



**WOMEN ^{OF}
REFORM JUDAISM**

2024

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,

Throughout fiscal year 2024, we continued our legacy of creating a more caring and just world, empowering women to live their fullest lives in a Jewish context, and finding value and meaning in our personal and communal expressions of faith.

Our community changed forever following the attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023, and our efforts to stand up against sexual violence, support survivors, and continue our call for the return of the hostages has remained steadfast. WRJ, in partnership with the Women's Rabbinic Network, led a feminist mission to Israel in February for North American leaders to show solidarity with our Israeli partners and bear witness to the attacks.

We were so excited to gather once again in person at the Fried Women's Conference in May in New Orleans. Nearly 350 participants gathered for the four-day event that included moving worship services led by musician-in-residence Elana Arian, spotlights of our YES Fund grantees, and innovative programming.

Shortly following the conference, our Legislative Body convened to review constitutional amendments and adopt two critical resolutions—one addressing reproductive health care access in the wake of Dobbs, and the other exploring the intersection of gun violence and domestic violence. We voted to expand our membership parameters to include anyone who identifies as female, nonbinary, or genderfluid and all who identify as Jewish or have a commitment to the Jewish community. Keeping in line with our efforts to promote gender equity, we also voted to change the title of the staff's most senior position to CEO. WRJ continues to strive to be an inclusive organization, and we know this requires reflection on our beliefs, practices, and the evolving needs of our members and groups.

Looking forward, we are excited to bring advocates from around the world to the [Rabbi Marla J. Feldman Social Justice Conference](#) in April 2025 in Washington, D.C. This conference will also feature our Women's Empowerment Awards, honoring true hometown heroes who embody social justice within their communities, and the presentation of our Jane Evans Pursuit of Justice Award, WRJ's highest honor.

In many ways, last year was a wake-up call for the Jewish community, yet it showed how resilient our membership is, even in moments of despair. We continue to be inspired by our communities, volunteers, and supporters. Together, we will continue the necessary work in creating a more equitable and compassionate world for all.

In gratitude,



Karen Sim
WRJ President




Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch
WRJ Chief Executive Officer



Sisterhood

The mainstay of WRJ for over 111 years has been the power of sisterhood. This year, our membership boldly embraced the evolving landscape of Reform Judaism, affirming that there is more than one way to be Jewish—just as there is more than one way to define gender. In a powerful act of inclusivity, WRJ delegates banded together at the June 2024 Legislative Body meeting, amending our constitution to best reflect the diversity of our current and future WRJ members and leaders, and to **expand our membership and leadership eligibility**. Additionally, in alignment with our commitment to gender equity, the Legislative Body voted to elevate the title of the organization's senior-most staff person from **Executive Director to Chief Executive Officer**.



Across North America, WRJ members gathered for transformative events, strengthening connections while uplifting WRJ's mission. Central to many of these events has been our philanthropic work, particularly the YES (Youth, Education, and Special Projects) Fund, which continues to drive meaningful change in our communities and the world. Over the past year, more than 25 YES Fund events were held across local sisterhoods, all seven WRJ districts, and North American platforms. They brought together hundreds of individuals who engaged in programs, while raising critical funds for the YES Fund that will amplify WRJ's impact on the future of the Jewish community.



These events ranged from Rosh Hashanah bake sales and film screenings to events honoring longtime sisterhood members and congregational leaders, Area Days, gatherings at URJ camps, and leadership retreats.

Sisterhood

YES Fund event highlights included:

- Featuring YES Fund grantees like HUC-JIR rabbinical students, speakers from the LUNAR Collective — the only organization by and for Asian American Jews— and Israeli grantees who spoke about the changes in Israel since the start of the war.
- In October 2023, WRJ's Pacific District held its annual leadership weekend at URJ Camp Kalsman. Bringing together nearly 50 women for a weekend of sisterhood, learning, and programming, they raised \$6,700 for WRJ's YES Fund, including the start of **two new YES Fund Lifelines**.
- In March 2024, WRJ's Southwest District hosted its **YES Fund Heal the World Event**, which brought together six sisterhoods across the Dallas-Fort Worth area of Texas. Guests heard from WRJ's Director of Philanthropy, Shari Schulner, as well as the granddaughter of one of WRJ's Board Members who was in Israel during the attacks.
- At the **Fried Women's Conference 2024 in New Orleans**, WRJ's flagship event, we hosted a dynamic YES Fund lunch that featured YES Fund grantees from around the world and pinned 20 new Lifelines. As a result of that luncheon, we received more than 160 individual donations and 40 new pledges, raising more than \$200,000 for our philanthropic arm.



We are deeply grateful to each leader, volunteer, and participant who devoted their time, energy, and resources to organizing these important gatherings. Each event has played a vital role in strengthening the voice of women worldwide.

We join together, in sisterhood, to learn from one another, to enhance our Jewish experience, and to participate in *tikkun olam*, enabling WRJ to provide hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants each year. With your support, we look forward to building on this foundation and continuing to reach new heights in the year ahead.

Spirituality

In a year marked by profound pain in the Jewish world, WRJ leaned into the strength of spirituality to connect us, uplift us, and bring us hope.

Following the tragic attacks on October 7, 2023, [Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch wrote a prayer for the captive women and children who were taken that day.](#) With help from our partners at the World Union for Progressive Judaism and the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism, this prayer has been translated into Spanish, Hebrew, Russian, German, and Ukrainian, extending its reach to communities around the world. WRJ continues to provide resources on how to best support Israel during this time.

Knowing the transformative power of healing texts within our tradition, WRJ called for submissions for the new ***Covenant of Justice: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations from Women of Reform Judaism***, to be co-published with CCAR Press. This long-awaited spiritual publication marks WRJ's first Covenant book in over a decade and will feature original, inspirational prayers and readings written by WRJ members, students, and clergy. Submissions were guided by themes that reflect the intersections of Jewish tradition, identity, and social justice, including *tikkun olam*, solidarity and allyship, intersectionality, antisemitism, equity, LGBTQ+ inclusion, racial justice, and reproductive rights.



WRJ is excited to debut the new Covenant book at the Rabbi Marla J. Feldman Social Justice Conference, April 4-7, 2025, in Washington D.C. We extend gratitude to WRJ Past Presidents Susan C. Bass, Lynn Magid Lazar, and Blair C. Marks, whose generosity, vision, and leadership helped make this project possible.

Spirituality was woven throughout the entirety of WRJ's Fried Women's Conference, creating moments of deep connection and meaning. Our musician-in-residence, Elana Arian, collaborated with our service leaders and our choir to create beautiful Shabbat services, blending traditional melodies with her own contemporary compositions. Their work infused Shabbat services with beauty and spirit. We also heard moving *divrei Torah* from Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch and Karen Sim, both of whom were formally installed in their positions (WRJ's CEO and WRJ President) during the conference.

Spirituality

For Morgan Helfman, a new Board Member and first-time attendee to the flagship event, the experience was profoundly moving. She described struggling to put into words the meaningful connection she felt to her Jewish faith throughout the conference, noting one particularly powerful moment: the Saturday morning service when the attendees all linked arms and danced to Miriam's Song as Elana played the guitar—a celebration of both joy and sisterhood.



Saturday morning services also included the installation of the new North American Board. WRJ past, current, and incoming presidents were invited to pass the Torah. Three Torah readers — Laurel Fisher, Ally Karpel, and Karen Goldberg — beautifully chanted the week's Torah portion while representing the transition of power; outgoing board members, incoming board members, and incoming executive committee members, respectively. The power of spirituality made this l'dor v'dor (from generation to generation) moment even more meaningful.

As we navigate an ever-changing world, WRJ remains steadfast in its commitment to spiritual connection, Jewish tradition, and the pursuit of justice. In joy and in sorrow, we continue to find strength in one another and in the sacred work we do together.



Social Justice

Deeply committed to the principle of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), WRJ upholds social justice as a fundamental pillar of our mission. This year, we championed numerous initiatives that support this value, including defending voting rights, advancing reproductive freedom, strengthening our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and lending our collective voice to advocate for urgent and worthy causes.

In partnership with the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC), WRJ co-sponsored the Every Voice, Every Vote campaign, empowering our communities through education, outreach, and activism. At the WRJ Fried Women's Conference, we facilitated educational opportunities and hosted postcard-writing initiatives, urging civil engagement. We also continued our collaboration and partnerships with RAC-FL and RAC-NY on their crucial ballot initiative campaigns and elevated our advocacy efforts with WRJ members in Arizona, reinforcing our unwavering commitment to reproductive health and rights.

While gathered for FWC, WRJ also offered a wide range of panels and social justice workshops designed to inspire and equip attendees with the tools to drive meaningful change. These sessions showcased expert speakers, examined the evolving landscape of key issues, and provided concrete ways to take action on the local, state, and District levels. Notable sessions included:

- A panel on diversity and Jewish women's leadership featuring Analucía Lopezrevoredo (Jewtina y Co.), Elizabeth Mandel (jGirls+ Magazine), Lindsey Newman (Be'chol Lashon), and Cheryl Cook (Avodah)
- A panel on the Jewish role in the Civil Rights Movement in the South, with insights from Yolanda Savage-Narva (Union for Reform Judaism), Reverend Dr. Herbert A. Brisbon III (Dillard University), Lenora Costa (Longue Vue House & Gardens), and Kenneth Hoffman (Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience)



Social Justice



Throughout the conference, attendees engaged in deep discussions on crucial topics including antisemitism, reproductive rights and justice, climate justice, immigration, paid leave, gender-based gun violence, feminist frameworks for community building, Jewish diversity, inclusive language, disability and accessibility, and Israel.

At our June Legislative Body meeting, WRJ passed two resolutions: **Preventing Gun Violence Against Women** and **Reaffirming our Commitment to Reproductive Rights Post-Dobbs**. We are proud to have passed such timely and relevant as well as everlasting and consistently poignant resolutions, along with their associated action roadmaps. Through these guides, constituents can engage with our two 2024 resolutions through individual and group actions.

In response to three significant U.S. Supreme Court decisions at the end of the June 2024 term, WRJ and the RAC released several statements. Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch and Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner **applauded the rejection of the challenge to medication abortion, commended the restriction of guns from domestic abusers, and responded to the Idaho v. United States decision regarding emergency abortion care**. Together, WRJ and the RAC continue to mobilize Jewish communities across the country to advocate for abortion access and protection.

While we pray that there will be a time that this work is not necessary, we know that our dedication to social justice is vital in creating a more just and compassionate world for all.

Just For This:

A New Podcast

Launched in March 2024 by Women of Reform Judaism, Just For This is a weekly podcast that inspires women in leadership to talk about women and leadership. Hosted by Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch, CEO of WRJ, Just For This is committed to sharing powerful stories of women who stand out in their fields.

The name, Just For This, comes from the story of Purim. When Queen Esther can see that the Jewish people of Persia are in danger under Haman's direction, she turns to her uncle Mordechai for advice. He responds, "Who knows, maybe it is **just for this** moment that you find yourself in a position of leadership?"

Esther then proceeds to tell her husband, the king, to save the Jews from this persecution and ultimately saves her people.

Each week, Rabbi Hirsch asks her guests to share their "just for this" moment. When did they find themselves in the right moment, in the right place, at the right time to step up to lead?

Season 1 included guests such as **Rabbi Andrea Weiss**, Ph.D., Provost and Associate Professor of Bible at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion; author **Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg**; **Dr. Cochav Elkayam-Levy**, founder of the Civil Commission on Oct. 7th Crimes by Hamas against Women and Children; and **Tiffany Harris**, Chief Program Officer at Moishe House.

We also had a live recording of an episode with **Rebecca Soffer**, best-selling author and co-founder of Modern Loss, at WRJ's Fried Women's Conference in New Orleans in June 2024.

Listen wherever you get your podcasts. New episodes launch Mondays at 12:00 p.m. ET.



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We thank the donors who gave in FY 23-24, below, for their generous contributions. We could not have successfully implemented WRJ's mission without your help.

\$10,000+

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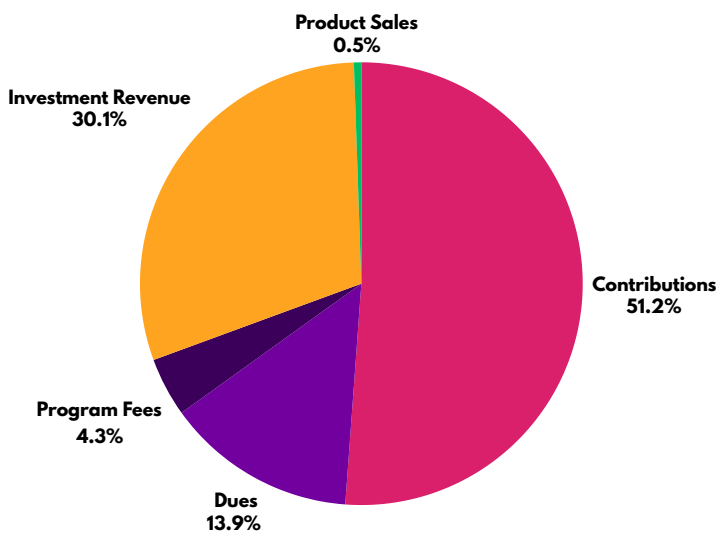
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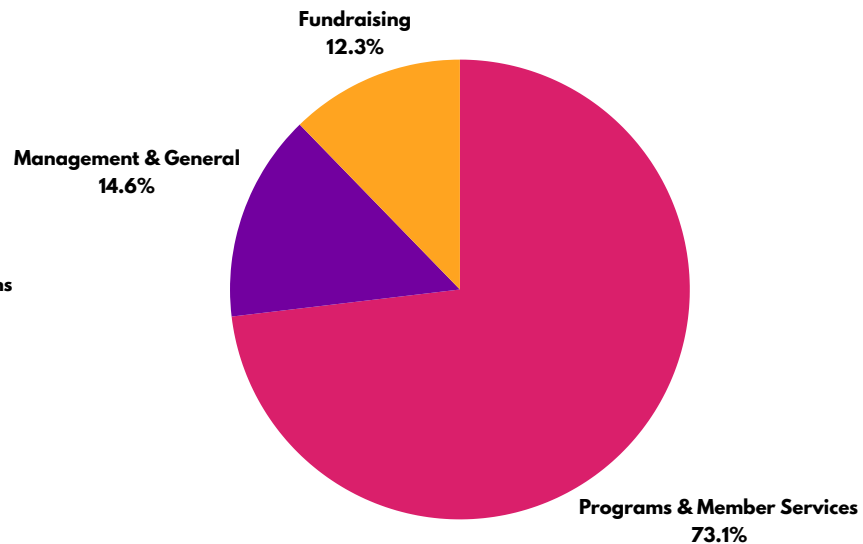
FINANCIALS

Below is an overview of the 2024 financials. To learn more, [download a thorough financial statement.](#)

Revenues



Expenses



Net Assets

