

**RESOLUTION NUMBER 128**  
**The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Central Reform Congregation**

**WHEREAS**, Central Reform Congregation started slowly, out of need. A few bright young St. Louis area couples with children nearing school age came to realize that they needed to act if they were to raise them as Jews. They had no congregational affiliations and the last nearby synagogue had followed its congregants out and away from the city limits. They did not like the idea of having the City, for many years home to several dozen Jewish congregations, totally devoid of a Jewish presence. These couples wanted a special kind of Jewish home - a community where they could raise their children, sing and dance and pray together. They were looking for a community that was inclusive, gender-neutral, non-patriarchal, and spiritual; and

**WHEREAS**, wedding their social consciousness to their burgeoning Jewish awareness, they decided, after much soul-searching, to create a new Jewish place of worship within the City of St. Louis. The group held services in a park during the summer of 1984 to get people interested about the new community. Central Reform Congregation was founded in 1984, with 30 families attending their first High Holiday services. The founding families chose the name "Central Reform Congregation" because they wanted the community to be both "central" in City location and "Central" in their lives. In 1985, CRC joined the Reform movement by joining the UAHC (now the URJ, Union for Reform Judaism); and

**WHEREAS**, Rabbi Susan Talve consulted with the founding families in 1984, as they determined what kind of community they wanted to create. In 1985, she was hired as a part-time rabbi for the congregation. Today, she serves the community as their Senior Rabbi. Rabbi Randy Fleisher was hired in 2000 to help meet the spiritual needs of their growing community. And in 2008, Rabbi Ed Harris, one of the founding members and leaders for many years, was ordained as a rabbi. Rabbi Ed continued to work as a private practice psychologist and served part-time as a rabbi at CRC; and

**WHEREAS**, thirty years later, believing more than ever that a desire to heal and transform the world demands that they not flee the problems of the inner city, they revel in their status as the City's only Jewish congregation. Their voice is heard in discussions and plans for urban revitalization and their hands are busy in a variety of efforts aimed at revitalizing the area and improving life for neighbors; and

**WHEREAS**, with the inspiration and insightful teaching of Rabbi Susan Talve, Rabbi Randy Fleisher, and Rabbi Ed Harris, and their new Rabbi Deana Sussman, as well as the deep commitment of lay leaders and members, they have created a vital faith community that looks for holy responses to all their life situations. People who never knew what holiness was are finding it in connecting with one another, in worshiping together, in studying Torah together, and in coming together just to experience the shelter of peace that we create together; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1999, they broke ground on their building in the Central West End. The building - which they call Sukkat Shalom, or "Shelter of Peace," provides a holy space for not only CRC programs but also for dozens of community events throughout the year. Each year, hundreds of youth and adults participate in their education programs, and thousands of individuals worship during the High Holidays, on Shabbat, and at other holiday celebrations throughout the year.. With no recruitment effort, membership rolls grew exponentially, from 10 households in 1984 to approximately 750 households today.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of Aldermen of the City of St. Louis that we pause in our deliberations to congratulate Central Reform Congregation and wish them many more years of success and we further direct the Clerk of this Board to spread a copy of this Resolution across the minutes of these proceedings and to prepare a commemorative copy to the end that it may be presented to our honoree at a time and place deemed appropriate by the Sponsor.

Introduced on the 26th day of September, 2014 by:

**Honorable Lyda Krewson, Alderwoman 28th Ward**

Adopted this the 26th day of September, 2014 as attested by:

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David W. Sweeney  
Clerk, Board of Aldermen

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Lewis E. Reed  
President, Board of Aldermen