

## **THE MONMOUTH REFORM TEMPLE VALUES STATEMENT**

*In all aspects of temple life – spiritual, educational and social – these values are our common bond and support our common effort:*

### ***SPIRITUALITY***

We are guided by Torah as we strive to live ethical lives. In search of spiritual and intellectual nourishment, we become aware of a sense of wonder, amazement and being in God's presence. Our deeds reflect our gratitude for the gift of life and its blessings.

### ***RESPECT***

In all our relationships we treat each other in a way that preserves individual dignity and welcomes new ideas. Courtesy, directness, and openness to others will guide our interactions and demonstrate our trustworthiness.

### ***INCLUSIVENESS***

We welcome all who choose to embrace Judaism in their lives and homes, regardless of background. As builders of community, we care about each other in all our diversity.

### ***LIFELONG LEARNING***

MRT is a center of life-long learning, where we search for meaning, we study, we question, and we seek the sacred. Learning enables us all to progress from knowledge to commitment to action.

### ***ENGAGEMENT***

In partnership with clergy and staff, we count on our members to contribute their talents, resources and energy to ensure the vitality of MRT's community. We depend on our members to be informed and participate in decision-making.

## THE URJ VALUES STATEMENT

***Values (the moral and ethical imperatives that undergird everything we do):***

### **SHARED HUMANITY**

הַיָּמִים אֵל בְּצֶלֶם B'tzelem elohim (Genesis 1:27) "In the image of God."

We see everyone as created in the divine image and, as such, treat everyone with respect, dignity, and kindness.

### **JUSTICE**

פֶּט מִשְׁפָּט Dirshu mishpat (Isaiah 1:17) "Seek justice."

We seek justice for all people throughout the world.

### **BELONGING**

אַתֶּם הַיּוֹם כְּלָכֶם Atem nitzavim hayom kulchem (Deuteronomy 29:9) "You stand today, ALL of you."

We build, connect, and enrich communities – congregations, camps, programs, social justice work, and more – where youth and adults across all identities, generations, and lived experiences feel a deep sense of belonging.

### **LEARNING**

בְּלֶמַד תִּתְלַמֵּד Talmud Torah k'neged kulam (Mishnah Peah 1:1) "The study of Torah, above all."

We honor Torah; wrestle with Jewish traditions and beliefs, including God; and engage directly with the difficult questions of our age.

### **EVOLVING**

וְיָבוֹשׁוּ U'vtuvo mechadesh b'chol yom tamid ma'aseh v'raysheet (Yotzeir Or, daily liturgy) "With goodness, the Holy One renews creation every day."

We awaken to new awareness, holding ourselves accountable for changing as we grow.

### **ISRAEL AND JEWISH PEOPLEHOOD**

כֹּל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲרֻמִּים זֶה בָּזֶה Kol yisrael arevim zeh ba'zeh (Shevuot 39a) "All of Israel and the Jewish people are responsible, one for the other."

We are committed to the safety and vitality of the Jewish people and to a secure and just state of Israel as a home – for all Jews and for all its inhabitants.

## ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

The Monmouth Reform Temple Code of Ethics will be made available to all congregants, clergy, and staff. Visitors and guests will be able to see the Code, on request, from the MRT main office. The Code will also be published on the MRT website. MRT is committed to promptly investigating any reported violations.

NOTE: In all cases where the term Ethics Committee is used in relation to MRT, it is understood that it is an ad hoc committee not a standing committee.

The Code of Ethics 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 MRT Board 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 MRT Board, HR Committee, or ad hoc Ethics Committee by any partner. Revisions to the code shall be approved by the MRT Board.

THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES DELINEATE HOW ALLEGATIONS OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR BASED ON THE MONMOUTH REFORM TEMPLE CODE OF ETHICS WILL BE ADDRESSED.

- ✧ The ad hoc Ethics Committee shall be a sub-committee within the portfolio of the HR Committee.
- ✧ The MRT President, in consultation with the HR Committee chair, will appoint a congregant to chair the 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. Committee members should be able to balance a strong sense of right and wrong with an ability to see multiple sides of a situation. The MRT President shall be an ex-officio member of the ad hoc Ethics Committee. The MRT President, if unable to serve, shall appoint a member of the MRT Board or HR Committee to serve in that capacity.
- ✧ The committee is notified by the Ethics Committee Chair (Chair) of all complaints received by the Chair, MRT President, Rabbi, Cantor, or any other member of the MRT Board or staff and assists in resolving complaints that require action beyond a meeting between the Chair and the complainant. Such assistance may include discussions with other affected individuals; internal discussion of the breadth of the problem; potential implications of the problem and the possible need for further action; and research regarding generally accepted standards of ethical behavior (both civil and Judaic).
- ✧ An allegation of unethical behavior, oral or in writing, should be directed to the MRT President, Rabbi, or Ethics Committee Chair. In order to initiate an Ethics Committee process, the person who received the allegation will share the information with the other two. If the allegation pertains to any one of the three, that person must recuse themselves.
- ✧ Members of the ad hoc Ethics Committee must recuse themselves if an allegation pertains to them in any way.
- ✧ 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 ad hoc Ethics Committee will determine whether to handle the allegation or refer it to the appropriate organization. The MRT Ethics Committee Chair should 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.
- ✧ When an allegation of unethical behavior is made to the Ethics Committee Chair, the Chair will decide together with the MRT President and the HR Committee chair whether they should consult independent legal counsel representing the synagogue. The MRT Board will want to be knowledgeable of state laws addressing nonprofits, employment matters, administrative or law enforcement reporting duties, and other relevant legal requirements. When an allegation is first reported to the MRT President, Rabbi, or Ethics Committee Chair, it may be prudent or necessary to consult or hire legal counsel when addressing allegations of unethical

behavior, especially allegations involving more grievous allegations. Notice may also need to be made to MRT's insurance company.

- ☆ 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 MRT President, in consultation with the Ethics Committee Chair, may take such action as deemed appropriate.
- ☆ 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.
- ☆ Within 14 business days of receiving a complaint, the complainant will be contacted regarding next steps for addressing the complaint.
- ☆ Everyone involved in an Ethics Committee process is expected to comply with all Ethics Committee requests to assist in information gathering. All members, clergy, 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 ad hoc Ethics Committee may deem appropriate, subject to review by the MRT Board upon request of the person sanctioned.
- ☆ All steps, from an initial allegation of unethical conduct to ultimate resolution, will be documented in writing by the ad hoc Ethics Committee.
- ☆ Confidentiality will be maintained throughout any Ethics Committee process to the extent practicable and consistent with thorough assessment and restoration of the matter.

Complaints and investigations about alleged or suspected violations of this code, and related information, will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate and timely investigation and to prevent imminent harm. Information related to complaints and the parties involved shall be confidential; no one 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, to prevent imminent and substantial harm to affected persons or the synagogue, or as otherwise required by law. No member of the ad hoc Ethics Committee or other person involved in the investigation or made aware of the complaint shall disseminate any information regarding a pending complaint to any source outside of the investigation, including the media, unless legally compelled to do so.

- ☆ All attempts will be made to protect those who make an allegation of unethical behavior from retaliation. Harassment or taking adverse action affecting the employment or volunteer status of any partner who makes a good faith report of unethical conduct under the code is itself unethical conduct and violates this 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.
- ☆ The ad hoc 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. In circumstances of investigation of and/or consideration of a remedy for an ethics violation, the committee should be mindful that the congregation is a sacred community. Full consideration should be given to the goals of healing and reconciliation in determining how to proceed and what actions should be taken. This suggestion is not intended to minimize the importance or the consequence of violating this code. Rather, given the broad range of possible code violations, responses to such behavior should be proportional and sensitive to the fact that these are circumstances in which congregants are dealing with fellow MRT partners.
- ☆ 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 ad hoc Ethics Committee. Although there is no time limitation on an MRT partner raising an ethics complaint or MRT investigating and/or addressing alleged violations, the age of an alleged violation and the respondent's conduct in the years since may be considered in addressing the alleged violation.

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 Rabbi, or the MRT 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.

Every possible attempt will be made to conclude the matter as soon as possible. Possible outcomes may include but are not limited to:

- ✧ Satisfactory resolution of the issue, as agreed upon by the individuals involved in the complaint;
- ✧ Continued contention or disagreement between the individuals, with an agreement to move forward with the complaint;
- ✧ Continued disagreement and request for additional intervention and/or appeal; and
- ✧ Recommendation to the MRT 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 Rabbi is also informed and consulted regarding a final plan.

All steps in the process, from initial allegation to ultimate or recommended resolution, are documented in a report written by the ad hoc Ethics Committee. The Committee must review the report, and once finalized, the Chair provides this confidential document to the MRT President and the Rabbi 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 is then given to the involved individuals and the outcome documentation will be kept by the Rabbi in a locked confidential file.

If any of the involved individuals are unsatisfied with the outcome, they may request reconsideration within 20 business days of receiving the results by submitting a written request for reconsideration to the Chair. The MRT President reviews and addresses all appeals, except for the following:

- ✧ Appeals regarding issues involving employees will be referred to the HR Committee;
- ✧ Appeals regarding legal issues will be referred to the congregation's counsel.

Acknowledgment of receipt of requests for reconsideration will be provided within 5 business days. Every effort will be made to provide the requestor with a final decision within a reasonable time frame. 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 business days of the final determination.