

Temple Beth El Statement of Ethical Principles

Adopted by the Board of Directors on September 5, 2023

Overview

Temple Beth El is a vibrant and inclusive Jewish congregation located in Augusta, Maine. We adopt this Statement of Ethical Principles to affirm our identity as a welcoming, safe, and inclusive sanctuary for all who come through our doors. Jewish tradition teaches that every person is created *b'tzelem elohim*, in the Divine image. Accordingly, the cornerstones of this Statement are nondiscrimination, mutual respect, and conduct towards each other and the community at large that embodies the Jewish values of *kavod* (respect), *bitachon* (safety), and *chesed* (lovingkindness).

Expectations

At Temple Beth El we commit to providing a community where all are welcome to worship and participate in congregational programs and activities, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and where everyone can feel a sense of comfort and belonging. Being a part of our spiritual community therefore requires each of us—including members, clergy, and staff—to act in accordance with the following expectations.

Respect for Others

To ensure that our community is both respectful and welcoming, all community members are expected to be mindful of the varied ways in which inappropriate behaviors can be expressed. All members of our community should be aware of how our behavior impacts others and be sensitive to the need to address any harm that is caused.

Nondiscrimination

Everyone who desires to be part of the Temple Beth El community is welcome. It is antithetical to our principles to engage in discriminatory or offensive behavior against anyone on the basis of race, age, religion, disability, marital status, nationality or national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, hairstyle, economic status, size, weight, ethnicity, or class.

Personal Interactions

We should strive to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves (Leviticus 19:18). Members of our community should avoid engaging in interactions that are hurtful, demeaning, or bullying. Members should not instigate or escalate physical confrontations, verbal assaults, or inappropriate online behavior (e.g., using technology or social media to threaten, insult, or harass another).

We understand—and expect—that members of our community may have healthy disagreements. Individuals' ability to disagree and/or share ideas and concerns openly and without reprisal must not be compromised. Yet, each community member should recognize that utterances that are ill-spirited or hurtful, whether intentional or not, can negatively impact others and their spiritual experience.

Sexual Harassment or Misconduct

Each of us is responsible for ensuring that personal and sexual boundaries are respected. It is antithetical to our principles to engage in sexual harassment or misconduct. Examples include:

- Unwelcome verbal kidding, teasing, insults, or jokes of a sexual nature.
- Offensive visual conduct such as leering, making sexual gestures, or displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons, or posters.
- Unwelcome physical contact, such as patting, grabbing, pinching, or brushing against another's body.
- Repeated unwelcome flirtations, advances, propositions, or commentary about personal appearance.
- Sexual favoritism or bias.
- Implicitly or explicitly conditioning the conferral of any benefit on the receipt of sexual favors.

Good Governance

Officers, directors, and staff members should conduct all congregational business in a manner that is solely motivated by the best interests of Temple Beth El. They are expected to conduct all financial affairs with complete honesty, integrity, and appropriate transparency, while refraining from any form of financial impropriety. Such persons should avoid both conflicts of interest and any circumstances that would give rise to the appearance of a conflict of interest.

What To Do If You Have Concerns About Statements or Conduct Inconsistent with This Statement of Ethical Principles

If you have a concern about statements or conduct that you believe are inconsistent with this Statement of Ethical Principles, please get in touch with a member of the TBE Ethics Committee* (or, if the concern is about a member of the Committee, please get in touch with a different committee member or with the Rabbi). The Ethics Committee will then meet (without the participation of any member whose statements or conduct is involved) to discuss the best way forward, which may include individual meetings with those involved, a conversation among everyone concerned in the matter, or a referral to the Rabbi for the discussion of pastoral matters. In all cases, the Committee will inform the person raising the concern about what steps they propose to take so that the person has an opportunity to decide whether to discontinue the matter before those steps are taken. Whenever possible, the primary goal of the process will be insight and reconciliation.

In addition to being a member of the TBE community, the Rabbi is a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (the "CCAR"), which has its own Ethics Code. If you report to the TBE Ethics Committee that the Rabbi has violated the CCAR Code, the Committee may file a complaint with the CCAR unless you ask the Committee not to do so. Regardless of whether the Committee files a complaint with the CCAR, you are always free to file your own complaint with the CCAR and need not notify the TBE Ethics Committee, the Rabbi, or anyone else before or after doing so. The CCAR Ethics Code is available at: <https://www.ccarnet.org/about-us/ccar-ethics/ccar-ethics-code/>. For questions about the CCAR ethics system or reporting a complaint, email ethics@ccarnet.org. The address for filing a complaint is: Chair, Ethics Committee, Central Conference of American Rabbis, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

This Is Not a Contract or a Legal Code

This Statement of Ethical Principles is aspirational and is adopted to encourage a supportive moral and spiritual environment within the Temple Beth El community. It does not create any legal rights or obligations for anyone but is instead an identification of our community's values and a guide to the resources available to community members when disagreements arise.