



## Women of Reform Judaism's Brit Kehillah

We acknowledge our obligation and responsibility to one another as members of the Women of Reform Judaism Board of Directors. It is incumbent upon each of us to create an environment of *kavod* (honor and respect) while striving to accomplish our shared mission. We hold ourselves to high standards as we engage in this holy work.

We enter into this Brit Kehillah with the intention of modeling considerate, respectful, and courteous behavior while acknowledging differences of opinion. When we demonstrate regard for one another in the spirit of *B'tzelim Elohim* (being created in God's image) we cultivate each other's personal growth and are truly strengthened by one another. When one succeeds, we all succeed.

We present these guiding principles based upon the Jewish values as outlined.

### Board responsibilities:

- Represent WRJ in a professional and positive manner both publicly and privately.
- Attend all board meetings and district events during your term, barring undue circumstances.
- Financially support the organization by meeting at least the minimum annual donation and by contributing to other campaigns.
- Disclose potential conflicts of interests.

### Organizational interaction responsibilities:

- Be prepared for every meeting whether in person or virtually
- Listen respectfully to all who are speaking.
- Offer new points to the discussion
- Recognize time restraints and defer to the chair to limit the discussion.
- Demonstrate sensitivity by welcoming others.
- Respect the privacy of deliberations during meetings and calls.
- Strive for unity, not uniformity, when decisions are reached.

- Set timely agenda expectations and deadlines while considering family and work responsibilities of all involved.
- Include and notify all stakeholders working on a project about decisions in a timely manner.

#### Personal expectations:

- Practice basic manners and courteous behaviors
- Refrain from organizational politics and *lashon hara* (negative talk, gossip, and slander)
- Keep shared information confidential
- Be open and willing to work with every board member and support the work of each other.
- Acknowledge receipt of all communications with a timely response.

We, the Women of Reform Judaism, value all board members – regardless of age, marital background, financial means, ethnicity, political affiliation, sexual orientation or gender assigned at birth. In honoring this brit, we will create a community of sensitivity, openness, and mutual respect.

## Values for Conducting Meetings

“My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile. Open my heart to your Torah, that my soul may follow your commandments.”

#### Sh'tikah: Silence and Listening

“All my life, I have been raised among sages, and I have found nothing better for a person than silence.” – Pirke Avot 1:17

In order to listen, there are times that one must keep silent. While silent, we can reflect, watch, hear, listen, and thereby have a better chance of understanding.

#### Dibbur: Speech

“Speak as if God were listening to everything you say.” – Martin Buber

When it is time to speak, it is best to proceed slowly; lest we hurt others with our words and tone.

#### Savlanut: Patience

Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch would restrain his angry outbursts until he had looked into the codes to learn whether anger was permissible on the occasion in question. But how much real anger could we feel after searching the authority in the Shulchan Aruch?

The word for patience in Hebrew comes from the root that also means to bear, to suffer, to carry a heavy load. To carry another's truth is to feel their load. Patience allows us to become more empathetic towards others.

### **Elu V'elu: Both This Opinion and That Opinion Have Within Them Truth**

In debates between Hillel and Shammai, a heavenly voice was heard saying that since some decisions had to be made, the opinion of Hillel would generally prevail, but nonetheless: "*Elu V'elu devrei Elohim Chayim*" – Both Hillel and Shammai teach the words of the living God." Though one opinion may prevail, the Rabbis found the truth was in the discourse and preserved for all time the minority opinion.

### **B'yachad: Together**

A favorite saying of rabbis at Yavneh was "I am God's creature and so are other people." – BT Berachot 17a.

Rabbi Chalafta taught: "When two or more discuss words of Torah, God's presence comes to rest among them." Progress emerges from collaboration. Traditional Jewish study is done in *hevurata*, in pairs; we pray in a minyan; we require witnesses for any important lifecycle event. "Together" is a philosophy in Judaism, a point of reference. The genius of the group is greater than any individual.

### **Derech Eretz: Decency**

Hillel used to say: "In a place where human decency is lacking, practice decency yourself."

Respect and human decency are signs of good character. It places the concerns of others at the top of every group interaction.

### **Dayenu: It is Enough**

"Where there is much talking, there is no lack of transgressing, but the one who curbs the tongue shows sense." – Proverbs 10:19.

"There is a time to keep silent and a time to speak." – Ecclesiastes 3:7

When enough is said, say nothing.

Rabbi Karyn D. Kedar, adapted from "Introducing Synagogue 2000 Partnerships for a New Vision."