

Enrollment in Congregation B'nai Israel Religious School

July 8, 2010

Q: Can a child who is receiving religious training in another faith, or being raised in another faith, also enroll in the B'nai Israel Religious School?

A: Our congregation strives to provide a welcoming environment and place of belonging for all of our members. We recognize that interfaith families are an integral part of our sacred community, and we welcome the participation of each of our congregants in exploring the depths and joys of Jewish life.

The issues surrounding the religious education of children of interfaith families are complex and challenging. We admire and appreciate the many parents, brought up in other religions, who are raising their children as Jews with pride, love, and open support. Our Religious School reflects these same goals by teaching Judaism as a faith that is lived, so that our students can develop a strong, positive Jewish identity that reflects a relationship to God, Torah and Israel. We therefore expect that students not practice, profess beliefs, or receive formal training in any faith other than Judaism. This is not to preclude a family from sharing the religious traditions of non-Jewish family members, such as holiday celebrations with extended family. A non-Jewish parent should be free to share cultural traditions and not be made to feel invisible in a child's religious life.

However, participation in cultural and family traditions should be distinguished from formal religious training. As the Union for Reform Judaism has emphasized, enrolling a child in the religious education program of another faith is contrary to theological principles, as a person cannot identify as both Jewish and Christian (or as an adherent of any other faith). Dual enrollment places a child in an untenable position for spiritual development. It is also incongruent with the mission of Jewish religious schools to teach Judaism as a living faith and to enable students to develop strong Jewish identities.ⁱ

Therefore, it is the policy of Congregation B'nai Israel that students registered in our Religious School be raised as Jews and not receive formal religious education in any other religion. To assure that this policy is communicated and understood, the Senior Rabbi shall provide a process for all parents/guardians to positively acknowledge this policy as a condition of Religious School enrollment

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on July 8, 2010, upon the recommendation of the Religious Practices Committee and the Religious School Committee.

ⁱ 1995 Resolution of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, "Enrollment Policies in Reform Religious Schools."