

FAQs

Why a new name?

A new name was a requirement of the merger between our seminary and congregational union. We saw developing a new name as an opportunity to engage with Reconstructionists across North America to revisit our essence and capture the energy inherent in the movement. It clearly communicates who we are, what we do and have always done, and invites people to join us in this holy work. It reflects our mission and communicates to the world that we are about actively engaging and creating Jewish life.

What is Reconstructing Judaism?

Reconstructing Judaism is the central organization of the Reconstructionist movement. We believe that Judaism evolves with the world and that we can play a powerful role in defining the Jewish future. To do so, we train rabbis, support and partner with congregations and summer camps and foster the emerging ideas that shape what it means to be Jewish today.

Why is there a verb in the name?

A verb best reflects our approach to Judaism as an active process and shifts the emphasis from “being” Jewish to “doing” Jewish. A Reconstructionist understanding has always embodied action and stood for purposeful Judaism. Our mission is now communicated in our name. Other organizations with verb-based names include Moving Traditions, Teaching Matters, Educators Rising, Feeding America and Facing History and Ourselves.

Is the name of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College changing too?

For now, the rabbinical seminary—which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year—will still be known as the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. It will change to the **College for Reconstructing Judaism** at the end of the academic year. Stay tuned for more information about the seminary.

What is meant by the phrase, Deeply Rooted, Boldly Relevant?

This phrase clarifies that we live at the intersection of past and future. It expresses a reverence for Jewish tradition and a constant quest to cultivate Jewish experiences that are meaningful. We believe the important task is to create a thriving Judaism by continually reconstructing Judaism, which will enable us to meet the needs of tomorrow. The word “relevant” is an imperative, not a descriptor.

What is the green, leafy graphic?

The green graphic depicts sprouting leaves that symbolize spreading joy, innovation, and resilience. At once grounded and flourishing, it balances our connection to tradition with our continuous growth and reinvention. The hand-drawn style of the graphic and typography speak to the *heimish* and eclectic personality of the communities, teachers, learners and rabbis our organization serves. The grouping of leaves of varying shades conveys our participatory nature. The pairing of the name (architectural, engineering sensibility) with the graphic (organic) captures the breadth of our movement.

**Are the vision and goals of the organization changing as well?**

No, although the identity exploration process did provide us an opportunity for us to do some soul searching and refining of the language of our values. Our Mission, Vision and Values Statements are at the end of this document.

How is Reconstructing Judaism acting on its name?

The organization is reconstructing Judaism by training rabbis to be entrepreneurs and changemakers, seeding and supporting dynamic congregations and *havurot*, cultivating Jewish experiences in new venues, deploying digital networks and platforms to tackle the pressing challenges of Jewish life, investing in startup projects with the potential to transform Jewish living and learning on micro and macro scales, bringing Jewish values to the public square through movement commissions and statements, publishing new thought pieces, podcasting and utilizing other new media.

Is this the new name for the Reconstructionist movement?

No. What has been renamed is the central organization of the Jewish Reconstructionist movement. There is still a Reconstructionist movement and, if we choose, we can still call ourselves Reconstructionist Jews.

What process led to the name change?

This was a deliberate and participatory yearlong process. In developing the new name and visual identity, we invited everyone in Reconstructionist communities across North America to share insights in a series of in-person and online town halls, and through a number of substantive online surveys. More than 1,000 Reconstructionists participated in the process and provided invaluable input that shaped the final outcome. Our organization's board of governors unanimously approved the name change and new visual identity in October 2017.

What would Mordecai Kaplan say?

Of course, we don't know. We do know that his son-in-law, Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, the seminary's first president, titled his memoir *Reconstructing Judaism*. We believe he would appreciate our bold approach to hold our minds, hearts and spirits together as we all seek meaning and walk into an uncertain future together.



Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

Reconstructing Judaism cultivates and supports Jewish living, learning and leadership for a changing world.

Vision

A more just and compassionate world where creative Jewish living and learning guide us toward lives of holiness, meaning and purpose.

Values

We strive to realize these core values in every initiative and interaction:

Talmud Torah: Sacred Study

We delve into the wellsprings of our tradition, taking hold of Torah and challenging it to speak to our lives today.

Kedushah: Holiness

We open ourselves to manifestations of the divine as transmitted in our tradition and experienced in our lives.

Kehillah: Diverse and Inclusive Community

We build diverse, participatory, joy-filled communities that embrace Jews, seekers and our loved ones. As we encounter difference, we strive to respect each other's voices, listening deeply and engaging with *hesed* (open and generous hearts).

Ahavat Yisrael: Hope and Healing

We act to bring about the vision that the Jewish people, in Israel and throughout the world, will flourish along with our neighbors in peace and security. We seek healing for the rending of our communities and our hearts.

Tzedek: Justice and Sustainability

We fight for justice, sustenance and dignity for all peoples. We work toward sustainability for our world.

Hiddush: Evolving Judaism

Inspired by Torah, the wider world and the Jewish people in all our diversity, we co-create new ways of expressing Jewishness.