

Dear Supporter,

We've had a lot of exciting developments at InterfaithFamily.com since our [June Update](#):

- Our re-designed website with great new functionality – personalized delivery of content, easy-to-search organization, professional and program listings, social networking and group support – launched at the end of August.
- We were one of only twelve organizations included in *Slingshot: A Resource Guide to Jewish Innovation* for a fifth straight year.
- We were a leading voice on the MASA “Lost Jews” controversy -- our blog post was quoted in an [Associated Press article](#) and we had an op-ed in the *Jerusalem Post* – and we're now commenting on the new [Birthright Israel study](#).
- We added seven new articles and one new video to our “for clergy only” [resources](#) helping rabbis and cantors address intermarriage and officiation issues.
- Our [2009 User Survey report](#) demonstrates that our resources have very positive influence on our users' Jewish choices and are used extensively by professionals who work with interfaith families.

Despite reductions in funding and staffing, we are meeting or exceeding all of the goals set in our 2009 Strategic Priorities Plan – except for one, on which I'm going to ask for your help. Looking forward, we have a new Board member, our re-vitalized Advisory Board will have its first meeting on November 19, and we've just completed our 2010 plan, which identifies the “core” activities we can undertake with level funding, and three important expansions we would undertake with increased support.

Organizational Highlights

We're very pleased with the results of our second online [User Survey](#), which attracted 1,109 responses. The highlights are that intermarried respondents with children at home reported that IFF positively influenced their knowledge of Jewish life (83%), participation in Jewish rituals (73%), participation in outreach programs (39%), sending their children to Jewish education classes (25%), exploring conversion (25%), and joining a synagogue (24%).

We've just completed our 2010 Strategic Priorities Plan; if you would like a copy, please email me at edc@interfaithfamily.com.



Isaac Luria

We're pleased to welcome Isaac Luria, the Campaigns Director of J Street, to our Board. Isaac grew up in an interfaith family; his wife Sara Luria is a rabbinic student at Hebrew Union College.

We're looking forward to the first telephone meeting, scheduled for November 19, of our re-vitalized [Advisory Board](#), which is still in formation but already has twenty-seven members.

In August our Director of Web Strategy, Micah Sachs, left us for film studies graduate school at NYU. Micah made lasting contributions to IFF in his three years with us; we are very grateful, and wish him all the best.

Education Activities

We published a broad range of interesting new content in the past four months. For the first time, we addressed Jewish views of illness and healing: [Paging Dr. God: Jewish Views of Illness and Healing](#). We published an important essay on the Classical Reform alternative: [A New Judaism for a New Millenium](#) by Rabbi Howard Berman, executive director of the [Society for Classical Reform Judaism](#). We had a great story by a couple about their experience on an [Israel Encounter](#) trip for interfaith couples: [An Israel Encounter: One Couple's Story](#) by Shira and Thomas Johnson. And we added a great video re-published from [MyJewishLearning.com](#): [Todd & God: How to Hang a Mezuzah](#).

We published some great new content for the High Holidays:

- [Rosh Hashanah Party for the New Year](#) by Jane Larkin
- [My First Yom Kippur](#) by Elizabeth Meyer
- [High Holy Days: The Basics](#) by Karen Kushner of the [Jewish Welcome Network](#)

October 2009

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We continued to add to our “how-to” content:

- In October we published our new [Guide to the Synagogue for Interfaith Couples and Families](#)
- Our [Jewish Holidays Cheat Sheet](#), published at the end of January, has now had over 24,000 page views! We followed up in August with [A Jewish Food Cheat Sheet](#)

If you don't receive our biweekly email newsletter highlighting our newest content and would like to, click [here](#).

Connections Activities



1. Jewish Clergy Officiation Referral Service

So far in 2009, we've responded to 1,027 requests to help interfaith couples find a rabbi or cantor for their wedding – an average of 103 a month, which is slightly lower than last year. Our goal for 2009 was to increase the number of responses made by our free, high quality referral service to 1,360, or 113 a month. We're making an effort to publicize the referral service more, and we'd like your help. Please encourage anyone you know who might benefit from the referral service to submit a request. We've started a contest: every couple who submits a referral request between October 1 and December 31, 2009 will be entered to win a \$500 American Express gift card--that's quite a wedding present!

We don't just send names when we respond to couples; we also suggest resources to help their planning, and we send follow-up requests for feedback. On October 26, Rabbi Lev Baesh, who directs the referral service, got this email:

I wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you for helping me find a rabbi to officiate our ceremony. We had our wedding at the end of July and thanks to the help from your site, it was a wonderful day.

On October 21, he got this email:

I would like to express my appreciation and deep gratitude for the useful resources you are putting at disposal of interfaith couples and families. Your website is a precious guide for young couples like us, who are new to the dynamics of interfaith families.

We now have 337 rabbis and cantors to whom we make referrals, a net increase of 35 since our last Update four months ago. Interested clergy should take our [Jewish clergy survey](#).

2. The InterfaithFamily.com Network

We now have 648 organizations and professionals listed on our Network, a net increase of 28 since our last Update. Some interesting new additions include:

- An [outreach program](#) in Washington DC
- A [racially diverse synagogue](#) in Gary, IN
- A [progressive synagogue](#) in Vancouver, BC

Over 700 individuals have become members of the Network in the two months since launch. Members can receive personalized delivery of the content and connections information they are interested in, and search for and connect with other members. It's easy to become a member at www.interfaithfamily.com/join - please join the Network!



Ed Case, Jen Rosen, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, and Gail Reimer, Jewish Women's Archive, at the [Moving Traditions](#) benefit in New York

Advocacy Activities

Since our last Update we reprinted two important essays: [Making a “Right Turn” on Intermarriage](#) by Rabbi David Lerner, a leading Conservative rabbi, and [A Letter to My Congregants](#) in which Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel explains why he changed his position on officiation at weddings of interfaith couples.

1. Resource Center for Jewish Clergy



In October we sent an email newsletter to the almost 650 rabbis and cantors who previously had access to our “for clergy only” resources. Going forward, access will be through the new [Resource Center for Jewish Clergy Private Group](#) on our Network. In the email newsletter, we announced seven new articles and one new video by rabbis across the spectrum. We remain the only Jewish organization providing a cross-denominational resource to help clergy address issues that arise with interfaith couples and families.

2. Surveys and Speaking Engagements

Our sixth annual December Holidays survey recently closed, with 611 responses. For the first time, we asked questions about interfaith couples' experiences at synagogues. Watch for our survey report toward the end of November.

I enjoyed speaking at the August retreat of the Schusterman Rabbinic Fellowship – a joint training program for rabbinic students at Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Theological Seminary – and have been invited to participate again in the future.

Managing Editor Ruth Abrams spoke earlier this week at [Siegal College](#) in Cleveland on *The Many Faces of Interfaith Families*.

We will be exhibitors at the Reform movement's Biennial in Toronto November 4-6 and at the General Assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America November 8-10

3. Advocacy Writing

Our [Network Blog](#) is a great way to keep up with policy developments relating to outreach to interfaith families.

We played a role in the controversy over the MASA "Lost Jews" ad campaign, which urged Israelis to combat assimilation in North America by working to prevent the loss through intermarriage of their own Jewish acquaintances. I wrote a very critical blog post, titled [A Stupid, Ill-conceived Approach from Israel](#) that was picked up in Forward columnist [J.J. Goldberg's blog](#). After MASA announced that it was dropping the ad campaign, Associated Press writer Amy Teibel wrote a story, [Anti-assimilation Ads Yanked Over Uproar](#), that includes the following:



"Blogger Ed Case said on Interfaithfamily.com that "Israeli leaders simply do not understand that many intermarried couples, and the adult children of intermarried parents, are actively engaging in Jewish life."

The AP story was very widely picked up, on the websites of the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Miami Herald*, and many others.

I followed up with an op-ed in the Jerusalem Post, [What Israelis Need to Know About Intermarriage in North America](#), that was syndicated by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. My conclusion:

Helping Israelis to learn not to think and talk about intermarriage as the equivalent of assimilation will contribute to increased Jewish identity and connection among intermarried families - something that is of vital interest to the Jewish communities of both North America and Israel.

Just recently, we published two blog posts on the new study of Birthright Israel:

- In [Birthright Israel Trips and Intermarriage](#), I said:

It would be a shame if the main message of the study, that trip participation is associated with more in-marriage, is twisted into viewing Birthright Israel as a "cure" or "antidote" to intermarriage or the "solution" to the "intermarriage problem."... [T]he most important impact of the Birthright Israel experience is the motivation to engage in Jewish life and have Jewish children – whether the marriage is "in" or "inter."

- In [Birthright Israel, Jewish Wedding Ceremonies, and Jewish Commitment](#), I noted that the study's authors reported that of the respondents who had religious officiants, "an estimated 65% made an unambiguously Jewish choice by having a rabbi or cantor alone officiate." I applauded the authors for recognizing that "Marrying a Jewish person is not the only measure of Jewish commitment... [T]he nature of the wedding ceremony is an additional indicator..., particularly for intermarried couples."

Marketing



Traffic to our website is growing steadily. In the twelve months ended October 31, 2009 we had 363,504 unique visitors, and 1,086,315 page views. Traffic for the three months ended October 31 was 33% greater than in the comparable period in 2008.

IFF's score on [Hubspot's Website Grader](#) has improved since our last Update: we now score higher than 98.1% of other websites in terms of the marketing effectiveness of our search engine optimization.

About 55% of our October traffic came from Google and Yahoo natural searches; 13% came from paid search results on Google; 2.5% came from links on Facebook – and .2% came from Twitter.

Our Facebook fan page now has 398 fans – just click [here](#) to join.

One of our articles, Mimi Dupree's [book review](#) of *The Secret Shofar of Barcelona*, was mentioned in Cathy Grossman's [Faith & Reason](#) blog on *USA Today*. We were also mentioned in a [dating column](#) in the *Philadelphia Daily News*.

Key Metrics and Testimonials

- **Website traffic:** We had 363,504 unique visitors in the 12 months ending October 31
- **Bi-weekly email newsletter:** Our October 27 email newsletter was sent to 7,691 mailable email addresses
- **Organizations listed on our Network:** We had a net gain of 28 organizations added to our Network between July 1 and October 31, bringing the total to 648
- **Requests for Jewish clergy officiation referrals:** 1,027 from January 1 through October 31, an average of 103 a month.

We participated in a contest run by [GreatNonprofits](#) to feature Jewish non-profit organizations. We were gratified by the favorable "client" reviews posted on that site, including this one:

InterfaithFamily.com has been an invaluable resource to me since the beginning of my interfaith family life: my wedding to my non-Jewish husband. Yes, the site gave me referrals to clergy,.... But even more valuable have been the extremely thorough and high-quality written materials about the ceremony and other holidays and rituals, which provide me with great reinforcement and provide my curious friends with excellent, easy-to-understand descriptions of our customs.

And this one:

I have found [IFF] to be tremendously helpful to me in my work as a congregation rabbi. It provides a wide array of perspectives on issues relevant to Jewish life and, especially, to the challenges and unique aspects of interfaith families. I frequently refer people to this site and consider it one of the more helpful Jewish resource websites available.

Finance and Development

SLINGSHOT We were proud to be included in *Slingshot: A Resource Guide to Jewish Innovation*, and featured as one of only twelve organizations to be included for the fifth straight year.

We are projecting that we will raise and spend about \$840,000 in 2009. Since our last Update we received an important new grant from the [Jim Joseph Foundation](#). Under our 2010 Strategic Priorities Plan we have a "core activities" budget of \$760,000, and we have identified three expansion opportunities that if funded would nearly double our spending.



Mamie Kanfer Stewart, Board Chair, Ed Case, Jim Ball, Board Member, at Slingshot Day

Thank You for Your Interest!

We appreciate your support and interest very much. We welcome your input and advice--please let us know what you think of our progress.

And please help us by forwarding this Update to anyone who might be interested in our work.

[Send to a Friend](#)

With best regards,



Edmund C Case

Edmund C. Case, CEO