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Shabbat Evening Programming

Every Friday, Reform Jews around the country gather for Shabbat. We offer prayers for healing and say Kaddish, honoring the lives lost and the memories of people we miss. These moments, and throughout the service, offer opportunities to address the epidemic of gun violence in our country. Especially as a Reform Jewish community who is invested in gun violence prevention, here are some ways to address gun violence on Shabbat:

1. Host a “Gun Violence Prevention” Shabbat. Include readings and poems related to gun violence prevention throughout the shabbat worship (some references and suggestions are at the bottom of the page).
2. Use the Shabbat D’var Torah or Sermon as an opportunity to discuss Gun Violence Prevention.
3. Host a Shabbat Dinner for the community and have a speaker or community discussion on the topic of Gun Violence Prevention.
4. Have a signmaking station available before or after Shabbat Services with Jewish texts as inspiration for signs that can be hung up around the building or carried during a local march.
5. Consider collecting tzedakah for the families of the victims of gun violence in your community.
6. Offer a way to take action, like writing postcards, or handing out call-in guides to help your community contact their elected officials.

Resources

Check out this article from the Union for Reform Judaism with some additional ways to have a [Gun Violence Prevention Shabbat](#).

[Rabbis Against Gun Violence](#) has put together a resource packet that includes prayers, readings, songs, and sermon starters.

[Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence](#) has also compiled a large list of resources to help plan a Shabbat service.



The Religious Action Center pursues social justice and religious liberty by mobilizing the Reform Jewish community and serving as its advocate in Washington, D.C. The Center is led by the Commission on Social Action of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union for Reform Judaism (and its affiliates) and is supported by the congregations of the Union.



Working with Local Organizers to Plan Marches and Events

Each event or march is unique and will differ in terms of size and sponsor. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for the local Reform Jewish community to engage with the local organizers to amplify the power of citywide marches, protests, and gatherings.

To find the organizers of a local event, find what page set up the local Facebook event and message the creators of the event or the page itself. Check your friends in common and see if anyone could introduce you.

When you are getting in touch with the organizers, let them know about what your plans are to program around the event, and consider asking some of these questions. While not all questions may be applicable to what your community is interested in doing, you might want to discuss what type of public-facing action you want to do and work to make that happen.

1. Can organizations (specifically religious organizations) co-sponsor the event? What would that mean for you, your congregation, or organization (logo, speaking role, responsibility for costs, etc.)?
2. Is there an opportunity for representatives from different religious communities to speak? Would they let a rabbi or youth leader from the Jewish community share a few words at a rally or the speaking portion of the event about why, as Jews, we are marching?
3. Would the event leadership team publicize our Shabbat Service or program?
4. Can we put our logo as a synagogue on official branding for the event?
5. Are there any aspects of the event that we can help with? Maybe volunteer coordination, a first aid station, etc.?

Let them know you're coming and that you are excited to be part of the local efforts to prevent gun violence. Building these relationships now will help the Reform Jewish community be a continuing partner in local efforts against gun violence and can help build a coalition for future successes.

Morning of A March Gathering Tips

On March 24, 2018 our movement came together and did what we do best — used our Jewish values to bring about change. Led by the power of our youth leaders, Reform Jews took part in the national March for Our Lives on Washington, D.C. and over 75 sister marches, echoing our attendance as a NFTY contingent at the March on Washington in 1963.

Now past and present NFTYites and synagogues are organizing their communities everywhere from Nashville to London to address gun violence. Here are a few pointers for a successful pre-march or event gathering with your local Jewish community.

Sign Making

Clever and meaningful signs are a key aspect of any successful protest. If you are representing a Jewish organization or other nonprofit, be sure your sign isn't partisan — supporting or denouncing one political party or the other. Nonprofit organizations can be political, but have to be careful not to be partisan. Here are some pointers for Jewish signs at events:

- “Tzedek, tzedek, tzirdof—Justice, justice, you shall pursue!” — Deuteronomy 16:20
- “Praying with our feet” — Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, referencing his comment that he felt “my legs were praying,” on the Selma March with Dr. King
- “A righteous person falls down seven times and GETS UP!” — Proverbs, 24:16
- “I don't speak because I have the power to speak; I speak because I don't have the power to remain silent.” — Rabbi A.Y. Kook
- “If I am not for me, who is for me; and if I am (only) for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” — Hillel, Pirkei Avot, 1:14
- “Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God” — Micah 6:8
- “Do Justice, Love Mercy, March Proudly” based on Micah 6:8

Non-denominational sign ideas:

- Too cool for guns in school!
- Our leaders will change our laws, or we will change our leaders.
- I can't even fit my outrage on this sign.
- VOTE.
- From [“15 March for Our Lives Sign Ideas for Kids Who Are Ready to Change the World”](#)
 - Protect Kids, Not Guns
 - “Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some time. We are the ones we've been waiting for.” — Barack Obama
 - No More Massacres
 - “I Am Stronger Than Fear” — Malala Yousafzai
 - We've had ENOUGH!
 - Change is coming!

- From, [“15 Quotes For March for Our Lives Signs That Are Incredibly Powerful”](#)
 - “We Call BS” — Emma González
 - Fear Has No Place In Our Schools
 - Now IS the time to talk about guns.
 - Never Again.
 - This is not normal.
 - Disarm Hate
 - Am I Next?
 - Power to the People!

Food

Make sure you coordinate with your staging location to ensure that there is enough breakfast food for event goers. This would entail taking RSVPs prior to the event, in order to gain a rough estimate of the amount of food that must be provided. You can reach out to local restaurants to see if they will sponsor your pre-event, or see if a donor or volunteer would buy and pick up food for you.

Photo booth

If possible, create some type of backdrop for a makeshift photobooth! People can snap pictures with their friends, holding 8x11 signs that all give a different response to the typed, “I March Because _____.” Post pictures with the hashtags #JewsDemandAction and #NeverAgain.

Marketing Your Local Event

Almost as important as the logistical coordinating with local gun violence prevention organizers is marketing your efforts to your congregation and your community. Effective marketing will make sure your event feels organized, will generate awareness of your efforts, and will motivate individuals and groups to be advocates for gun violence prevention.

Creating an Interest Form

Creating a simple interest form, using a platform such as Google Forms, will allow you to keep tabs on who from your community is interested. The form works to generate interest and can also help you test ideas and gain logistical information you may need. Making sure your Interest Form is effective requires you to think through your goals and the questions you are asking. The form should have three parts.

1. **Demographics:** Get name, contact info, occupation or grade, location, school, etc. Also ask if respondents want to help with organizing march efforts or if they are just interested in attending the march and related programming, as well as what their current plans for the march may be.
2. **Test ideas and gather logistical info:** If you have 500 seats and are worried you may not have enough space to hold a program before the march, you can ask respondents if they are interested in attending a program to better gauge whether or not you are able to fit everyone. You can also test ideas you may have, such as asking “Would you be interested in a community debrief the Sunday after the march?”
3. **Opt-In for More Updates:** This is where individuals can select to receive more updates. You can create a contact list of everyone who wants to stay up-to-date and send out emails to all those interested, keeping them up to speed on your efforts or future events.

Marketing the March

Start by creating a flyer and try to incorporate a hashtag. Chances are someone in your community or congregation, especially young people, has a knack for graphic design. Reach out and see if they are interested in helping you create the image! Once it is created, you can use it everywhere:

Print it out:

- Print it out and put it in physical locations around your synagogue or school
- Send it out in any community mailings
- Put it in prayer book inserts

Post online:

- Post it on all forms of social media accompanied by a brief description of what you are planning, asking people to share the post, and use the hashtag.
- You can also create a Facebook event or Eventbrite event, which can be used to gain a better sense of your community’s interest and include the link to the event in your posts.
- Incorporate your community into the posts as frequently as possible. Ask people in your congregation why they plan on marching and include their quotes.
- Share stories within your community that may be relevant to gun violence prevention.

A successful marketing strategy requires you to make your message visible in as many places as possible, as frequently as possible! For more information on creating a successful marketing campaign, please visit:

<https://urj.org/blog/2018/02/26/social-media-tips-teen-gun-violence-prevention-activists>