



**WOMEN ^{OF}
REFORM JUDAISM**

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) strengthens the voice of women worldwide and empowers them to create caring communities, nurture congregations, cultivate personal and spiritual growth, and advocate for and promote progressive Jewish values.

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Introduction

Dear Friends,

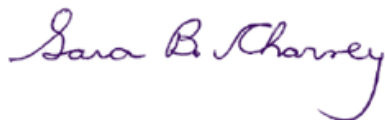
As outlined in this annual report, Women of Reform Judaism's strong network of tens of thousands of members continues to empower women and communities through our pillars of **sisterhood, spirituality, and social justice**.

Throughout fiscal year 2023 (July 1, 2022-July 30, 2023), our organization remained dedicated to advancing our principles through our diverse array of programs, initiatives, and advocacy efforts. Whether through our cultural mission to Israel, our district conventions, or our successful social justice fundraising campaign, WRJ is advancing what it means to be a part of our organization for years to come.

Looking forward, WRJ will facilitate future missions to Israel, regional and local YES Fund events, opportunities for new leadership, and will propose updates to our constitution that will expand the diversity and inclusivity of our membership. We are most looking forward to the **Fried Women's Conference** in May 2024 in New Orleans, our first in-person North American conference since 2019.

Last year, we said a bittersweet farewell to our executive director of more than 11 years, Rabbi Marla J. Feldman, and welcomed Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch to fill the role in July 2023. Rabbi Hirsch will be installed into her position during the Fried Women's Conference in May. At the same time, Sara will conclude a transformative three years of leading WRJ's North American Board. As we reflect on the achievements of the past year, we are inspired by the dedication and passion of our members, volunteers, and supporters. Together, we will continue to work toward a more just, equitable, and compassionate world.

In gratitude,



Sara Charney
WRJ President



Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch
WRJ Executive Director



Sisterhood



In spring 2023, WRJ's seven districts hosted regional district conventions, which brought together hundreds of women, sisterhoods, and individual members for workshops, worship, learning, and time to connect. This was the first in-person event for many WRJ members after the COVID-19 pandemic, and being together in sisterhood created new, lasting memories.

All district conventions included guest speakers, WRJ executive committee members, and a WRJ staff member to represent the North American organization. Each district convention had its unique set of highlights and theme, and all installed new district leadership and celebrated outgoing officers. WRJ is so grateful to support new and existing leadership.

Another meaningful event that is woven through each district convention is the opportunity to raise significant funds for WRJ's philanthropic arm, **the YES Fund**. The philanthropy team, in partnership with the district vice presidents of development, district YES Fund chairs, and district convention YES Fund chairs, planned a special YES Fund gathering at each convention.

Each group viewed a **dynamic, updated YES Fund video**, met and heard the stories of YES Fund grantees, honored those who completed YES Fund Lifelines, and recognized sisterhoods that made notable contributions to the Fund.

Hundreds of women throughout these weekends stepped up to support WRJ's YES Fund. WRJ received more than \$170,000 in new YES Fund Lifeline pledges, and additional donations to the YES Fund totaled more than \$50,000. WRJ thanks all those who donated to these initiatives and celebrates those who completed their Lifeline journey.

One of WRJ's core pillars is sisterhood: empowering Reform Jewish women to find strength, joy, and connection in their communities. Our districts represent tens of thousands of sisters throughout North America, **ensuring a vibrant future for Reform Judaism**. District conventions served as an opportunity to showcase the strength of active and engaged members, working together while opening their tent to include all those who want to learn about leadership, social justice, and further their Jewish connection.

Spirituality

In May 2023, WRJ led our “Off the Beaten Path” Israel Mission. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, WRJ’s favorite Israel tour guide, Shari Robins, led participants through virtual tours. She researched, studied, and visited remote sites to take photos and shoot fascinating videos to augment her spiritual and educational words. We were excited, however, to finally see the sites in person once it was safe to travel.

The one-week trip included tours through the mystical city of Tsfat, the Ralli Museum in Ceasarea, the Dead Sea, lunch at HUC-JIR’s Jerusalem campus, a visit to Leo Baeck Education Center in Haifa, cultural sites in Tel Aviv, and more. One of the highlights of the trip was Kabbalat Shabbat services at Shoham Reform Congregation, where services were led by Rabbi Rinat Tzfanian-Schwartz. We were greeted with hugs from the rabbi as the congregation welcomed us into their community. After services, we were split into groups to have dinner with different families from the synagogue to better understand the Reform Jewish experience of Israelis. Participants found many similarities to our North American Jewish experience, such as families joining together for Shabbat dinner and attending Friday night services. Despite the language barrier, it was still Shabbat and we were able to participate in the service and worship together.



Prior to this Israel Mission, WRJ convened our [Wilkenfeld International Women’s Leadership Seminar](#) in conjunction with the World Union for Progressive Judaism’s Connections Conference. The seminar’s goal is to bring together Reform, Liberal, and Progressive Jewish women from around the world who are interested in developing successful strategies for making a difference, learning the power of ‘why’ and the importance of ‘how,’ and taking on leadership roles in their home communities. Continued thanks to WRJ Past President Dolores K. Wilkenfeld for making this seminar possible.

Over the course of two intensive days together, we dug deep, looked for our “why,” talked about identifying partners and overcoming obstacles, and formed a community of women. We laughed, we cried, we danced, we prayed, and we joined in serious leadership development.

A welcoming environment where all members **can embrace their connection to Judaism** is what grounds us in our mission of enriching spiritual growth. Looking toward our [Fried Women’s Conference 2024](#), WRJ staff and lay partners are working diligently to make sure this environment exists for all participants.



Social Justice



Throughout the year, social justice remained a top priority for WRJ. Following the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* SCOTUS decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, WRJ members continued to protest the decision and focus their attention on participating in reproductive freedom campaigns throughout the states. In 2023, WRJ worked with Religious Action Center-Ohio (RAC-OH) to **protect the right to abortion**. WRJ mobilized our network of women around issues of concern, and sisterhoods and women's groups held postcarding parties throughout North America to contribute to the campaign. WRJ's work on the state level through state advocacy expanded in 2023, in no small part thanks to engaging a Women of Reform Judaism Legislative Assistant at the Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism to provide advocacy support and better serve as connective tissue between WRJ and the RAC. WRJ continued to issue statements, create resource guides, and amplify action steps regarding our top priority issues, like [The Path Forward on Abortion.](#)

Other projects such as [WRJ says STOP: An Initiative Against Sexual Harassment and Assault](#) continued its work from 2022. This initiative was created as a result of concluded investigations into reports of egregious cases of sexual harassment, abuse, and misconduct in three of the Reform Movement's institutions. The initiative included a series of educational webinars that demonstrate that sometimes, despite our best efforts, we inflict harm on others, intentionally or not. The series provides steps to create spaces of respect and safety. WRJ organized and ran [the third WRJ says Stop webinar](#) in the series, a powerful presentation that included Dr. Guila Benchimol and Dr. Alissa Ackerman (Amperstands Restorative Justice). We are looking ahead to not only the fourth and final webinar in the initiative's series, on how to continue having conversations around sexual harassment and assault in our own Jewish communities to change and improve our environment, but where we take the WRJ says STOP content after the close of this initial series.

Later in the year, WRJ re-envisioned its Incubator Grants as "[Microgrants](#)," with rolling acceptance of applications and a broader scope of funding obtained. These funds allowed WRJ to open these grants to support not only engagement, but social justice endeavors by WRJ-affiliated sisterhoods and women's groups. This contribution and dedication expanded WRJ's current grant-making capacity to our women's groups and districts, bringing more of a focus to and opportunity for social justice programming.

Thanks to the generous support of WRJ lifetime board member Joanne B. Fried, WRJ will hold the Rabbi Marla J. Feldman Social Justice Conference in spring 2025. This conference follows the successful [2019 Social Justice Conference](#), which brought together hundreds of participants to learn, worship, and advocate for women's priority issues. Our 2025 conference will introduce participants to a variety of public policy issues, educate them about the Jewish values that shape WRJ's advocacy work, and build upon WRJ's continued social justice legacy.

Change in WRJ Leadership

Rabbi Marla J. Feldman & Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch

After over a decade of service to Women of Reform Judaism, Rabbi Marla J. Feldman retired as executive director on June 30, 2023.

When announcing Rabbi Feldman's retirement, WRJ President Sara Charney offered heartfelt remarks: "In these past ten years, Rabbi Feldman has made a mark on every aspect of WRJ's work. She has been an inspiring leader, a friend and colleague, and a mentor to many of us. In the months ahead, we will have several opportunities to celebrate her leadership. While we won't be saying farewell for many months, I know Marla will be deeply missed."

During her tenure, Rabbi Feldman helped WRJ reimagine the organization's mission statement and governance policies, adopt a new strategic plan, reshape and expand the staff complement, stabilize and strengthen the financial infrastructure, redesign communications and branding, and deepen WRJ's relationships with our Reform Movement partners.

WRJ celebrated Rabbi Feldman's career and retirement in April 2023 with a celebration dinner and special concert. That event also acted as the culmination of a social justice fund campaign, raising \$1.1 million in honor of her service. WRJ has since renamed the fund, "[The Rabbi Marla J. Feldman Social Justice Fund](#)" to honor Rabbi Feldman's commitment to this cause and allow us to continue to engage women in the pursuit of justice.

Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch was selected to be the next executive director beginning on July 5, 2023. Rabbi Hirsch previously served as rabbi of Temple Anshe Amunim, a Reform synagogue in Pittsfield, MA. She is the founding co-chair of RAC-Massachusetts, a statewide synagogue-based community organizing project of Reform Judaism, and a key leader in the 2020 campaign to pass the ROE Act, safeguarding reproductive rights in Massachusetts. She will formally be installed in her position at the Fried Women's Conference in May 2024, in addition to the installations of WRJ's new incoming president, executive committee, and board of directors.

WRJ is lucky to have such innovative, thoughtful leaders to have led us since our centennial and who will now lead us into the future.



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We thank the donors below for their generous contributions, who gave in FY 22-23. We could not have successfully implemented WRJ's mission without your help.

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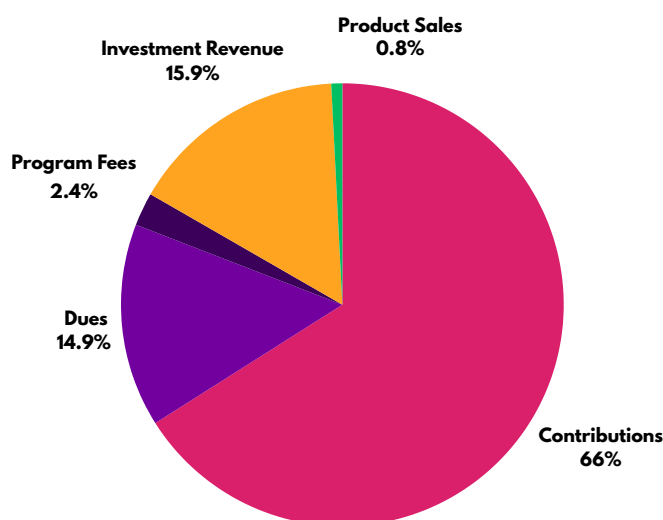
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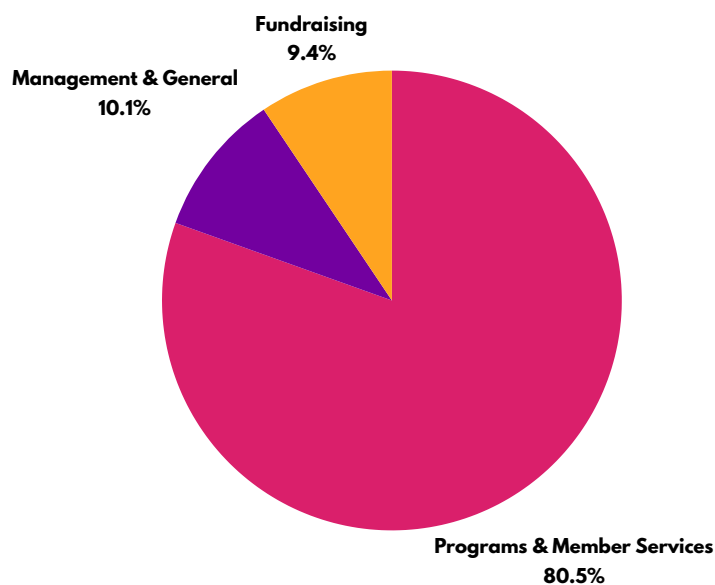
FINANCIALS

Below is an overview of the 2023 financials. To learn more, [download a thorough financial statement.](#)

Revenues



Expenses



Net Assets

