The Placement of Newly-Ordained Rabbis
In the Class of 2021/5781
A Handbook of Procedures

The Rabbinical Placement Commission,
Central Conference of American Rabbis,
Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for participating in the placement program for our senior rabbinical students. This handbook explains the student placement procedures established by the Rabbinical Placement Commission (RPC) and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), and is the product of many years of placement experience—sometimes learning what should be done and occasionally, what would be best not to do! Our goal and yours is to maintain fairness for all candidates and congregations, and to guarantee an orderly and dignified system for this important process.

This handbook is intended for use by both congregational search committees and senior rabbinical students, and it is important that all participants in the process review it carefully. It is our hope that the handbook will answer all of your questions, and that the guiding principles and the placement procedures outlined here will create an environment for placement that will benefit both congregations and rabbinical candidates.


The Partnership between Rabbi and Congregation

For more than two millennia, the synagogue has served our people as Beit T’fillah, House of Prayer; Beit Midrash, House of Study; and Beit K’nesset, House of Assembly. As it fulfills these classic roles, the modern congregation becomes worthy of the designation kehillah kedoshah, a holy community.

Sacred Jewish values underlie the partnership between rabbi and congregation; it is a covenant through which each party undertakes the obligation of working together in the service of God and the Jewish people. That covenant begins as early as the placement process.

A Vision of the Placement Process

Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi said, “Which is the proper path that one should select? The one that seems honorable for oneself and brings honor bestowed by others.” [Pirke Avot 2:1]

It is our hope that these guidelines will serve the following purposes: 1) to create the best possible matches between candidates and congregations; 2) to afford all candidates equal access to available positions; 3) to afford all congregations equal access to candidates; and 4) to ensure fairness, dignity and order in the placement process for all congregations and soon-to-be-ordained rabbis. This handbook is designed to help facilitate communication, the gathering and sharing of information, and participation in the rabbinical placement process.
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THE PLACEMENT PROCESS

I. Available Positions

A. Newly-ordained rabbis are eligible for congregational positions that fit into four broad categories. There can be great diversity within a category and we encourage students to review every job description closely:

1. **Solo Rabbis**: Seniors are eligible to seek solo positions classified by the Rabbinical Placement Commission as Category A Congregations (up to 300 member units). They are not eligible for solo positions with larger congregations. A solo rabbi is responsible for working with the other professionals in the congregation, fulfilling the many roles that might arise as the only rabbi in a congregation, including but not limited to life-cycle events, holidays, worship, teaching, counseling, and much more.

2. **Assistant Rabbis**: Seniors are eligible to seek positions listed as Assistant Rabbi. Primarily the Senior Rabbi, in consultation with the appropriate congregational body, shall define an Assistant Rabbi’s duties. In performing these duties, the Assistant shall be supervised by the Senior Rabbi and be responsible to the Senior Rabbi and the Board of Trustees.

3. **Rabbi/Educator**: Some congregations look to the new rabbi to take charge of the congregation’s educational program. There are some students who are uniquely equipped to do so, either because they have earned a Master’s Degree in Jewish Education at HUC-JIR or elsewhere, have pursued education courses or a degree in a secular university, or have had extensive practical experience in Jewish education. Some may have qualified for the title of Reform Jewish Educator. These jobs will typically include some rabbinical tasks, such as conducting services or sharing in holiday experiences, in addition to the many tasks of the Educator in the congregation.

4. **Part-Time Positions**: Congregations may engage a senior to serve on a part-time basis, either as Rabbi or Assistant Rabbi. The duties and responsibilities should be precisely defined in writing, specifying how many hours each week and how many days per month are to be devoted to the part-time post. The part-time rabbi should be elected for a fixed term and receive prorated pension and all other benefits when that service is considered to be half-time or more.

All of these positions are handled through the Placement Process.
II. **Student Eligibility for Placement**

1. All students must be in good academic standing in order to participate in placement. They must have no outstanding incompletes or outstanding failures by the end of the fall semester. They must submit an approved thesis/final project by the assigned due date in order to participate in placement.

2. Students must successfully complete all academic and fieldwork requirements of the spring semester in order to be ordained. Students failing to do so will not be ordained and will not be able to start a rabbinic position, even if they have already accepted a position through placement. It is the students’ responsibility to meet these requirements.

III. **The Steps of the Placement Process**

A. For Congregations

1. Congregations wishing to hire a rabbi should contact the Director of Placement. The congregation will receive application forms appropriate to the position being listed.

2. The application itself should be completed by the president or chairperson of the search committee, perhaps in consultation with other congregants. The application includes the following agreements:

   In keeping with the highest ideals of Jewish tradition and the Reform Movement, our congregation agrees:

   1. To abide by the teaching that each individual is created b’tzelem Elohim, in the image of God, and we will not discriminate in any way with regard to age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, sexual orientation or marital status.

   2. To follow the rules, policies and procedures of the “Handbook of Placement Procedures.”

   3. To take into consideration the principles of “The Guidelines for Rabbinical-Congregational Relationships.”

   4. To conduct our search solely through the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

   5. To affirm for every rabbi in the search process that the information we provide in the position description and interview process is accurate.

   3. All documents should be completed electronically and submitted to the Placement Office. It is in the congregation’s best interest to submit these forms as soon as possible; for the fullest consideration of your application by the students, please submit the application by
December 4, 2020. Congregations may add links to information about the congregation and the broader community in their application.

4. There will be a Zoom webinar for participating congregations with the Placement Director and the Rabbinical School Director from the coordinating campus on Thursday, January 7, 2021 at 1:30 p.m. EST. All steps of the placement process will be reviewed and questions addressed.

5. By December 16-17, 2020, congregations will receive resumes of interested students from the Director of Placement.

6. Communication between students and congregations prior to their initial interview shall be limited to acknowledgement of the receipt of their resume and personal statements; students will be directed not to respond to each acknowledgement so as not to encourage on-going communication. At conventions and gatherings at which students and congregational leaders might attend, no meetings are permitted.

By January 6, 2021 congregations will inform the Placement Office of their intention regarding participation in first round of video interviews taking place January 31 – February 2, 2021 and which students they would like to interview. Congregations may not drop students from their list once it has been submitted, but they may add students. While congregations may decide to extend an interview to students not on their original list, for scheduling purposes and to enable the students to prepare appropriately, we ask that congregations try to submit their full list at one time.

7. The Placement Office will inform the students which congregations are participating in video interviews on January 31 – February 2, 2021. The Director of the Rabbinical School in New York prepares the interview schedules and will send a tentative schedule to congregations and students between January 20-22, 2021. Given the nature of the scheduling process, it is not always possible to consolidate the interviews for either students or congregations in an ideal manner. Please understand that every attempt is made to ensure that interviews are not set too far apart and that appropriate breaks are scheduled. Due to the complexity of scheduling interviews across time zones, it is difficult to set a realistic schedule too far in advance.

8. On or after February 4, 2021, congregations that choose not to participate in the first round of interviews may contact students whose resumes they have received and proceed according to the RPC Handbook of Placement Procedures.
9. Students may find themselves serving as HUC-JIR academic year student rabbis or interns in a congregation that is considering hiring a Rabbi. In such a case, the congregation may enter placement and the student may apply for the position. The congregation also has the option of offering the position to the student before placement. The student may choose to accept the position or enter into placement. In such a case, the congregation and student must notify the placement director and their program director in writing of their decision by January 6, 2021.

B. For students

1. Introducing the Available Positions: During the fall semester, the Director of Rabbinic Placement meets with the senior class, both as a group and individually, to better acquaint them with the positions available for their consideration and to offer counsel as they make their preliminary choices.

2. In preparation for interviews, students need to complete their resumes and personal statements, create a website with samples of their work, including items like a sermon, eulogy, course curriculum, bulletin article, etc., and contact those whom they wish to serve as references. Resumes and personal statements must follow the guidelines listed in the Placement and Transition section of the CCAR website (www.ccarnet.org).

3. Resumes and personal statements are due to the CCAR Placement Office by Thursday, December 3, 2020.

4. Following Placement Office guidelines, students should prepare a list of references with contact information to present to congregations immediately following the initial video interview. Students should have at least four or five references that should include: a rabbi with whom you have worked, a lay leader, a rabbinic mentor/home rabbi, and HUC-JIR faculty member/s. References must be invited and informed of the placement schedule so they can anticipate they will be contacted during or after the initial interview period.

5. Students should complete the form provided by the Placement Office indicating the congregations where they want their resumes sent, by December 10, 2020. The Placement Office will then forward the students’ resumes and personal statements to the congregations requested by the students on December 16-17.

6. Part of the nature of the placement process is that congregations will enter and withdraw from the process after the submission date.
Therefore, students may be given opportunities to have their resumes sent to additional congregations that enter into search after December 10. Students may not drop congregations from their list, but may add additional congregations as they come into placement. There may be opportunities for students to add congregations they had not previously listed, but now wish to apply to. Congregations may not drop students from their list once it has been submitted, but they may add students. While congregations may decide to extend an interview to students not on their original list, for scheduling purposes and to enable the students to prepare appropriately, we ask that congregations try to submit their full list at one time.

7. Applying for positions outside this placement process:

a. A student who chooses not to go through CCAR/HUC-JIR placement is free to pursue a non-congregational position (Hillel, chaplaincy, organizational, etc.) or WUPJ congregation.

b. A student who wishes to enter CCAR/HUC-JIR placement and pursue a non-congregational position or a WUPJ congregation may do so but may not accept a non-congregational or WUPJ position until after March 2.

c. Once a student begins the placement process, the student must complete it, following through with all interviews that they accepted.

d. Students may not pursue positions with non-URJ or non-WUPJ congregations until after March 2.

C. Information Gathering: Congregations and students will want to learn as much as they can about one another in advance of the interviews.

1. Appropriate sources of information:

a. For students: students may review any publicly available information, including congregational websites, clergy websites, blogs, and social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, and they may request copies of bulletins and membership information. Students also may choose to speak with their rabbinical mentors or colleagues in the field, as well as former staff members of the congregation. They may also speak to the rabbi who is leaving the advertised position.

b. For congregations: congregations may review students’ resumes, personal statements, websites and blogs, as well as any publicly available social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.
2. **Inappropriate sources of information:**

   a. For students: To limit the potential for self-advocacy, a student may not seek information about a congregation by contacting those who are likely to be directly involved in the congregation’s rabbinical search. These people include: the continuing rabbi(s), other continuing members of the congregation’s professional staff, members of the search committee, and current board members. Students who are currently serving a congregation participating in the placement process should make every attempt to refrain from inappropriate self-advocacy or information gathering. Students may not send invitations to “friend” a rabbi, search committee chair or other members of the staff or congregation on social media sites.

   b. For congregations: Rabbis and search committees may not send invitations to “friend” a student on social media sites. When contacting HUC-JIR faculty, congregations should be aware that FERPA (The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) prohibits anyone associated with HUC-JIR from speaking about a student without that student’s permission. Students will give their references permission to speak about them; anyone not listed as a reference will have to ask the students to sign a FERPA permission form before they can speak on the student’s behalf.

   c. For congregations: Rabbis and search committees may not send invitations to “friend” a student on social media sites. When contacting HUC-JIR faculty, congregations should be aware that FERPA (The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) prohibits anyone associated with HUC-JIR from speaking about a student without that student’s permission. Students will give their references permission to speak about them; anyone not listed as a reference will have to ask the students to sign a FERPA permission form before they can speak on the student’s behalf.

D. **Advocacy:**

   Seniors may not advocate for their employment interests with an employee or member of a searching congregation. Self-advocacy includes, but is not limited to: forwarding of resumes or other materials outside the standard placement process; use of electronic media or social networking sites for self-promotion; intentional social contact for the purpose of advocating employment interests (including at rabbinical conferences or URJ functions); encouraging others to advocate on the student’s behalf, and any other oral or written expression of interest in a position with a congregation, whether direct, indirect, expressed, or implied.

IV. **Initial Video Interviews: January 31 - February 2, 2021**

A. Dates and Times of Interviews: The video interviews will extend from **Sunday, January 31, 2021 to Tuesday, February 2, 2021.** Because creating an interview schedule that accommodates a large number of students and congregations is a complex undertaking, we ask that congregations be available all three days, particularly if they anticipate conducting a large number of interviews.
B. Congregations are asked to limit the number of search committee members asking questions during the interviews to one or two. In addition, for consistency, the same search committee members should be present at all of the congregation’s interviews.

C. Interviews will last 40 minutes, allowing some time between interviews for deliberation or relaxation.

D. Students and congregations should not interact before their scheduled interview. Once this interview has taken place, contacts between students and congregations are not restricted.

E. Content of the Initial Video Interview:

1. Interviews should be seen by both parties as an opportunity to get to know each other, ascertain compatibility and present one’s best self. It is essential for each to be honest with the other, remembering that, as with any successful relationship, the relationship between a rabbi and a congregation begins with finding a well-suited partner.

2. Questions of a personal nature, such as those relating to physical appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or family status, are inappropriate in an interview. The Reform Movement, in numerous resolutions, has clearly expressed its opposition to any form of discrimination.

3. Invitations for on-site interviews, or additional phone or video interviews may be made as of Thursday, February 4, 2021 but not during the initial interview period.

F. Recording of the initial video interviews is prohibited.

V. The Call-Back Interview Phase – February 5 through March 1

A. Please note that in July 2020 the Rabbinic Placement Commission adopted a temporary policy for all rabbinic searches. (See Appendix E) In order to promote equity and pikuach nefesh, saving lives, all candidate interviews, including call-back interviews, must be conducted via video-conferencing from now until January 1, 2021. The policy will be reevaluated in the fall of 2020 to determine whether to extend the time-frame or whether to permit in-person interviews after January 1, 2021. The Placement Office will continue to update you as to the status of this policy. Depending on the applicability of this policy, the phrase “call-back interview” shall refer to either an in-person or virtual call-back process.

B. Selecting candidates for on-site interviews: After the initial video interview process is completed, the search committee, guided by those members who conducted the initial interviews, decides which candidates it will invite to the community for a call-back interview. Please note that once an invitation has
been extended, it may not be withdrawn. Similarly, any student who accepts a
call-back invitation must follow through with the call-back interview.

C. The Call-Back Interview phase begins with the extending of invitations for in-
person or virtual congregational visits commencing on Thursday, February 4,
2021 and concluding on Monday, March 1, 2021.

D. Congregations that conducted initial interviews January 31- February 2 will be
in touch directly with students to invite them for follow-up interviews
according to the following schedule:

1. **Thursday, February 4, 2021** begins the next phase of placement.
   Congregations may issue invitations for on-site interviews beginning
   at 11:00 a.m. EST. Students may accept or decline these invitations,
   A student may request a short amount of time (a couple of hours) to
   consider all the invitations received and make a thoughtful
determination regarding positions to be pursued. Giving the student a
short time to decide will spare the congregation from spending
scarce resources on a student who has less enthusiasm to serve your
congregation. Some congregations may choose to hold an additional
Zoom interview as an interim step before inviting students for a call-
back interview. Such congregations should bear in mind that
students will be pursuing other interviews within the same time
frame. The Handbook of Placement Procedures of the RPC apply
throughout the remainder of the placement process.

E. The Call-Back Interview phase is for interviews ONLY; **job offers may not be
made between February 5 and March 1.** This period has been established to
ensure that congregations and students have the opportunity to explore all of
their options without undue pressure. However congregations should review
the compensation package with any student applicants without making an offer
until March 1.

F. Congregations that received student resumes, but did not participate in initial
interviews during the January 31-February 2 period, may be in touch directly
with students **on or after February 4** to invite them for interviews.

G. Congregations that interviewed students and chose not to pursue their
application any further should, out of courtesy to the students, contact them as
soon as possible to let them know of that decision.

H. Congregations that set up additional video interviews and wish to record them
may do so but only with permission of the candidate and only for use by search
committee and/or board of the congregation; the discussion of recording should
take place when the interview is set up.

I. Students should be in contact with the Placement Office if they have questions
and if they want resumes sent to additional congregations after February 4,
2021. Students should check the Placement List on the CCAR website for new postings. Congregations should continue to be in contact with the Placement Office for guidance throughout the placement process.

VI. **Student Visits with Congregations**

A. **Planning a travel itinerary:** In the event that in-person call-backs are permitted, students will arrange flights and travel times, considering the schedule of the congregations involved. Students will submit travel receipts to the congregations they visit for reimbursement of travel expenses. Congregations should be sensitive to the travel expenses that students may have to incur during placement and consider pre-paying the student’s travel where possible or reimburse those expenses in a timely manner. Candidates should not be expected to travel on Shabbat.

B. **Inviting the Spouse or partner:** It is customary to invite a candidate’s spouse or partner to accompany the candidate on a congregational visit, since they will be involved in making choices. If the congregation extends this invitation, then the congregation is assumed to be responsible for the expenses of the spouse or partner as well as the candidate. The spouse or partner is not to be interviewed, however, unless they are formally applying for a position within the congregation. Congregations should put the spouse or partner in touch with resource people for information on jobs, housing and cultural life. No undue pressure by the congregation, its affiliates, or its members may be placed upon the spouse or partner to accept or to decline any job offer.

C. **The content of the call-back interview:** Congregations and students should discuss, in advance, what will be scheduled in the call-back interview.

1. **Suggested areas of exploration:** theology, religious practice, social issues, particular interests for the congregation or the candidate, programs they would like to establish, and past experiences.

2. It is certainly understandable that a congregation would want to ensure a rabbi’s happiness in their congregation and community. However, questions of a personal nature (i.e., regarding one’s spouse, future family plans, etc.) are inappropriate to an interview setting and an invasion of an applicant’s privacy. It is appropriate to ask open-ended questions such as, “Do you have any concerns about moving to our city?” (see Appendix D for more suggested questions). Congregations also get to know candidates through informal meetings during an on-site visit and can glean that which a candidate is willing to share in conversations over dinner, etc.

3. **Meetings:** In addition to meeting with the search committee and the professional staff, many congregations use the call-back interview to allow various constituencies within the congregation to meet the candidate. Visits with youth groups, religious school committees,
adult learners, and other congregational committees and auxiliary
groups are all appropriate.

4. **Activities:** The itinerary of a call-back interview should be designed
to best promote the process by which congregations and candidates
evaluate each other. At the same time, care should be taken to
prepare a worthwhile informative visit that does not overburden the
candidate. Congregations and students, by mutual consent, may
decide in advance of a candidate’s arrival, to include in the on-site
visit some activities in addition to individual and panel interviews.
These activities should be limited in duration and in a natural and
authentic setting. Such activities may include such offering divrei
Torah, invocations and benedictions at board meetings and brief
teaching opportunities. These additional activities should not
constitute the bulk of the on-site visit and must be agreed upon in
advance so that the student will have adequate preparation time.
Students may not be asked to deliver sample sermons or divrei
Torah in a service, lead services, or participate in mock
counseling sessions. If it happens that a student is visiting a
congregation on Shabbat, they may not participate in any aspects of
leadership in the service and should have no interview related
responsibilities until Motzei Shabbat (after Shabbat concludes).

5. Should the congregation want to take any photographs of the student
or record the interview or any part of a student’s visit, they may do
so only with the consent of the student and only for viewing
purposes of the search committee and board of the congregation.
That permission must be requested in advance of the visit.

6. **Financial Arrangements:** It is understood that when a congregation
seeks to engage a rabbi, a fair salary and benefits package will be
offered. The disclosure and discussion of the specific salary and
benefits should occur during the call-back interview.
Congregations and students should discuss openly all employment
information including, but not limited to: health insurance for the
rabbi’s family, vacation, pension, parental leave, other benefits, and
any other concerns of either party that may be part of an employment
agreement. (See Appendix A.)

7. **Job description:** The student should leave the call-back interview
with a clear understanding of the job description and responsibilities.

D. **Preparation for call-back interviews:** In advance of the interviews,
congregations should prepare questions for each applicant that will enable
them to evaluate that candidate’s skills and fit for the congregation. Students
should anticipate the kinds of questions they will be asked and prepare their
responses. In as much as the student is being interviewed, so, too, is the student
interviewing the congregation and should, therefore, have questions prepared
in advance that will help her/him learn more about the congregation and determine if it is a good match. (See Appendix D for suggested questions.)

E. Communication following call-back interviews: communication is open and encouraged for follow up and clarifying questions. Our experience has shown that attempts to ascertain a candidate’s level of interest in a position is experienced as pressure and can actually work against the congregation.

VII. Job Offers

A. On Tuesday, March 2, 2021 beginning at 11:00 a.m. EST, congregations may extend offers to students and enter into negotiations with them. No offers may be made before that day and time. To facilitate a fast response, congregations should review the terms of their offer with each student during their call-back visit, and the congregation should have a written terms sheet to present to the student at the time of the actual offer. It is reasonable for students to ask for up to two hours to consider an offer, to consult with spouses and partners, and/or to review it with mentors.

B. Defining a job offer

When the search committee reaches a decision regarding the candidate whom they would like to hire, the authorized leaders (usually the chair of the search committee) of the congregation will make an offer to the student. That offer should set forth specifically the terms of the offer and describe the major provisions of the final agreement that will be contained in the subsequent contract. (See Appendix A for Guidelines for Financial Arrangements.)

C. Acceptance of an offer

1. Once the student receives a firm offer and accepts it, both the student and the congregation must end their respective searches. The congregation must inform other active candidates that an offer has been made and that their candidacy is no longer being considered and the student must inform other congregations at which they might be a candidate that they are no longer a candidate. This can be done either by contacting the parties directly or through the Director of Placement. Even in the absence of a signed contract, so long as there is an oral agreement and a meeting of the minds, acceptance of the position has taken place for this purpose. A written contract or letter of intent should follow as soon as possible.

2. Should the student receive a firm offer from one congregation while negotiations for another pulpit are incomplete, fairness dictates the following options: The student may accept the present offer or decline it. The student may ask for time to consider the offer. The first congregation will have the right to stipulate how long they will
wait for a decision. Congregations should try to be as flexible as they can and grant the student a reasonable amount of time to consider all of his/her options so as to make the most well-thought out decision possible. If a congregation cannot delay the decision, the student will be obliged to accept or reject their offer at that time.

VIII. Enforcement

Failure to uphold the guidelines contained in this booklet or their inherent spirit is viewed with great concern by all those who, in good faith, take part in this process. Any breach of these guidelines is subject to the rules and procedures for ethics complaints contained in the Code of Ethics for Rabbis adopted by the CCAR (available online at https://www.ccar.net/about-us/ccar-ethics/). Any candidate or congregational search committee is encouraged to express concerns about possible violations immediately to a Rabbinical School Director at HUC-JIR or the Director of Rabbinical Placement.
Appendix A: Guidelines for Financial Arrangements*

A. Term of Election for Newly-Ordained Rabbis: Newly-ordained rabbis may be engaged as Assistant Rabbis for a period of two to three years with possible renewals. Some congregations limit the tenure of an Assistant Rabbi to three years. These congregations should make this known at the time of the placement process. However, from the viewpoint of the congregation, this limiting arrangement may not be advantageous. The first year of the three-year tenure is devoted in large measure to the rabbi becoming acquainted with congregants and gaining familiarity with rabbinic responsibilities and much of the third year will be devoted to securing another position. Thus it may prove beneficial to the congregation for an assistant to remain for five years. In addition, a rabbi who has had five years of experience has a better chance of finding a Category B or Category C congregation. Newly-ordained rabbis may therefore be attracted to congregations that will be open to their remaining in the position for five years after ordination.

B. The Rabbi’s Compensation and Benefits: The ideal of tzedek, (justice, fairness, and sincerity) should permeate negotiations between congregation and rabbi.

An understanding of the complexities of synagogue finances and the realities of the newly-ordained rabbi’s fiscal concerns is of high importance to both the congregations and to newly-ordained rabbis. Congregations and students have free access to the latest salary survey published jointly by the offices of the URJ and CCAR (http://www.ccarnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2016-2017_salary_study_.pdf).

C. Base compensation, figured in US dollars, is the amount to be paid directly to the rabbi as salary and parsonage, with the parsonage percentage to be determined by the rabbi later. (Parsonage should be declared in the synagogue’s minutes and the parsonage amount of the rabbi’s base compensation becomes non-taxable and is not reported to the IRS.) The valuation of benefits is not part of the salary figure. It is understandable that the precise definition of benefits will vary with locale.

D. Housing Allowance: If the congregation provides housing, the details of that arrangement shall be specified in writing. If the congregation does not provide housing, that portion of the rabbi’s income used to house the rabbi and his/her family, plus all expenses pertaining thereto, shall be declared as Parsonage or Housing Allowance and so recorded in the minutes of the congregation in order to conform with the IRS regulations for tax exclusions (I.R.C. Section 107).

E. Health insurance for the rabbi and his or her dependents should be provided either through a group policy or through some other arrangement.

F. The congregation and the rabbi should participate in the Reform Pension Plan, administered by the Reform Pension Board of the URJ/CCAR. This plan includes group life insurance to provide for the rabbi’s dependents. The Reform Pension Program requires the congregation to pay 15% of the rabbi’s annual salary into the Fund each year. The rabbi makes a yearly contribution as well.
G. The Reform Pension Board offers long-term disability insurance that provides benefits after a waiting period of six months. During this time, the congregation is obligated to continue the rabbi’s salary and benefits.

H. Conference Allowances: Congregations benefit from granting the rabbi time and funds for attending conferences held under the auspices of the CCAR, URJ, NATE, WRN and WUPJ.

I. Moving Expenses: On electing a new rabbi, the congregation provides a realistic moving allowance for the rabbi, the rabbi’s family and possessions to their community. Some congregations also choose to include the rabbi’s family trips made prior to moving to allow the rabbi to set up housing, schooling, and other necessary arrangements.

J. Family and Parental Leave: Given Judaism’s traditional commitment to the family, congregations should gladly support the decision of rabbis to raise a family. Fathers, as well as mothers, should be afforded every opportunity to devote themselves to parenting. Therefore, congregations should grant at least a two-month parental leave at full pay for their rabbis. Parental leave should apply to all rabbis regardless of marital status, gender, or sexual orientation. This applies to adoptive parents as well. We ask for sensitivity to various family structures and special needs cases, including the need for time to take care of family members with serious health conditions.

K. Time Off: The rabbi is entitled to at least one free day each week and to a paid vacation of at least four weeks during each year of service to the congregation. Time spent on the staff of URJ congregations, camps or conclaves, at professional conferences, in leading trips to Israel or on other congregational trips should not be counted against annual vacation time.

L. Other possible items to consider: Family membership included for rabbi and family; religious, early childhood and/or day school fees; agreement on non-member services and fees related to them; retreat fees for family; housing subvention to enable the rabbi to purchase home.

M. Letter of Intent: The Placement Commission recommends the composition of a letter of intent from the congregation to the student. This letter should come from the President or another qualified officer of the congregation, addressed to the soon-to-be-ordained rabbi, and should confirm the specifics of base compensation, benefits and term of service to which the congregation has agreed. The letter of intent should cover all categories of compensation and benefits outlined above, and should specify the dates when these terms of contract will be in effect.

N. It should be understood that all parties will be guided by Guidelines for Rabbinical Congregational Relationships, adopted by the Union for Reform Judaism and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

O. It is understood that if the letter of agreement is signed before the date of ordination, the student has not yet fulfilled all of the requirements to be ordained and must do so
by the date set by HUC-JIR. Failure to meet those requirements will prohibit the student from being ordained and from being able to fulfill the agreement. The responsibility to meet the requirements for ordination is upon the student. HUC-JIR cannot be held accountable for any student who fails to do so.

When the student has countersigned or otherwise indicated acceptance of these terms, a copy of this letter should be: 1) Filed with the Minutes of the Board of Trustees, and 2) Given to the student. The URJ will gladly offer guidance on re-evaluating your congregation’s finances, should that be necessary in order to engage a rabbi. You can reach them at http://www.urj.org/what-we-do/transition-crisis-support

* adapted from “Guidelines to Offering a Rabbinic Contract Rabbinical Placement Commission of the Reform Movement"
## Appendix B: Summary Checklist and Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, December 3, 2020</td>
<td>Placement Office receives resumes from students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Friday, December 4, 2020</td>
<td>Congregations: Notify the CCAR Placement Office of the opening. Appoint a Search Committee. Complete and return the application to the CCAR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, December 10, 2020</td>
<td>Students inform Placement Office of congregational interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 16-17, 2020</td>
<td>Student resumes and personal statements sent out by Placement Office to congregations whose applications were submitted by December 6. Students will receive an email confirmation from the Placement Office on or after December 17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, January 6, 2021</td>
<td>CONGREGATIONS INFORM THE PLACEMENT OFFICE OF THEIR PLANS AND WHICH STUDENTS THEY WOULD LIKE TO INTERVIEW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, January 7, 2021</td>
<td><strong>1:30 p.m. EST</strong> Zoom video webinar for participating congregations with Placement Director and Director of the Rabbinical School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 12-15, 2021</td>
<td>Placement Office will inform students which congregations will interview them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 20-22, 2021</td>
<td>Tentative video interview schedules sent to students and congregations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 31 - February 2, 2021 (Sunday – Tuesday)</td>
<td>INITIAL VIDEO INTERVIEWS WITH CANDIDATES. CONGREGATIONS AND STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO BE AVAILABLE FROM 9:00 A.M. ON SUNDAY TO 5:00 P.M. ON TUESDAY FOR INTERVIEWS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, February 4, 2021 after 11:00 a.m. EST</td>
<td>Invitations for call-back interviews* may be proffered from this date. Congregations that did not participate in the initial interviews may now contact students whose resumes they have received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, February 5 through Monday, March 1, 2021</td>
<td>Students may participate in call-back interviews with congregations. Congregations also may conduct follow-up phone or video interviews with students during this period. No offers may be made or accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 2, 2021 beginning at 11:00 a.m. EST</td>
<td>Congregations may offer students positions and students may respond to offers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * Please note that in July 2020 the Rabbinical Placement Commission adopted a temporary policy for all
rabbinic searches. In order to promote equity and *pikuakh nefesh*, saving lives, all candidate interviews, including call-back interviews, must be conducted via video-conferencing from now until January 1, 2021. The policy will be reevaluated in the fall of 2020 to determine whether to extend the time-frame or whether to permit in-person interviews after January 1, 2021.

See Appendix E
Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Where will information regarding resumes, interviews and schedules come from?
   The assistant to the Director of Rabbinic Placement will collect student resumes and send them out to the appropriate congregations. The assistant will inform the students of the congregations with whom they will interview.

   The scheduling of the interviews is coordinated by the office of the HUC-JIR Rabbinical School Director. Her office will send individual interview schedules to students and congregations.

2. How far in advance can I anticipate receiving the interview schedule?
   Because there are always last minute changes to the placement schedule, it is impossible to finalize the schedule more than a week in advance of placement. We will do our best to get the schedules to everyone as far in advance of placement as is possible.

3. Do I really need to be available from Sunday through Tuesday?
   Yes. The more flexibility congregations can provide in timing, the more balanced a schedule we will be able to set up, making the interview experience more pleasant for congregations and students.

4. What is the recommended size for a search committee for the initial interviews?
   We recommend no more than three people in this initial interview. Even if more people are participating in the initial interview, congregations are asked to limit the number of search committee members asking questions during the interviews to one or two. In addition, for consistency, the same search committee members should be present at all of the congregation’s interviews.

5. Should students consider applying to a WUPJ congregation?
   Yes, these are wonderful opportunities. WUPJ congregations do not interview within the CCAR/HUC-JIR time frame. You can find the list of WUPJ openings on the CCAR website in the Placement & Transition section; interested students should contact those congregations directly.

6. May an interview be cancelled by a student or an invitation be withdrawn by a congregation?
   Once a student submits his/her resume to a congregation, the student may not withdraw that resume. Similarly, a congregation may not cancel an interview unless the congregation is withdrawing from placement.

7. If travel arrangements have been made for an on-site interview and then the interview is cancelled, who is responsible for the costs associated with the visit?
   In the event that an interview has to be cancelled, the party that cancels the interview is responsible to pay the costs associated with the visit (i.e., airfare or other travel-related expenses).

8. Should a student engage an attorney or other representative in contract negotiations?
   The answer to this question depends on many factors:
a. The culture of the synagogue: is the leadership of the synagogue accustomed to working with a negotiator? Have other members of the staff used negotiators? Do the synagogue leaders expect to keep negotiations ‘friendly’ by negotiating directly with the student? Will the use of a negotiator hurt the relationship with the leaders?

b. The complexity of the contract: Often, first-time contracts for assistant rabbis are straightforward.

c. The expense of the negotiator: while attorneys often discount their rates for rabbis and students, they still charge for their services.

d. The student’s skill and comfort in negotiating: If the student is experienced and skilled in negotiating, engaging a professional negotiator might not be necessary. If negotiating makes the student anxious, the use of a negotiator might be a good idea.

e. The way in which the negotiator will be used: A negotiator can be used to negotiate directly for the student or to act as a guide and coach behind the scenes.

The Director of Rabbinic Placement and the HUC-JIR Rabbinical School Director are available to consult on this question as with any concerns throughout the placement process.
Appendix D: Suggested Interview Questions

For Congregations to ask of students:

- We’d like to begin by giving you a couple of minutes to tell us about yourself. Why did you become a rabbi?
- What is your own Jewish background?
- Why are you a Reform Jew?
- What modern Jewish thinker do you feel most akin to?
- What are some of the classes that you enjoyed the most at HUC-JIR and why? Tell us about your thesis and why you chose that topic?
- What is your approach to outreach to non-Jews?
- What is your position on interfaith wedding officiation, and how did you arrive at it?
- Tell us your thinking on same-sex marriage.
- What are your requirements for conversion?
- Tell us about a book that you are reading now or have read recently.
- Tell us three interesting things that are not in your resume.
- Do you wear a kippah? Talit? Robe?
- What episode in the Torah best illustrates your leadership style?
- How do you see the role of the rabbi in relation to the staff? The Board?
- We are looking for a rabbi to guide us collaboratively into the future. What does the rabbi-congregational partnership mean to you?
- What social justice issues do you feel most passionate about?
- Can you share with us any experience that has given you “second thoughts” about becoming a rabbi?
- What is a meaningful worship experience for you?
- What role does God play in your own spirituality?
- What do you think are the most important issues facing Reform Judaism today?
- What is the most exciting program you have developed?
- What do you do for fun? How do you spend your leisure time? Do you have hobbies?
- What are the two or three things that you would most want to know about us?
- Describe an accomplishment of yours that you believe best qualifies you to become our rabbi.
- Identify the unique qualities about yourself that would motivate us to select you as our rabbi.
- Please tell us about your theology.
- Illustrate how you would bring wonderment, awe and joy to your pulpit.
- Describe some of the courses and programs you might like to teach in religious school and to the congregation.
- Share with us your ideas regarding retention of students after bar/bat mitzvah. How would you encourage students to be involved in Jewish life generally?
- Describe your ideal model of education in a congregational setting.
- In what ways can you, as the rabbi, promote Jewish values and customs in interfaith homes?
- What direction would you like to see the Reform Movement take in the decade ahead?
• What have you learned about our temple which makes you interested in becoming our next rabbi?
• What excites you the most about being the rabbi at Temple XYZ?
• What causes you the most anxiety about being the rabbi at Temple XYZ?

Don’t Forget: Is there anything you would like to ask us?

For Students to Ask of Congregations:

• What are three things that you are most proud of about Congregation XYZ?
• Where do you envision the congregation in five years? Ten years?
• Why are you a member of Congregation XYZ?
• What are you looking for in an (Assistant Rabbi/Rabbi Educator/Rabbi)?
• What are some of the congregation’s challenges?
APPENDIX E: Temporary Policy of the Rabbinical Placement Commission July 2020

The Rabbinical Placement Commission ("RPC"), made up of representatives of the Central Conference of American Rabbis ("CCAR"), Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion ("HUC-JIR"), and the Union for Reform Judaism ("URJ"), was formed in 1964 to establish policies and procedures that advance a fair, orderly and dignified process of placing CCAR member rabbis in URJ member congregations. The policies and procedures of the RPC are designed to support equity in the search process and lead to engagements in which the skills, abilities and interests of rabbis align with the stated needs, visions and values of congregations. The RPC is committed to the needs of both rabbis and congregations and holds in the highest regard the sanctity of the relationship between rabbi and the congregation he/she/they serves. In recent years, the RPC has adopted some new policies, which address gender and other inequities – e.g., requiring all search applications to include a stated range for base compensation and that search committees answer several questions regarding implicit bias training.

The current Covid-19 pandemic now poses numerous challenges to our lives generally and to the rabbinic search process specifically. The RPC convened a special meeting to discuss how best to ensure a fair, orderly and dignified search process that ensures equity and fairness for congregations and for rabbis while also safeguarding the health, well-being and privacy concerns of rabbis, their families and members of congregational communities.

After careful consideration and recognizing the highest values of equity and pikuakh nefesh, saving lives, the RPC unanimously voted to institute a temporary policy requiring that all candidate interviews, including call-back interviews, be conducted via video-conferencing from now until January 1, 2021.

That is, there is to be no travel related to search processes and no in-person interviews or visits until January 1, 2021. In the fall, soon after the High Holy Days, the RPC will re-evaluate the policy in light of information regarding the status of the pandemic available at that time and determine whether to extend the time-frame or whether to permit travel and in-person interviews/visits after January 1, 2021.

The RPC recognizes that this temporary policy is likely to be received with relief by some and disappointment by others. Moreover, with awareness of the deep significance of the rabbinic search process and outcome in the lives of rabbis in placement and congregations in search, the RPC acknowledges that this temporary policy may pose added difficulties to an already challenging time. The professionals of the CCAR, HUC-JIR and the URJ are ready to offer support and guidance, including best practices for online interviews for both rabbis and search committees, as we navigate this new terrain with compassion and fairness together as a Movement.

Please be in contact with Rabbi Cindy Enger, Director of Rabbinic Placement, with any questions. She can be reached at cenger@ccarnet.org or (212) 542-8784.