



## HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE CODE OF ETHICS

**Approved by the  
Board of Directors  
on June 22, 2023**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its best, the Temple is a sacred space that serves as a spiritual home for all who enter its doors, its sanctity and strength, in turn, depend largely on the degree to which everyone in the community, members, lay leaders, clergy and professional staff, acts according to Reform Jewish values. When they do, the Temple remains a safe space in which to engage with one another in sacred partnership.

A Code of Ethics reinforces the community's values and positively influences individuals' behaviour. Individuals who know and understand the community's expectations are more likely to act in accordance with those standards and make responsible decisions.

Every individual who enters our holy community is valued. Congregants and staff members will conduct themselves in an open and honest way, treating others with respect, dignity, and fairness in accordance with the Jewish value of *derech eretz* (decency and respect).

The Temple is a place that promotes responsibility, respect and civility and Reform Jewish values in a safe working and learning environment. A positive Temple climate exists when all members of the Holy Blossom community feel safe, included and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. All congregants, board members, clergy, Temple staff, volunteers and visitors have the right to be safe, and to feel they are safe, in the Holy Blossom community. With this right comes the responsibility to contribute to a positive synagogue climate.

Members of the Temple community 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, clergy 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, clergy and professional staff must always be guided by the policies of the synagogue and in its best interests.

The Holy Blossom Temple Code of Ethics will be made available to all congregants, Board members, professional staff, and clergy. Visitors and guests will be able to access the Code, on request, at the Temple's main office. The Code will also be published on the Holy Blossom Temple website. The Code will be updated as appropriate.

Holy Blossom is committed to promptly investigating any reported violations. The Temple will provide members of its community with a confidential avenue for addressing alleged breaches of the Code of Ethics. The appropriate Temple Committee will review submitted complaints and collaborate with the involved individuals to achieve appropriate and timely resolution of a complaint.

## A. CODE OF ETHICS

### INTRODUCTION

Holy Blossom Temple (the “Temple” or “Holy Blossom”) 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.

A central tenet of Holy Blossom is belonging or *Kehila Kedosha*. We aspire to be a sacred congregation in which our members, old and new, can connect through participation in Temple life.

The Temple 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, the Temple is a safe, welcoming and sacred environment.

The values-based Code of Ethics sets out principles and expectations for adherence to standards of conduct for our clergy, congregants, staff, visitors, and guests, whether participating in a Temple activity or event that is on the premises, online or offsite.

### EXEMPLIFY HOLINESS (K’DUSHAH)

The Temple welcomes all who wish to engage in our sacred community.

- We embrace everyone without regard to religious background, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability.
- 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 (HAKLALAH, HA’ARACHA)

Every individual who enters our holy community is valued. Congregants and staff members will conduct themselves 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).

The Temple is a place that promotes responsibility, respect and civility and Reform Jewish values in a safe working and learning environment. A positive Temple climate exists when all members of the Holy Blossom community feel safe, are included and accepted, and actively promote

positive behaviours and interactions. All congregants, board members, clergy, professional staff, volunteers and visitors have the right to be safe, and to feel they are safe, in the Temple community. With this right comes the responsibility to contribute to a positive synagogue climate. To that end, congregants and staff members will:

- Conduct themselves with good manners and common courtesy.
- Refrain from *lashon hara* (negative talk, gossip and slander).
- Encourage open discussion, while maintaining confidences.
- Express openness and willingness to engage with all other congregants and staff members and support one another's work.
- Respect differences in people, their ideas and their opinions.
- Respect the rights of others.
- Treat one another with dignity and respect to all times, and especially when there is disagreement.
- Take appropriate measures to help those in need.
- Employ empathy and sensitivity towards other people.

## HONESTY (YOSHER)

The Temple expects all who engage in our community to conduct themselves with honesty and integrity.

- We promote open and honest communication that allows for addressing differences constructively.
- We will conduct all financial affairs with complete honesty and integrity, refraining from financial impropriety.
- We will represent accomplishments and achievements accurately.
- We protect the confidentiality of privileged information, either about an individual or the synagogue, and will not disclose it without permission. For example, this includes personal information, such as employment status, compensation and performance reviews, as well as personal information about an individual's health, financial status or family matters.
- We recognize, respect and protect the intellectual property rights of our synagogue and others. We will comply with 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. This includes complying with placement guidelines of the CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis), ACC (American Conference of Cantors) and ARJE (Association of Reform Jewish Education) when hiring clergy.

## HONOUR (KAVOD)

The Temple values acting with integrity.

- We act in accordance with Holy Blossom'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 a sacred obligation to uphold financial agreements made with the Temple, such as donation objectives. If a change in personal circumstances occurs, we will inform those responsible for managing and administering Holy Blossom 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 in compliance with the *Ontario Employment Standards Act, 2000*, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, the *Human Rights Code* and other relevant legislation.
- We will respect and comply with all applicable federal, provincial and municipal laws. In the event that we have reasonable grounds to believe that a criminal offence either has been or may be committed, we will arrange to immediately contact appropriate law enforcement authorities.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (NIGUD INYANIM)

Members of the Temple community 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, clergy, 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, clergy and professional staff must always be guided by the policies of the Temple and in its best interests.

Wherever possible, conduct should be based solely on the best interests of Holy Blossom 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 the following scenarios:

- A transaction in which a member of the Temple community 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 member of the Temple community, other than the best interests of Holy Blossom.
- A situation in which a member of the Holy Blossom community 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 they have to advance the interest of the Temple.

When acting on behalf of Holy Blossom, 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 Temple, its deliberations, or congregants and staff members.
- Obtain personal advantage or benefit due to one's synagogue position.
- Use the Temple'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 Temple). A congregant or staff member must make a senior leader of Holy Blossom aware of any concerns about a real or perceived conflict of interest when the situation arises. The senior leader will depend on the person's role in the Temple and may include their direct supervisor, the Senior Rabbi, Executive Director or President.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY (SODIYUT)**

Confidentiality involves preserving information, especially as it pertains to personal or private information about congregants, Board members, clergy, 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 professional roles in the congregation, including personnel information related to employment status, compensation, or performance management.
- Discourage the seeking of employment-related information about others.
- Refrain from speculation about the personal situation of other members of the Temple

community (e.g., health, financial difficulty, marital problems).

- Refrain from sharing, even with family members, information obtained in confidence (e.g., in an *in-camera* 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). It is especially important to prevent inadvertent and untimely release of candidate names and prior employment details.

There are inherent challenges in using the internet, email and social media, as well as texting and other electronic communications. Members of the Temple community 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).

### COMPASSION (RACHAMIM)

The Temple 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.

### JUSTICE (TZEDEK)

The Temple 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.

### HARASSMENT, BULLYING AND CYBER-BULLYING (HATRADA ISHEET, HATZAKA, B'REYUNUT B'RESHET)

The inherent right of all individuals to be treated with dignity and respect is central to the values

and beliefs of the Temple. Holy Blossom is committed to maintaining a sacred community which fosters mutual respect for the dignity and well-being of all congregants, lay leaders, clergy, Temple staff, students and visitors. The Temple is committed to providing a working and learning environment that promotes positive behaviour.

We oppose bullying, including any unwanted behavior that degrades, humiliates, or oppresses another. Verbal or physical bullying or harassment, or cyberbullying is never acceptable. Incidences of harassment, bullying or cyber-bullying are completely unacceptable and cannot and will not be condoned in the Temple community.

**Harassment** is defined in the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, as engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. The *Human Rights Code* establishes a person's right to an environment free of discrimination and harassment.

**Bullying** is behaviour that can be repeated or occur one time and can be carried out by an individual or group of individuals. It is defined as aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by an individual or group, where the behaviour is intended to have the effect, or the individual(s) ought to know that the behaviour would likely have the effect, of causing harm, fear or distress to another individual or creates a negative environment for another individual, and the behaviour occurs in the context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.

**Cyber-bullying** is the act of engaging in bullying behaviours through electronic means, such as social media platforms, e-mail, text or direct messaging, digital gaming and/or communication applications.



## **B. ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR**

The Code of Ethics will be made available to all congregants, Board members, professional staff, and clergy. Visitors and guests will be able to access the Code, on request, from the Temple's main office. The Code will also be published on the Holy Blossom Temple website. The Code will be updated as appropriate. The Temple is committed to promptly investigating any reported violations. The following procedures delineate how complaints of unethical behavior based on the Code will be addressed.

### **PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

The Temple will provide members of its community with a confidential avenue for addressing alleged breaches of the Holy Blossom Temple Code of Ethics.

There are four avenues for addressing complaints of unethical behaviour:

1. A one-on-one conversation between the person submitting the complaint and the senior Temple staff member or senior lay leader they feel most comfortable discussing it with, who can deal with the matter, and resolve the matter confidentially or escalate if necessary to one of the following Committees<sup>1</sup>;
2. Matters involving the clergy shall be referred to and resolved by the existing Pulpit Committee;
3. Matters involving all other staff shall be referred to and resolved by the existing Confidential Employment Committee;
4. Any matters that cannot be resolved by one of the three avenues noted above shall be referred to and resolved by the Ethics Committee.

Confidentiality shall be maintained throughout the Ethics 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 shall suffer retaliation, harassment, or adverse employment consequences. Retaliation or reprisal against any person who makes a complaint or is involved with investigating a good faith report of unethical conduct under the Code is itself unethical conduct and will be investigated as such.

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<sup>1</sup> Committees refers to any or all of the Pulpit, Confidential Employment or Ethics committees as appropriate.

## **PART 2: THE ETHICS COMMITTEE**

The Ethics Committee (the “Committee”) will be composed of three individuals (one representative from each of the Pulpit Committee and the Confidential Employment Committee and one member selected by the President) in keeping with the by-laws of the Temple, one of whom serves as the Chair. Each member will serve a term of three years, and terms are staggered to ensure continuity and overlap of new and existing members. Each member may serve up to two terms.

Committee members should possess qualities of 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. All members shall have or receive training in conflict resolution within 90 days of appointment to the Committee.

The Temple’s Ethics Committee will review all relevant complaints and collaborate with the involved individuals to achieve appropriate and timely resolution of a complaint.

## **PART 3: REPORTING**

1. All communication regarding reported concerns/complaints relating to the Code will be confidential as stated in Part 1 of this document. Wherever possible, and if they are comfortable doing so, the complainant can address their concern directly with the other person(s), keeping the same principles of the Ethics Code in mind.
2. If they are not comfortable addressing it directly, the complainant can report their concern/complaint verbally or in writing to any of the senior staff or lay leaders who can work with them to deal with the matter, and resolve the matter confidentially or escalate if necessary to one of the Committees. These leaders include a Rabbi, the Cantor, the Executive Director, the Director of Education, the Temple President, or Temple Board Vice-Presidents (or another person in leadership to whom the complainant feels safe and comfortable disclosing the issue.)
3. If the concern/complaint cannot be resolved and requires escalation to a Committee, the senior staff/lay leader will liaise with the chair of the appropriate Committee, and meet with them and the complainant to consider the need to escalate the complaint and next steps.

## **PART 4: INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS**

1. Where a complaint involves a member of the clergy it will be investigated by the Pulpit Committee; where it involves a staff member it will be investigated by the Confidential

Employment Committee; and for complaints regarding Congregants only the Ethics Committee will investigate;

2. Additional communication between the appropriate Committee Chair and the person submitting the complaint may be necessary to determine what type of violation may have occurred, including the possibility of a criminal offence.
3. When a complaint of unethical behavior is made to the Chair, the President, after consultation with the Chair, will decide whether they should consult independent legal counsel representing the Temple.
4. Where a complaint 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 President, in consultation with the Chair, may take such action as deemed appropriate.
5. If it is determined that a Code of Ethics violation may have occurred, the Chair, in consultation with their Committee, Senior Rabbi, and President, will determine the appropriate process for working towards resolution. Process options include, but are not limited to:
  - a) One-on one-discussions with the complainant and/or person about whom the complaint was lodged;
  - b) Informational discussions between the complainant and the subject of the complaint; and/or
  - c) Further Committee investigation, including interviews with others who may have been involved or witnessed the incident in question.
6. Within 14 days of a Committee receiving a complaint, the complainant will be contacted regarding next steps for addressing the complaint.
7. Everyone involved in an Ethics Code process is expected to comply with all 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 the Committee may deem appropriate, subject to review by the Board, upon request of the person sanctioned.
8. 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), or National Association for Temple Administration (NATA), the Ethics Committee may also 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.

## **PART 5: CONFLICT RESOLUTION/HEALING PROCESS**

Some alleged ethics violations may warrant or benefit from meetings aimed at facilitating healing of a breach between the involved individuals. The Chair, a committee member, the Senior Rabbi, the Executive Director, Director of Education or the President may encourage and/or facilitate such a meeting if those individuals are interested and willing. Upon the request of any individuals involved, the Chair shall provide referral information for professional help.

## **PART 6: 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 and request for additional intervention and/or appeal; and
  - c) Recommendation to the Board by the Committee that one or more involved individuals be removed from congregational membership or have a probationary period defined and implemented. In such cases, the Senior Rabbi is also informed and consulted regarding a final plan.
2. All steps in the process, from initial complaint to ultimate or recommended resolution, are documented in a report prepared by the appropriate Committee. The Committee must review the report, and once finalized, the Chair will provide this confidential document to the President, the Senior Rabbi and Executive Director for their approval. They may request further action, including the possibility of consulting legal counsel if this has not already been done. The final report will then be provided to the involved individuals.
3. The final report and the outcome documentation will be kept by the Executive Director in a locked confidential file or secure electronic file.

## **PART 7: 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 Chair. The President will review and address all appeals. Appeals regarding legal issues will be referred to the Temple's legal counsel.
2. Acknowledgment of receipt of requests for reconsideration will be provided within five

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 five days of the final determination.