

Shaare Torah
Shabbat and Haggim Policy
Spring 2002

February 2002

Shaare Torah is a Conservative congregation that upholds and educates about halakhah (Jewish Law). Moreover, incorporation of the observance of Shabbat into the rhythm of our congregational life creates a sense of kedushah (holiness) to our celebrations and the work of the synagogue

1. Scope and Exceptions

- a) This policy applies to all staff, and lay leadership, and events sponsored by the congregation, including the religious school and ancillary organizations (e.g. Sisterhood, Men's Club, youth groups, etc.)
- b) Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the ritual committee, subject to review by the rabbi, who serves as the mara d'atra (decisor of Jewish law) for the congregation

2. Definition of Shabbat/Haggim

- a) Shabbat begins at candle lighting time as listed for Washington, DC in the USCJ calendar. Shabbat ends 25 hours later, and 2-day holidays end 49 hours later.
- b) The rules pertaining to Shabbat also apply to the following Haggim (festivals or holy days): 2 days of Rosh Hashanah, the first 2 days of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, Simhat Torah, the first 2 and last 2 days of Passover, 2 days of Shavuot, and Yom Kippur
- c) This policy does not apply to minor holidays except when they fall on Shabbat.

3. Preparation for and Timing of Events following Shabbat

- a) To avoid the need for driving or setting up on Shabbat, events must begin at least one hour after Shabbat ends.
- b) Setup for events which follow Shabbat must take place before Shabbat begins or no earlier than 15 minutes after Shabbat is over.

4. Food Served On Shabbat

- a) The purchasing and heating of food must be in accordance with the congregation's ***Policy on Food and Kashrut for Synagogue Activities.***
- b) Delivery of food by outside purveyors may not take place on Shabbat.
- c) Whenever possible, all food will be delivered to the place of worship or program site before Shabbat.
- d) Until such time as Shaare Torah has a permanent building, when it is not feasible to store food at the place of worship or program site (e.g. refrigerated or heated items), previously-purchased and delivered food may be transported from a congregant's home to the place of worship or program site on Shabbat. This permission applies only to food which was purchased and delivered prior to Shabbat.

- e) Kiddush or meals which immediately follow services in the same location as a Shabbat service or program are subject to this policy, even if food is provided by an individual or family and not directly by the congregation.

5. Expectations of Paid Staff and Lay Leadership

- a) The congregation understands that individuals and families establish their own patterns of religious observance with regard to Shabbat. Lay leaders and employees of the congregation are expected to provide leadership in regard to learning about and demonstrating a commitment to halakhah, especially as regards work done for the sake of the synagogue. Therefore, lay leaders and employees of the congregation may not engage in the following activities on Shabbat:
 - 1. Phone calls and emails which relate to synagogue business, including checking the synagogue message line and postings to the listserv or other synagogue lists
 - 2. Handling of synagogue funds and associated record keeping
 - 3. Mailing of synagogue materials (materials may be deposited before Shabbat begins) or retrieval of synagogue mail.
 - 4. Work on written or electronic materials related to synagogue programs, publicity, and administration.
 - 5. Synagogue committee meetings.
 - 6. Purchase of materials for use by the synagogue.
- b) Violation of this policy by paid staff of the synagogue is cause for dismissal, as recommended by the personnel committee.
- c) The above expectations of paid staff and consequences for violation of this policy will be made a part of all future employment agreements.

6. Programs on Shabbat

- a) Programs held on Shabbat may not involve activities which involve *melakhah* (“work” as defined by halakhah). This includes writing (such as using pencils, crayons, chalk, markers), cutting, pasting, and other types of craft projects.
- b) Stickers used in craft projects or for administrative records are not permitted. *Pre-printed* name tags and stickers given as prizes (which are affixed to clothing on a temporary basis) are permitted.
- c) Whenever possible, all materials should be brought to the site of the service or program before Shabbat.
- d) Use of recorded music, instrumental music, or electronic devices is not permitted during services or programs.
- e) Use of recording devices such as video recorders, audio recorders, or photography is not permitted during programs or services.
- f) Use of microphones will be limited to situations where large numbers of people are involved (e.g. High Holidays, b’nai mitzvah ceremonies) and upon the approval of the ritual committee and subject to review by the rabbi, who serves as the mara d’atra (decisor of Jewish law) for the congregation. Delivery of such equipment may not take place on Shabbat. Setup should not be done on Shabbat unless approved in advance by the ritual committee or the rabbi.

- g) Lighting candles or other use of fire is prohibited. Candles lit as part of the observance of Shabbat must be done before Shabbat begins; Havdalah may not begin until Shabbat has ended.
 - h) Toys used for programs or babysitting must be appropriate for Shabbat. This means excluding those which involve writing or stickers (as detailed above), as well as battery operated or electronic toys, and musical toys.
 - i) The above restrictions apply to programs sponsored by an individual or family which directly follow worship services which are held in the same facility as the service.
7. Conduct of participants and attendees during Shabbat services and programs.
- a) The following may not occur within the building during Shabbat:
 - 1. Use of cell phones, beepers, and other electronic communication devices, except for situations to preserve human life (i.e., doctors on call). In such exceptional cases, use of such devices should be unobtrusive.
 - 2. Use of electronic toys or craft materials in the building (provided by synagogue as detailed above or parents)
 - 3. Smoking
 - 4. Use of recording devices as described in section 7 above.
 - b) The ritual committee will communicate these elements with sensitivity to the congregation and its guests (e.g. signs, ushers/greeters).