

CONGREGATION BRITH SHOLEM ETHICS CODE

**PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

Congregation Brith Sholem 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 Brith Sholem 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 Brith Sholem 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, visitors, and guests, whether participating in a Congregation Brith Sholem activity that is in the building, online**,** or offsite.

**PART 2: CODE OF ETHICS**

***HOLINESS (K’DUSHAH)***

Congregation Brith Sholem 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.

**We exemplify *k’dushah* when we:**

* Conduct ourselves 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 and support one another’s work.

***HONESTY (YOSHER)***

Congregation Brith Sholem 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. 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.

**We exemplify *yosher* when we:**

* Conduct ourselves in an honest manner and being truthful in communications and conduct.
* Conduct 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).
* Represent accomplishments and achievements accurately.
* Establish and enforce appropriate procedures to protect the assets of the Congregation.
* Stay informed and provide 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.
* Report unethical or illegal conduct to appropriate internal and/or external authorities.
* Recognize, respect, and protect 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 clergy, 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 and officers 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.

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). Board members, officers, and congregants 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, clergy, 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. Members of the community shall:

* Refrain from speculation about others’ 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).

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 Brith Sholem values acting with integrity.

✡ We act solely according to the synagogue’s best interest when acting on its behalf.

✡ We conduct financial matters related to synagogue involvement with complete honesty. 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.

✡ 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, and we should refrain from inappropriate communications.

***COMPASSION (RACHAMIM)***

Congregation Brith Sholem 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 Brith Sholem 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 violence.

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

Congregation Brith Sholem’s Ethics Code will be made available to all congregants and clergy. Visitors and guests will be able to see the Code, on request. The Code will also be published on the Congregation Brith Sholem website. The Code, and procedures for addressing allegations of unethical behavior will be updated as appropriate. Examples contained in the Code are not all-inclusive.

THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES DELINEATE HOW ALLEGATIONS OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR BASED ON THE CONGREGATION BRITH SHOLEM ETHICS CODE WILL BE ADDRESSED.

✡ The synagogue president will appoint a Board member 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. 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 or a Board member. In order to initiate an Ethics Code violation process, the person who received the allegation will share the information with the ad hoc Ethics Committee. If the allegation pertains to any member of the committee, that person must recuse themself.

✡ Should an allegation of unethical behavior be made, the synagogue president and board will determine whether independent legal counsel should be consulted to represent the synagogue.

✡ 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 particulars 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 resolution of the matter.

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

✡ 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.

✡ 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.

This Ethics Code was approved by the Board of Trustees of Congregation Brith Sholem on <DATE>.

Modification to the Ethics Code may be proposed by any member. Revisions to the code shall be considered and approved by the synagogue board of directors.