

TEMPLE BETH-EL
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

CODE OF ETHICS

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SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

The mission of Temple Beth-El, the historic heart of Reform Judaism in San Antonio, is to provide a sacred framework that inspires people to cultivate their Jewish lives. Our Congregation's sanctity and strength depend largely on the degree to which we hold ourselves to the highest standards of personal integrity, social responsibility, and human decency.

Our Jewish values embody the teaching that every human being is created in the image of God (*b'tzelem Elohim*). When we behave ethically and hold ourselves accountable, Congregation Beth-El (also referred to as Temple Beth-El) is a safe, welcoming, and sacred environment.

SECTION II. CODE OF ETHICS

Although not encompassing every possible concern, this Code of Ethics outlines the principles and expectations for standards of conduct for all persons, including but not limited to Congregation members, lay leaders, clergy, staff, guests, and persons who engage with Temple Beth-El – both within our *Bayit* (home) and “Beyond the Dome.”

The fact that Congregation Beth-El has adopted an Ethics Code will be made known in a prominent and appropriate manner. A copy of the Ethics Code, in its entirety, will be readily available from the Executive Director. The Ethics Code will also be published on the Congregation Beth-El website.

Review and revision of the Ethics Code shall be conducted not less than once every five (5) years. Revisions to the Ethics Code shall be approved by the Board of Trustees for Congregation Beth-El.

Exemplify Holiness (*K'dushah*)

Congregation Beth-El welcomes all who wish to engage with our sacred community by:

- ✧ Embracing everyone without regard to religious background, age, ability, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, or socioeconomic status.
- ✧ Striving to make all who participate in our community feel a sense of belonging. Everyone in our Congregation should feel that their ideas and concerns may be openly stated and responded to with respect.

- ✧ Treating each other with respect, dignity, and fairness in accordance with the Jewish value of *derech eretz* (decency and respect).
- ✧ Refraining from *lashon hara* (negative talk, gossip, and slander).

Honesty (*Yosher*)

Congregation Beth-El expects all who engage in our community to conduct themselves in an honest manner by:

- ✧ Promoting open and honest communication, which allows us to address our differences constructively.
- ✧ Protecting confidentiality of privileged information, and not disclosing it without permission of those to whom it pertains. This includes but is not limited to 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.
- ✧ Respecting the efforts of others and not taking credit for someone else's work.
- ✧ Recognizing, respecting, and protecting the intellectual property rights of those to whom it belongs.
- ✧ Obeying copyright laws governing the use and distribution of published materials.
- ✧ Making decisions regarding administrative related matters with transparency, openness and accountability, unless confidentiality dictates otherwise. For example, it is especially important to protect against 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.
- ✧ Behaving in a manner that brings credit to the Congregation. This behavior includes, but is not limited to the following:
 - Conducting oneself 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.
 - Recognizing that accepting gifts from members, community members, and vendors may result in a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.
 - Refraining from favoritism, nepotism, or implicit bias in all employment matters, such as hiring, firing, promoting, or granting contracts.
 - Establishing and enforcing the appropriate procedures to protect the assets of Congregation Beth-El.

- 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.
- ☆ Avoiding 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 always bear public scrutiny.
- ☆ Never, without full disclosure and appropriate approvals from relevant leaders of Congregation Beth-El, do the following:
- Divulge or release proprietary or confidential information about Congregation Beth-El, its deliberations, or members and staff members.
 - Obtain personal advantage or benefit due to one's position at the Congregation.
 - Use the Congregation's property or resources for personal benefit.
- ☆ Preserving confidential information, especially as it pertains to personal or private information about members, employees, volunteers, and business and financial data of the Congregation. 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.
- ☆ Congregation Beth-El leaders should exercise caution when communicating confidential information in emails, and take reasonable steps to secure the access of said emails which may contain confidential information. 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:
- Refrain from speculation about other Congregation members' or any other persons who engage with Congregation Beth-El's 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 Congregation Beth-El Board of Trustees meeting).
 - Establish and strictly follow procedures when conducting personnel searches, including, in the case of clergy, guidance from professional organizations (e.g., CCAR or ACC). It is especially important to prevent

inadvertent and untimely release of candidate names and prior employment details.

Honor (*Kavod*)

Congregation Beth-El values acting with integrity by:

- ✧ Acting solely according to the Congregation's best interest when acting on its behalf.
- ✧ Conducting financial matters related to Congregation Beth-El's involvement with complete honesty. For example, refraining from financial impropriety in decisions regarding restricted, committed, and discretionary funds.
- ✧ Conducting employment practices and related decision-making in an ethical and legal manner. Establishing and enforcing the appropriate policies and procedures to protect the employees of the Congregation, such as fair employment policies, grievance reporting, and conflict resolution procedures.
- ✧ Performing appropriate behavior outside the Congregation Beth-El. The behavior, which may seem private, may affect not only a member's own reputations but also that of Congregation Beth-El.
- ✧ Establishing an honorable reputation. Presence on social media is one of the most difficult assets to establish an honorable reputation and one of the easiest in which to lose a favorable reputation. Care should be taken to refrain from communications that are inappropriate (e.g., obscene content and defamatory statements) and to prevent personal communications from appearing to represent the views of Congregation Beth-El.
- ✧ Requiring vendors and other entities (Partners) working with Congregation Beth-El demonstrate respect, consideration and abide by applicable law for their employees. Congregation Beth-El's Partners 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 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.
 - 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*)

Temple Beth-El embraces the fundamental value of performing acts of loving kindness (*g'milut chasadim*) by:

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

Justice (*Tzedek*)

Temple Beth-El believes everyone entering our sacred space has the right to feel safe and respected. We believe that we are morally and ethically responsible for one another (*kol yisrael areivim zeh bazeh*) by NOT:

- ✧ Tolerating sexual harassment, including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, physical, or written, conduct of a sexual nature.
- ✧ Tolerating explicit or implicit, expectations of sexual favor as a condition of a person's employment or standing within the Congregation.
- ✧ Tolerating 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.
- ✧ Tolerating any of the following behaviors in our community:
 - Sexual abuse of any person including minors.
 - 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.
 - Unwelcome sexual activities, advances, comments, bullying, electronic communications, stalking or invasion of privacy.

Support (*Hatsilu*)

Congregation Beth-El recognizes the Covenant (*Brit*) between our members and future generations to assure the healthy continuation of our Congregation.

- ✧ Committing time, talents, and leadership to the growth and development of Congregation Beth-El.
- ✧ Striving to attend and participate in the activities and programs of Congregation Beth-El and its auxiliaries.
- ✧ Affirming obligations to financially support and maintain Congregation Beth-El and to uphold financial agreements made.

SECTION III. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING, INVESTIGATING AND ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Temple Beth-El provides members with a confidential avenue for addressing alleged breaches of our Congregation's Code of Ethics.

Confidentiality shall be maintained throughout the process to the extent practicable and consistent with thorough assessment and resolution of the matter. No person 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.

No person who in good faith reports or assists in the investigation of a violation of the Code of Ethics shall suffer retaliation, harassment, or adverse employment consequences. Retaliation against any person who makes an allegation (complainant) or is involved with investigating a report of unethical conduct under the Code of Ethics is itself unethical conduct and will be investigated as such.

PART 2: REPORTING

1. An allegation of unethical behavior should be directed to the President of the Congregation, member of the Clergy, or the Executive Director. The communication may include a request for a confidential meeting to discuss the incident or a written description of the incident generating the allegation.
2. Within 14 days of receipt of any allegation, the President of the Congregation will establish a special Ethics Committee and appoint a Chair. The Ethics Committee shall consist of the Ethics Committee Chair, President of the Congregation, Senior Rabbi, and Executive Director. Additionally, the Ethics Committee will consist of a minimum of three (3) members appointed by the Chair, based upon the following qualities: good judgment, integrity, leadership, independence, and ability to handle challenging situations.
3. Any individual identified in an allegation may not serve as a member of the Ethics Committee and must recuse themselves if an allegation pertains to them or their family in any way.
 - a. If the President of the Congregation is unable to serve, the Senior Vice President shall serve in that capacity.
 - b. If the Senior Rabbi is unable to serve, the Assistant or Associate Rabbi will serve in that capacity.

4. When an allegation of unethical behavior is made to the Ethics Committee, the President of the Congregation, in consultation with the Ethics Committee Chair, will decide whether they should consult independent legal counsel representing the Congregation.
5. 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 consult with the Ethics Committee Chair of the appropriate organization to determine if there is any conflict between Congregation Beth-El's process and that of the professional organization. If there is a conflict, then the ethics process of the professional organization will take precedence over this Ethics Code.
6. In addition to this Code of Ethics, all employees of Temple Beth-El are subject to the most recent version of the Congregation's Human Resource Policies and Procedures.

PART 3: INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS

1. Additional communication between the Ethics Committee and the complainant may be necessary to determine what type of violation may have occurred, including the possibility of a criminal offense.
2. 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 President of the Congregation, in consultation with the Senior Rabbi, and Executive Director, may take such action as deemed appropriate.
3. The Ethics Committee will decide on an initial process that includes information gathering, investigation, and deliberation, based on the particularities of the allegation that is received. All efforts will be made to resolve matters as promptly as possible.
4. Within 30 days of receiving a complaint, the complainant will be contacted regarding next steps for addressing the complaint.
5. 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 deemed appropriate by the Ethics Committee and are subject to review by the Board upon request of the person sanctioned.

PART 4: CONFLICT RESOLUTION/HEALING PROCESS

Some alleged ethics violations may warrant or benefit from meetings aimed at resolving a breach between the involved individuals. The Ethics Committee Chair (or designated Ethics Committee member) may encourage and/or facilitate such a meeting if those individuals are interested and willing. Upon the request of any individuals involved, the Ethics Committee Chair shall provide referral information for professional assistance.

PART 5: OUTCOME

1. 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 that both parties have been heard, but with no further action;
 - c. Continued disagreement and request for additional intervention and/or appeal;
 - d. Recommendation to the Executive Committee by the Ethics Committee that an employee of the Congregation be terminated, suspended, have written comment added to the employee's evaluation or employment file, or other conditions for continued employment, including, but not limited to presenting a written apology to the complainant, educational courses, training, or counseling;
 - e. Recommendation to the Board by the Ethics Committee to address an ongoing business relationship (in terms of an ethical violation by a Partner); and
 - f. Recommendation to the Board by the Ethics Committee that one or more involved individuals be removed from Congregational membership or denial of an application for membership or have a probationary period defined and implemented.
 - g. A probationary period may include conditions for returning to the Congregation, including, but not limited to, presentation of a written apology to the complainant, educational course, training, or counseling recommended by the committee, community service, or other remedies suggested by the Ethics Committee based upon the individual complaint at hand.
2. 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 Ethics Committee Chair provides this confidential document to the President. The Ethics Committee 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.
3. The final report and the outcome documentation will be kept by the Executive Director in a locked, confidential file.

4. The Ethics Committee is dissolved upon completion of the final report.

PART 6: APPEALS

1. If any of the involved individuals are unsatisfied with the outcome, they may request reconsideration within 20 days of receiving the results by submitting a written request for reconsideration to the President of the Congregation, who reviews and addresses all appeals, except for the following:
 - a. Appeals regarding issues involving employees will be referred to the Executive Director;
 - b. All other appeals shall be addressed by the President of the Congregation, or the Senior Vice President in the event the President is otherwise recused or prohibited in participating in the review of the ethics violation based upon this Code of Ethics.
2. 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.
3. 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. A written final decision will be provided to the requesting party within 5 days of the final determination.