

Temple Beth Sholom - Code of Ethics

Introduction

This CODE OF ETHICS (“Code”) articulates and codifies principles and expectations for the highest standard of conduct and ethical behavior for the Temple Beth Sholom community. It mirrors our core Jewish values, and is dedicated to ensuring that TBS is a safe, welcoming, and sacred environment for all (*Kehilah*). The Code was developed by a committee comprised of clergy, lay leaders, and staff, and was approved by the Board of Trustees. It is a living document. Review and revisions of the Code is a recurring responsibility of TBS, and is essential to ensuring the Code’s relevance and effectiveness.

While this Code concerns the actions of the entire Temple community, it is important to note that actions by employer/employees are governed by the TBS Employment Manual. Similarly, complaints involving TBS professionals would be referred – upon investigation and consideration by the Ethical Conduct Committee – to the appropriate organization: Rabbis to the Central Conference of American Rabbis; Cantors to the American Conference of Cantors; Executive Directors and Synagogue Administrators to the National Association for Temple Administration, and Educators to the Association of Reform Jewish Educators.

Accordingly, this Code applies directly to the Temple Beth Sholom community, which includes volunteers, congregational members, lay leaders, guests, and participants, whether attending and participating in a TBS program or activity in its physical building, online, or offsite. Guests and vendors are also governed by the “Respectful Events Policy”, and Officers and Board of Trustees by the “Brit Avodah: Covenant of Service”, which members sign annually.

Our Principles:

Holiness (*K’dushah*)

Jewish values embody the teaching that every human being is created in the image of God (*b’tzelem Elohim*). TBS respectfully welcomes all who wish to engage with our sacred community without regard to religious background, age, mental or physical ability, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, or political affiliation.

We refrain from *lashon hara*, derogatory speech, negative talk, gossip, and slander, whether in person or on social media.

Honesty (*Yosher*)

TBS expects all who engage in our community to conduct themselves in an honest and accurate manner.

We make decisions regarding Temple-related matters with transparency, openness, and accountability.

We refrain from using one's Temple position for personal or professional advantage or benefit.

We conduct financial matters related to Temple involvement with complete honesty, and refrain from financial impropriety in decisions regarding restricted, committed, and discretionary funds.

We accept gifts only in accordance with gift and conflict of interest policies on such matters, always being mindful of perceptions that such acceptance may generate.

We promote open and honest communication that allows for addressing differences constructively.

We protect the confidentiality of privileged information, either about an individual or the Temple, and do not disclose it without permission, unless required by law.

We respect the efforts of others and do not take credit for their work.

We recognize, respect, and protect the intellectual property rights of our Temple and others. We obey copyright laws governing the use and distribution of published materials.

Honor (*Kavod*)

TBS values acting with integrity, decency and respect. (*derech erez*). We act solely according to the Temple's best interest when acting on its behalf.

We are bound by sacred obligation to uphold financial agreements made with the Temple. If a change in personal circumstances occurs, we will inform those charged with managing Temple finances and make appropriate arrangements.

We conduct employment practices and related decision-making in an ethical and legal manner. We establish and enforce the appropriate policies and procedures to protect the employees of the congregation. (See Employee Manual).

Justice (*Tzedek*)

TBS believes everyone entering our sacred space has the right to feel safe and respected, and that we are morally and ethically responsible for one another.

As partners in a Jewish community, we have an ethical obligation to protect victims of abuse or neglect, including spousal abuse, child abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and other types of domestic violence, no matter where they occur.

We oppose bullying, including any unwanted aggressive behavior, that degrades, humiliates, or oppresses another. Verbal, physical, and cyberbullying is never acceptable. Bullying includes making threats, inappropriate sexual or other comments, taunting, spreading rumors, exclusion, harming a person's body or possessions, and similar conduct using electronic media.

We do not tolerate sexual harassment, including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, physical, written, or visual conduct of a sexual nature. We must ensure that personal boundaries, including those related to romantic and sexual matters, are always respected. We are responsible for responding appropriately to allegations or discovery of boundary-crossing by others.

We do not tolerate acts or behaviors that exploit the vulnerability of another, take advantage of a power imbalance, compromise one's moral integrity, or create an intimidating, offensive, abusive, or hostile environment.

We implement this Code in a manner that balances the principles of justice (*Tzedek*) and compassion (*Rachamim*).

Communications

We understand the inherent challenges in using the internet, email, and social media, as well as texting and other electronic communications. Members of the TBS community should demonstrate respect, professionalism, and good judgment when using any such technology. Special care must be taken to protect confidentiality when using social media (e.g., blogs, message boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, social networking sites, and other sites and services that permit users to share information and photography with others).

Role and Structure of the Ethical Conduct Committee

The President of the congregation shall appoint an Ethics Officer to chair the Ethical Conduct Committee, which will meet on an *ad hoc* basis when necessary. Complaints or allegations can be made directly - or indirectly through a third party – to one or more of the members of the committee. The Ethics Officer and committee members shall be congregants who demonstrate integrity, leadership, independence, and an ability to handle challenging situations in a diplomatic and confidential manner. Members of this committee will be recused if an allegation relates to them. Members shall be:

1. Congregational ethics officer
2. Board president
3. Executive director
4. Senior rabbi
5. Congregational liaison to URJ Ethics Task Force (if applicable)

Additional members representing a special ability or skill may be appointed on an *ad hoc* basis when needed to thoroughly address a particular issue.

Reporting & Investigating Complaints or Allegations “*Do not stand idly by*” (Leviticus 19:16).

TBS shall maintain and widely communicate this Code, as well as its open and non-retaliatory policy for internal reporting of code violations.

Where the allegations raise the possibility of imminent and substantial harm, the TBS president, in consultation with the ethics chair, may take such action as deemed appropriate. Legal obligations will supersede any procedures in these provisions.

TBS is committed to promptly investigating any reported violations and requires all members of the temple community to assist in such investigations upon request.

The Ethical Conduct Committee shall be responsible for overseeing investigations and resolving all reported complaints and allegations about violations of this Code. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout any complaint management to the extent reasonable and practicable under the circumstances, and consistent with appropriate investigative and corrective action. Investigative and corrective actions will be appropriately documented, and documentation will be securely held by the Executive Director.

When an allegation is first reported to the ethics officer, the ethics officer shall, where appropriate, confer with both independent legal counsel representing TBS, and with TBS’ insurance company. If the alleged ethics violator is a member of a professional organization with its own code of ethics (e.g., CCAR, ACC, NATA, or ARJE), the ethics committee shall – upon investigation and consideration - consult with the ethics committee chair of that organization to coordinate the congregation’s process with that of the professional organization, balancing the needs of the congregation and those of the professional body. Certain situations may require notifying law enforcement and/or prosecutory bodies.

In circumstances of investigation of and/or consideration of a remedy for an ethics violation, the committee should be mindful that TBS is a sacred community. Full consideration should be given to the goals of healing and reconciliation in determining how to proceed and what actions should be taken. This suggestion is not intended to minimize the importance or the consequence of violating this Code. Rather, given the broad range of possible code violations, responses to such behavior should be proportional and sensitive to the fact that these are circumstances in which congregants are dealing with fellow congregants.

Although there is no time limitation on an individual raising an ethics complaint or TBS investigating and/or addressing alleged violations, the age of an alleged violation and the respondent’s conduct in the years since may be considered in addressing the alleged violation.

TBS may also access resources about outside ethics adjudicators through the Union for Reform Judaism.

Cooperation and Non-retaliation

All members of the TBS community are expected to cooperate with any requests to assist in an investigation. Harassment or taking adverse action affecting the employment or volunteer status of any individual who makes a good faith report of unethical conduct under the Code is itself unethical conduct and violates this Code. Good faith reporters and participants in any part of the complaint and investigation process should expect to endure no form of retaliation for their participation.

Confidentiality

Complaints and investigations about alleged or suspected violations of this Code, and related information, will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate and timely investigation and to prevent imminent harm. Information related to complaints and the parties involved shall be confidential; no one shall disseminate any information regarding a complaint or the facts and circumstances relating to such matters, except as necessary to conduct a fair, adequate and timely investigation, to prevent imminent and substantial harm to affected persons or TBS, or as otherwise required by law.

No member of the Ethical Conduct Committee, or other person involved in the investigation or made aware of the complaint, shall disseminate any information regarding a pending complaint to any source outside of the investigation, including the media, unless legally compelled to do so.

Click [here](#) for a printable PDF version of the Code of Conduct.

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