institutions in other cities are members of their respective local IAF projects.

**Why did B’nai Havurah join CCG?**

As the first Denver Metro Jewish congregation to join, B’nai Havurah has the ability to attract congregants to whom social action matters. Recommendations from a study done by eJewishPhilanthropy in 2016 noted that younger Jewish people want to “partner with other community organizations (outside of the Jewish community), especially those with a social justice agenda.” *(Rabbi Kerri M. Olitsky, “Millennial Engagement in the Jewish Community,” October 25, 2016, EJP).*

Many existing B’nai Havurah members are attracted to CCG principles because of their alignment with our mission to pursue social justice, the broad diversity of member organizations, the wide range of social justice issues, and the internal leadership training offered. We bring our honor (kavod) as we represent B’nai Havurah to the greater Colorado community and lend our education, expertise, and time to help others.

**Who are members from B’nai Havurah who actively support CCG?**

Jennifer Ades

Hal & Risa Aqua

Gail benEzra

Glenn & Susan Cooper

Richard Fantel

Sharon Haber

Pat Madsen

Maggie Miller

Felice & John Morel

Shauna Morgan-Sherman

Liane Morrison

Dan Recht

Elizabeth & Bernard Reder

Debbie Reinberg

Barry Rosenberg

Zeik Saidman

Elaine Selsberg

Janet Sherman

Barbara Shindell

Paul Simon

Alana Smart

Barbara Borow Stephens

Allan Wallis

Marilyn & Talia Winokur

**How can I participate and/or donate?**

All interested congregants can lend their expertise and time to projects and actions as they meaningfully engage and re-engage with the community. Whether to participate, in what role, and for how much time is an individual member’s decision. Through our Positioning B’nai Social Justice policy, checks payable to B’nai Havurah can be designated for “social justice” or specifically for “Coloradans for the Common Good.”

For more information: [www.cocommongood.org](http://www.cocommongood.org) or contact: [marilyn@winokur.com](mailto:marilyn@winokur.com) or [zeiks@aol.com](mailto:zeiks@aol.com)