

## CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL OF WALLA WALLA ETHICS CODE

### PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Congregation Beth Israel 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 Israel 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 or lay clergy, Board of Directors, committee members, volunteers, and paid staff whether participating in a Congregation Beth Israel activity that is in the building, online, or offsite. Congregants, visitors, and guests are covered by the Code of Conduct.

### PART 2: CODE OF ETHICS

#### EXEMPLIFY HOLINESS (K'DUSHAH)

Congregation Beth Israel 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 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 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 support one another's work.

## HONESTY (YOSHER)

Congregation Beth Israel 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 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 important that we protect inadvertent and premature release of names of candidates for employment.

## 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.

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).

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 Israel 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 Israel 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 Israel 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.

## 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 Israel Ethics Code will be made available to all congregants, staff, and clergy. Visitors and guests will be able to see the Code, on request. The Code will also be published on the Congregation Beth Israel 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 Board of Directors 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 Israel ETHICS CODE WILL BE ADDRESSED.

Congregation Beth Israel's 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 building. 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. An allegation of unethical behavior should be directed to the synagogue president or other member of the Board of Directors. To initiate an Ethics Committee process, the person who received the allegation will share with the entire Board of Directors that an allegation has been received. If the allegation pertains to any member(s) of the Board of Directors, they must recuse themselves for the remainder of the investigation. The Board of Directors (less any recused members) will choose one Board member to chair an ad hoc Ethics Committee for addressing the allegation of unethical behavior. The chair will select a minimum of two additional committee members from the Congregation (non-Board members of CBI) 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.

2. 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.

3. When an allegation of unethical behavior is made, the Board of Directors will decide whether they should consult independent legal counsel representing the synagogue.

4. 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 or Board member may take such action as deemed appropriate.

5. The ad hoc 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.

6. Everyone involved in an Ethics Committee process is expected to comply with all Ethics Committee requests to assist in information gathering. All members 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.

7. All steps, from an initial allegation of unethical conduct to ultimate resolution, will be documented in writing by the Ethics Committee. A designee of the Board of Directors will maintain such records in confidence for the Board.

8. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout any Ethics Committee process to the extent practicable and consistent with thorough assessment and resolution of the matter.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. The Ethics Committee will make a recommendation to the Board of Directors of appropriate actions to take. The Board of Directors must discuss this recommendation at its next meeting in



executive session and determine an appropriate resolution. A report on any decisions or actions as a result of the recommendations will be made to the congregation.