



## ETHICS CODE

### PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Congregation Beth Shalom is a Reform Jewish community that exists in the context of our people's covenantal relationship with God. Ours is a vibrant, multi-generational congregation, guided by tradition, grounded in the modern world, and infused with the sacred values of our faith.

Congregation Beth Shalom is an inclusive congregation that demonstrates respect for the needs of all. Through worship, learning, and a concern for social justice, we strive to better ourselves, our community, and the world at large.

Our Jewish values embody the teaching that every human being is created in the image of God (b'tzelem Elohim). We therefore strive to hold ourselves to the highest standards of personal integrity, social responsibility, and human decency. When we behave ethically and hold ourselves accountable, Congregation Beth Shalom is a safe, welcoming, and sacred environment.

This values-based code of ethics sets forth the principles and expectations for adherence to standards of conduct for our clergy, congregants, staff, visitors, and guests, whether participating in a Congregation Beth Shalom activity that is in the building, online, or offsite.

### PART 2: CODE OF ETHICS

#### EXEMPLIFY HOLINESS (K'DUSHAH)

Congregation Beth Shalom welcomes all who wish to engage with our sacred community.

- ✧ We embrace everyone without regard to religious background, age, ability, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, or socioeconomic status.
- ✧ We strive to make all who participate in our community feel a sense of belonging with the expectation that their ideas and concerns can be openly stated and responded to with respect.

#### **INCLUSIVITY AND RESPECT**

*Every individual who enters our holy community is valued. Congregants and staff members will conduct themselves and their relationships in an open and honest way, treating others with respect, dignity, and fairness in accordance with the Jewish value of derech erez (decency and respect). To that end, congregants and staff members will:*

- *Conduct themselves with good manners and common courtesy.*
- *Refrain from lashon hara (negative talk, gossip, and slander).*
- *Refrain from derogatory speech.*
- *Encourage open discussion, while maintaining confidences.*
- *Express openness and willingness to engage with all other congregants and staff members and support one another's work.*

## **HONESTY (YOSHER)**

Congregation Beth Shalom expects all who engage in our community to conduct themselves in an honest manner.

- ✧ 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 synagogue, and do not disclose it without permission. For example, this includes personnel information such as employment status, compensation, and performance review, as well as personal information about an individual's health, financial status, or family matters.
- ✧ 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 synagogue and others. We obey copyright laws governing the use and distribution of published materials.
- ✧ We make decisions regarding synagogue-related matters with transparency, openness and accountability, unless confidentiality dictates otherwise. For example, it is especially important that we protect inadvertent and premature release of names of candidates for employment. This includes adhering to placement guidelines of the CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis), ACC (American Conference of Cantors), and ARJE (Association of Reform Jewish Educators) when hiring clergy.

### **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY**

*We are expected to behave in a manner that brings credit to our congregation and to the community. This behavior includes, but is not limited to:*

- *Conducting ourselves in an honest manner and being truthful in communications and conduct.*
- *Conducting all financial affairs with complete honesty and integrity and refraining from financial impropriety (e.g., embezzlement, nonpayment of just debts, inappropriate use of restricted funds, or tax evasion).*
- *Representing accomplishments and achievements accurately.*
- *Considering the impact of accepting gifts (such as a clergy or staff member's acceptance of a gift from a congregant; a congregant's or staff member's acceptance of a gift from a synagogue vendor) and accepting gifts only in accordance with gift and conflict of interest policies on such matters, always being mindful of perceptions that such acceptance may generate.*
- *Refraining from hiring or firing, rewarding or punishing staff or volunteers, and awarding or denying contracts based solely on personal considerations (e.g., favoritism, nepotism, or bribery).*
- *Establishing and enforcing the appropriate procedures to protect the assets of the Congregation.*
- *Staying informed of and providing accurate information on issues, practices, policies, rules, regulations, and laws that govern our work, professional, and volunteer activities – always striving to implement them in a forthright, fair, and equitable manner.*
- *Reporting unethical or illegal conduct to appropriate internal and/or external authorities.*
- *Recognizing, respecting, and protecting the intellectual property rights and contributions of others, including complying with copyright laws that govern how published materials are used and distributed.*

### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

*Synagogue partners should avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest. Those in positions of authority and influence, including members of the board, officers, and staff members, must conduct all congregational business in a manner that is morally, ethically, and fiscally of the highest order and can bear public scrutiny at all times. Decisions of the board, officers, and staff must always be guided by the policies of the synagogue and in its best interests.*

*Wherever possible, conduct should be based solely on the best interests of the synagogue under applicable laws and regulations. Actions should not be influenced by personal considerations or the appearance of such factors.*

### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (Continued)**

For our purposes, a “conflict of interest” means one or more of these scenarios:

- A transaction in which a synagogue partner or a close family member has a direct or indirect interest, financial or otherwise, in the outcome of any transaction or matter involving the synagogue.
- Considerations or competing interests exist, real or perceived, for an interested partner, other than the best interests of the synagogue.
- A situation in which a synagogue partner has a relationship with other parties that might reasonably be expected to affect the conduct of the congregant or staff member in a manner inconsistent with the overriding duty he or she has to advance the interest of the synagogue.

When acting on behalf of the synagogue, a congregant or staff member should never, without full disclosure and appropriate approvals from relevant synagogue leaders:

- Divulge or release proprietary or confidential information about the synagogue, its deliberations, or congregants and staff members.
- Obtain personal advantage or benefit due to one’s synagogue position.
- Use the synagogue’s property or resources for personal benefit.

A potential conflict of interest can be difficult to discern. It may arise in settings beyond the obvious business relationship setting (e.g., the acceptance of gifts, honoraria, royalties, or using intellectual property that belongs to the synagogue). Congregants and staff members must consult others about any real or potential conflicts and assist one another to resolve any such conflicts.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality involves preserving information, especially as it pertains to personal or private information about congregants, employees, volunteers, and business and financial data of the synagogue. Personal and financial information is confidential and should not be discussed or disclosed without permission. Even well-meaning disclosure of information revealed in confidence may have damaging results. Care should be taken to ensure that confidential conversations are not overheard and that any documents containing confidential information are not left in the open or inadvertently shared. Under certain circumstances, however, it may be necessary to share otherwise confidential information to avoid harm. As special diligence is required for employment discussions, the community shall:

- Protect information to which we have access by way of a “need-to-know” to support our professional roles in the congregation, including personnel information related to employment status or progression, compensation, performance management, etc.
- Discourage the seeking of employment-related information about others.
- Refrain from speculation about other synagogue partners’ personal situations (e.g., health, financial difficulty, marital problems).
- Refrain from sharing, even with family members, information obtained in confidence (e.g., in an executive session of a board meeting).
- Establish and strictly follow procedures when conducting personnel searches, including, in the case of clergy, guidance from their professional organizations (e.g., CCAR or ACC). It is especially important to prevent inadvertent and untimely release of candidate names and prior employment details.

There are inherent challenges in using the internet, email, and social media, as well as texting and other electronic communications. Synagogue partners 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).

## **HONOR (KAVOD)**

Congregation Beth Shalom values acting with integrity.

- ✧ We act solely according to the synagogue's best interest when acting on its behalf.
- ✧ We refrain from using one's synagogue position for personal advantage or benefit. For example, we refrain from hiring or firing, rewarding or punishing staff or volunteers, and awarding or denying contracts based solely on personal considerations such as favoritism, nepotism, or bribery.
- ✧ We conduct financial matters related to synagogue involvement with complete honesty. For example, we refrain from financial impropriety in decisions regarding restricted, committed, and discretionary funds.
- ✧ We are bound by sacred obligation to uphold financial agreements made with the synagogue. If a change in personal circumstances occurs, we will inform those charged with managing synagogue 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, such as fair employment policies, grievance reporting, and conflict resolution procedures.

### **SOCIAL AND PUBLIC PERSONA**

*Leaders' behavior outside the synagogue, which may seem private, could affect not only our own reputations, but also that of our synagogue. We must gauge our actions accordingly.*

*A positive reputation, including our presence on social media, is one of the most difficult assets to establish and one of the easiest to lose. We should be mindful of when our personal communications could be misconstrued as representing the views of the synagogue or another organization, and we should refrain from communications that are inappropriate (e.g., obscene content and defamatory statements).*

### **INCLUSION AND DISCRIMINATION**

*Environment and policies that promote respect for every individual in our congregation and our community regardless of: ancestry, age, disability (mental, physical or emotional), genetic information, gender, gender identity or expression, marital status, medical condition, military or veteran status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, financial means, or political affiliation.*

### **EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES: HIRING, DISCIPLINE AND TERMINATION**

*Decision making is undertaken in an ethical and legal manner. Those synagogue partners who engage in such matters have a responsibility to:*

- *Conduct all personnel matters with integrity.*
- *Implement hiring, discipline, termination, and other employment practices in a forthright, fair, legal, and equitable manner.*
- *Establish and enforce the appropriate policies and procedures to protect the employees of the congregation, including fair employment policies, grievance reporting, and conflict resolution procedures.*
- *Refrain from hiring or firing, rewarding or punishing, and awarding or denying benefits based on personal considerations, including but not limited to, favoritism, nepotism, or bribery.*
- *Stay informed of, compliant with, and provide accurate information on issues, practices, policies, rules, regulations, and laws that govern our work, professional, and volunteer activities.*
- *Report unethical or illegal conduct to appropriate internal and/or external authorities. Ensure rigorous adherence to effective procedures that respond to grievances, incidents and needs.*

## COMPASSION (RACHAMIM)

Congregation Beth Shalom embraces the fundamental value of performing acts of lovingkindness (*g'milut chasadim*).

- ✧ We treat others with respect, dignity, fairness, and compassion.
- ✧ We refrain from derogatory speech, negative talk, gossip, and slander, whether in person or on social media.
- ✧ We oppose bullying, including any unwanted behavior that degrades, humiliates, or oppresses another. Verbal, physical, or cyberbullying is never acceptable.

## JUSTICE (TZEDEK)

Congregation Beth Shalom 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 (*kol yisrael areivim zeh bazeh*).

- ✧ 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 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 strive to protect those who appear to be the victims of abuse or neglect, including spousal abuse, child abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and other types of domestic violence.

Procedures for addressing allegations of unethical behavior are available on request from Congregation Beth Shalom main office.

### PERSONAL BOUNDARIES AND HARASSMENT

*As synagogue partners, we must ensure that personal boundaries, including those related to romantic and sexual matters, are always respected. We also are responsible for responding appropriately to allegations or discovery of boundary-crossing by others. Synagogue partners should never:*

- *Engage in any act or behavior, even if it appears to be consensual, that exploits the vulnerability of another, takes advantage of a power imbalance, compromises one's moral integrity, or creates an intimidating, offensive, abusive, or hostile environment.*
- *Use a position or authority to intimidate, bully, or unduly influence others or allow other partners or guests of the synagogue to do so.*
- *Engage in abusive, harassing, or bullying behavior or unlawful discrimination.*

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND MISCONDUCT

*Whether explicit or implicit, expectations of sexual favor as a condition of a person's employment or as they affect a person's standing within the community are unethical. Such conduct unreasonably interferes with a person's work or volunteer performance and creates an intimidating, hostile, and an offensive working environment.*

*The following categories of behavior are inherently unethical and never acceptable in the synagogue community:*

- *Sexual abuse, including of a child.*
- *Sexual activity with a person who is legally incompetent or otherwise unable to give consent.*
- *Physical assaults or violence, or any attempt to commit such acts.*
- *Unwanted, intentional physical contact.*
- *Possession of or sharing of pornographic or sexually explicit material.*
- *Unwelcome sexual activities, advances, comments, bullying, electronic communications, stalking or invasion of privacy.*
- *Direct or implied threats that submission to sexual advances will be a condition of employment, promotion, or affiliation with the synagogue.*

### **PART 3: ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR**

Congregation Beth Shalom Ethics Code will be made available to all congregants, staff, and clergy. Visitors and guests will be able to see the Code, on request, from the Congregation Beth Shalom main office. The Code will also be published on the Congregation Beth Shalom website. The Code, and Addressing Allegations of Unethical Behavior document, will be updated as appropriate. Examples contained in the Code are not all-inclusive.

*Review and revision of the code is a recurring responsibility of the synagogue and is essential to ensuring the code's currency and relevance, and to enhancing its accuracy and comprehensiveness. Modifications to the code may be proposed to the ethics committee by any partner. Revisions to the code shall be approved by the synagogue board of directors.*

#### **THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES DELINEATE HOW ALLEGATIONS OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR BASED ON THE CONGREGATION BETH SHALOM ETHICS CODE WILL BE ADDRESSED.**

- ☆ The synagogue president will appoint a congregant to chair an ad hoc Ethics Committee for receiving and addressing allegations of unethical behavior. They will also select a minimum of three committee members based on the following qualities: integrity, leadership, independence, and ability to handle challenging situations. The synagogue president shall be an ex-officio member of the Ethics Committee. The synagogue president, if unable to serve, shall appoint a member of the Executive Committee to serve in that capacity. Members of the Ethics Committee must recuse themselves if an allegation pertains to them in any way.
- ☆ An allegation of unethical behavior, oral or in writing, should be directed to the synagogue president, rabbi, or Ethics Committee chair. In order to initiate an Ethics Committee process, the person who received the allegation will share the information with the other two. If the allegation pertains to any one of the three, that person must recuse themselves.
- ☆ If an allegation of unethical behavior pertains to a member of a professional organization with its own code of ethics such as the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), American Conference of Cantors (ACC), Association of Reform Jewish Educators (ARJE), National Association for Temple Administration (NATA), or Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), the Ethics Committee will determine whether to handle the allegation or refer it to the appropriate organization.

*If the alleged ethics violator is a member of a professional organization with its own code of ethics (e.g., CCAR, ACC, NATA, ARJE or the URJ), the committee should 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.*

- ☆ When an allegation of unethical behavior is made to the Ethics Committee chair, the chair will decide with the synagogue president whether they should consult independent legal counsel representing the synagogue.

*Congregation Beth Shalom shall strive to be knowledgeable of state laws addressing nonprofits, employment matters, administrative or law enforcement reporting duties, and other relevant legal requirements. When an allegation is first reported to the synagogue president, rabbi, or Ethics Committee chair, it may be prudent or necessary to consult or hire legal counsel when addressing allegations of unethical behavior, especially allegations involving more grievous allegations. Notice may also need to be made to the synagogue's insurance company.*

- ☆ Where an allegation raises the possibility of imminent and substantial harm to the person(s) of concern, legal obligations will take precedence and supersede any procedures otherwise delineated by this Code. The synagogue president, in consultation with the Ethics Committee chair, may take such action as deemed appropriate.
- ☆ The Ethics Committee will decide on a process that includes information gathering, deliberation, and resolution based on the particularities of each allegation that is received. All efforts will be made to resolve matters as promptly as possible.
- ☆ Everyone involved in an Ethics Committee process is expected to comply with all Ethics Committee requests to assist in information gathering. All steps, from an initial allegation of unethical conduct to ultimate resolution, will be documented in writing by the Ethics Committee.
- ☆ Confidentiality will be maintained throughout any Ethics Committee process to the extent practicable and consistent with thorough assessment and restoration of the matter.

*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 the synagogue, or as otherwise required by law. No member of the ethics 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.*

- ☆ All attempts will be made to protect those who make an allegation of unethical behavior from retaliation.

*Harassment or taking adverse action affecting the employment or volunteer status of any partner 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.*

- ☆ Ethics Committee processes will balance the Jewish principles of judgment (*din*) and compassion (*rachamim*). All allegations will be responded to with sensitivity and compassion. Judgment will be withheld pending completion of a full evaluation. During information gathering and/or consideration of a resolution for an ethics violation, the committee shall bear in mind that, as a sacred community, healing and reconciliation are important goals to achieve.

*In circumstances of investigation of and/or consideration of a remedy for an ethics violation, the committee should be mindful that the congregation 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 synagogue partners.*

- ☆ While there is no time limit to making an allegation of unethical behavior, the time that has elapsed since the alleged violation will be one of many factors in the totality of circumstances considered by the Ethics Committee.

*Although there is no time limitation on a synagogue partner raising an ethics complaint or the synagogue 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.*



## ADDENDUM: FORMAT FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGED ETHICS CODE VIOLATION

The Congregation Beth Shalom Ethics Code will be made available to all congregants, staff, and clergy. The Code will also be published on the congregation website and will be available in the synagogue office. The synagogue is committed to promptly investigating any reported violations. The following procedures delineate how allegations of unethical behavior based on the Ethics Code will be addressed.

1. The synagogue president will appoint a congregant to chair an ad hoc Ethics Committee for receiving and addressing allegations of unethical behavior. Together they will select a minimum of three committee members based on the following qualities: good judgment, integrity, leadership, independence and ability to handle challenging situations. Members should be able to balance a strong sense of right and wrong with an ability to see multiple sides of a situation. If the congregation By-Laws require it, the appointment of committee members is subject to review by the Board. The synagogue president shall be an *ex-officio* member of the Ethics Committee. The synagogue president, if unable to serve, shall appoint a member of the Executive Committee to serve in that capacity. Members of the Ethics Committee must recuse themselves if an allegation pertains to them in any way.
2. An allegation of unethical behavior should be directed to the synagogue president, Rabbi, or Ethics Committee Chair. To initiate an Ethics Committee process, the person who received the allegation will share the information with the other two. If the allegation pertains to any one of the three, that person must recuse himself.
3. If the alleged ethics violator is a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), American Conference of Cantors (ACC), Association of Reform Jewish Educators (ARJE), National Association for Temple Administration (NATA), or Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), the Ethics Committee must 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.
4. When an allegation of unethical behavior is made to the Ethics Committee Chair, the Chair will decide with the synagogue president whether they should consult independent legal counsel representing the synagogue.
5. Where an allegation raises the possibility of imminent and substantial harm to the person(s) of concern, legal obligations take precedence and supersede any procedures otherwise delineated by this Code. The synagogue president, in consultation with the Ethics Committee Chair, may take such action as deemed appropriate.
6. The Ethics Committee will decide on a process that includes information gathering, deliberation, and resolution based on the particularities of each allegation that is received. All efforts will be made to resolve matters as promptly as possible.
7. Everyone involved in an Ethics Committee process is expected to comply with all Ethics Committee requests to assist in information gathering. All members and staff are expected to cooperate with any requests to assist in an investigation. Failure to do so is itself an ethical violation and may lead to sanctions as the Ethics Committee may deem appropriate, subject to review by the Board upon request of the person sanctioned.
8. All steps, from an initial allegation of unethical conduct to ultimate resolution, will be documented in writing by the Ethics Committee.
9. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout any Ethics Committee process to the extent practicable and consistent with thorough assessment and resolution of the matter.
10. Harassment or taking adverse action affecting the employment or volunteer status of anyone who makes a good faith report of unethical conduct under the Code is itself unethical conduct and violates the 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.





11. Ethics Committee processes will balance the Jewish principles of judgment (*din*) and compassion (*rachamim*).
  - a. All allegations will be responded to with sensitivity and compassion. Judgment will be withheld pending completion of a full evaluation.
  - b. During information gathering and/or consideration of a resolution for an ethics violation, the committee shall bear in mind that, as a sacred community, healing and reconciliation are important goals to achieve.
12. While there is no time limit to making an allegation of unethical behavior, the time that has elapsed since the alleged violation will be one of many factors in the totality of circumstances considered by the Ethics Committee in weighing appropriate sanctions. Every possible attempt will be made to conclude the matter as soon as possible. Possible outcomes may include but are not limited to:
  - a. Satisfactory resolution of the issue, as agreed upon by the individuals involved in the complaint;
  - b. Continued contention or disagreement between the individuals, with an agreement to move forward with the complaint;
  - c. Continued disagreement and request for additional intervention and/or appeal; and
  - d. Recommendation to the Board by the Committee that one or more involved individuals be removed from congregational membership or have a probationary period defined and implemented. In such cases, the Rabbi is also informed and consulted regarding a final plan.
13. All steps in the process, from initial allegation to ultimate or recommended resolution, are documented in a report written by the Ethics Committee. The Committee must review the report, and once finalized, the Chair provides this confidential document to the Board President and the Rabbi for their approval. They may request further action, including the possibility of consulting legal counsel if this has not already been done. The final report is then given to the involved individuals.
14. The final report and the outcome documentation will be kept by the Rabbi in a locked confidential file.
15. If any of the involved individuals are unsatisfied with the outcome, they may request reconsideration (herein referred to as an appeal) within 20 days of receiving the results by submitting a written request for reconsideration to the Chair.
16. The Board President reviews and addresses all appeals, except for the following:
  - a. Appeals regarding issues involving employees will be referred to the Executive Board or the Personnel Committee;
  - b. Appeals regarding legal issues will be referred to the congregation's counsel.
17. Acknowledgment of receipt of requests for reconsideration will be provided within 5 days. Every effort will be made to provide the requestor with a final decision within a reasonable time frame.
18. The process for addressing the appeal is determined by the person/group charged with the reconsideration and will include a review of the findings of the initial complaint. The person appealing may request additional investigation or other discussions with the parties to the complaint.
19. A written final decision will be provided to the requesting party within 5 days of the final determination.