



Congregation Ahavath Chesed Code of Ethics

Congregation Ahavath Chesed is an inclusive congregation that demonstrates respect for the needs of all. Through worship, learning, and social justice, we strive to better ourselves, our community, and the world at large.

This value-based congregational code of ethics articulates expectations for ethical behavior and provides the structures and processes necessary to implement and enforce the code with respect to all Congregation Ahavath Chesed activities, whether onsite, offsite, or online. The code applies universally to all congregants, clergy, staff, volunteers, board members, lay leaders, and members of our community (The Community).

As participants in The Community, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of personal and professional integrity, moral conscience, and social responsibility. When we behave ethically and hold ourselves accountable, Congregation Ahavath Chesed is a safe, welcoming, and sacred environment.

I. **Exemplify Holiness (*K'dushah*)**

Congregation Ahavath Chesed welcomes all who wish to engage with our sacred community. Every individual who enters our holy community is valued.

II. **Honesty (*Yosher/Emet*)**

Congregation Ahavath Chesed expects all who engage in our community to conduct themselves in an honest manner.

III. **Honor (*Kavod*)**

Congregation Ahavath Chesed values acting with integrity. We are expected to behave in a manner that brings *kavod* (honor) to our congregation and to the community.

IV. **Compassion (*Rachamim*)**

Congregation Ahavath Chesed embraces the fundamental value of performing acts of loving kindness (*g'milut chasadim*).

V. **Justice (*Tzedek*)**

Congregation Ahavath Chesed believes everyone entering our sacred space has the right to be safe and respected, and that we are morally and ethically responsible for one another (*kol yisrael areivim zeh bazeih*).

VI. **Addressing Allegations of Unethical Behavior**

The Congregation Ahavath Chesed Code of Ethics (the "Code") will be communicated to The Community regularly. Visitors and guests will be able to see the Code on request from the Congregation Ahavath Chesed main office. The Code will also be published on the Congregation Ahavath Chesed website. The Code will be updated as appropriate. Examples contained in the Code are not all-inclusive.

I. Exemplify Holiness (*K'dushah*)

Congregation Ahavath Chesed welcomes all who wish to engage with our sacred community. Every individual who enters our holy community is valued.

- We embrace everyone without regard to religious background, age, ability, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital/family status, medical condition/disability, military or veteran status, political affiliation, 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 express openness and willingness to engage with all other members of the Congregation community and support one another.

Through these commitments and the policies set forth in this Code, we strive to create a safe and holy place, a true sanctuary, where all will feel welcome.

II. Honesty (*Yosher/Emet*)

Congregation Ahavath Chesed expects all who engage in our community to conduct themselves in an honest manner.

- We conduct ourselves in an honest manner and are truthful in communications and conduct.
- We promote open and honest communication that allows for addressing differences constructively.
- We uphold confidentiality, especially as it pertains to personal or private information.
- We uphold confidentiality regarding the business and financial data of the Congregation.
- Examples Of The Foregoing May Be:
 - Information to which we have access by way of a “need-to-know” to support our professional or lay leader roles in the congregation, including personnel information related to employment status or progression, compensation, and performance management;
 - Employment-related information about others;
 - Personal information about others, such as health, finances, and marital/domestic/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.
 - Synagogue financial management (non-public information per the bylaws), board discussions, and membership records which are not otherwise made public by policy or bylaws.
 - We make decisions regarding synagogue-related matters with transparency, openness and accountability, unless confidentiality dictates otherwise.
 - These principles extend to the use of technology, such as the internet, email, and social media, as well as texting and other electronic communications. We 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).

III. Honor (*Kavod*)

Congregation Ahavath Chesed values acting with integrity. We are expected to behave in a manner that brings *kavod* (honor) to our congregation and to the community.

- We act solely according to the synagogue's best interest when acting on its behalf.
- We avoid using synagogue positions for personal gain. This includes refraining from hiring, firing, rewarding, or penalizing The Community, as well as awarding or denying vendor relationships based on personal factors such as nepotism, membership status, donor status 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 synagogue. If a change in personal circumstances occurs, we will inform those charged with managing synagogue finances and make appropriate arrangements.
- We consider the impact of accepting gifts that are in the best interest of the congregation.
 - The congregation shall establish a conflict of interest and gift acceptance policy to be reviewed periodically.
- We conduct employment and volunteer-related practices in an ethical and legal manner.
 - We establish and enforce the appropriate policies and procedures to protect the employees of the congregation, such as fair employment policies, grievance reporting, and conflict resolution procedures.
 - We treat our volunteers with honor and respect.

IV. Compassion (*Rachamim*)

Congregation Ahavath Chesed embraces the fundamental value of performing acts of lovingkindness (*g'milut chasadim*).

- We treat others with respect, dignity, fairness, and compassion. Our community embraces diversity and strives to promote equity and inclusion for all.
- We refrain from *lashon hara* (derogatory speech, gossip, and slander) related to The Community.
- We should be mindful of when our personal communications could be misconstrued as representing the views of the Congregation or another organization, and refrain from such communications.
- We oppose bullying, including behavior that degrades, humiliates, or oppresses anyone in The Community. Bullying, whether verbal, physical, or online, is never acceptable. Such behavior includes making threats (e.g., inappropriate sexual, discriminatory, or hurtful comments), social misconduct (e.g., spreading rumors and exclusion), physical behavior (e.g., harming a person's body or possessions), or cyber-bullying (similar conduct using electronic media).

V. Justice (*Tzedek*)

Congregation Ahavath Chesed believes everyone entering our sacred space has the right to be safe and respected, and that we are morally and ethically responsible for one another (*kol yisrael areivim zeh bazeih*).

- We do not tolerate sexual harassment, including unwelcome sexual advances (including comments, bullying, electronic communications, stalking or invasion of privacy), requests for sexual favors, or 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, discriminatory 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.
- We must ensure that personal boundaries, including those related to romantic and sexual matters, are always respected.
- We do not tolerate retaliation against those who have made a complaint under this Code.

VI. Addressing Allegations of Unethical Behavior

The Code will be communicated to The Community regularly. Visitors and guests will be able to see the Code on request from the Congregation Ahavath Chesed main office. The Code will also be published on the Congregation Ahavath Chesed website and membership portal. The Code will be updated as appropriate. Examples contained in the Code are not all-inclusive.

Congregation Ahavath Chesed is committed to responding appropriately to allegations of conduct that violate The Code. All reported ethical violations will be reviewed equally following the procedures within The Code. The following procedures delineate how allegations of unethical behavior based on the Code will be addressed:

- Congregation Ahavath Chesed's President will appoint three congregation officers to comprise an Ethics Committee for receiving and addressing allegations of unethical behavior and/or violations of the Code. One of the congregation officers will be appointed Chair of the committee, and absent other action, the Vice President of Administration (or equivalent position as determined by the president) will serve in this role. Committee members must be selected based on the following qualities: integrity, leadership, independence, and ability to handle challenging and sensitive situations. The President and the Senior Rabbi will also sit on the Ethics Committee in an advisory role. Members of the Ethics Committee should recuse themselves if an allegation is related to them in any way, including an allegation related to a family member or close friend.
 - The Ethics Chair & Ethics committee members will be appointed annually.
 - The Ethics Chair & Ethics committee members will serve for one-year terms.
 - The Ethics Committee will meet annually, or more often as needed. There will be an annual training/orientation for the Ethics Chair & Ethics Committee members, including topics such as how to ask questions, how to record information, confidentiality, how to handle sensitive subjects, note-taking, etc.
- An allegation of unethical behavior should be reported to Congregation Ahavath Chesed's President, Senior Rabbi or the Executive Director, or in one of the following ways:
 - Send an email to: ethics@thetemplejacksonville.org (Emails to this address shall remain in the ethics@thetemplejacksonville.org mailbox AND be automatically forwarded to The President and Senior Rabbi).
 - Mail/drop off a letter to the office.
 - Call/speak/email with one of the above-mentioned people.
 - Note: Anonymous reports are discouraged, but will be accepted, with the understanding that it is very difficult to follow up on anonymous reports and the Ethics Committee may not be able to take much action from anonymous reports, depending on how much information was provided in the report. We would ask anyone who wants to make an anonymous report to provide an anonymous email address, if possible, so the Ethics Committee can follow up with questions and discuss resolution, if appropriate.
- If an allegation of unethical behavior pertains to a member of a professional organization such as the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), American Conference of Cantors (ACC), Association of Reform Jewish Educators (ARJE), and National Association for Congregation Administration (NATA), the Ethics Committee will determine whether to handle the allegation and/or refer it to the appropriate organization.

- When 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 President, in consultation with the Ethics Committee chair, may take such action as deemed appropriate.
- Based on the details of the complaint, the Ethics Committee will determine next steps, which may include the following, depending on the particularities of each allegation of unethical behavior that is received:
 - Gather more information*
 - Internal (i.e. the Ethics Committee, clergy/pastoral care)
 - External (i.e. recommend that the board hires a law firm or trained investigator to investigate)
 - Refer the parties involved to a mediator and/or ombuds
 - Recommend to the President or Executive Director that they consult independent legal counsel representing the synagogue
 - Determine/recommend next steps/consequences (which may need approval from the President and/or Board - for example, removing membership)
 - Encourage reporting to secular authorities for civil/criminal charges
 - Where applicable, a Restorative Justice approach may be used, with a trained facilitator.
 - Note: All efforts will be made to resolve matters as promptly as possible. Timelines may vary based on the specific circumstances.
- Everyone involved in an Ethics Committee process is expected to comply with all Ethics Committee requests to assist in information gathering. All steps, from initial allegation of unethical conduct to ultimate resolution, will be documented in writing, as appropriate, by the Ethics Committee. These written records of ethics committee activity shall be maintained by the ethics committee chair (who shall act as the documentation custodian) until the investigation is completed. Upon completion, all written records shall be transferred into a secure access restricted folder within the Temple Information System. Access to this folder shall be restricted to the current Temple Executive Director, Current Temple President, and Current Ethics Committee Chair.
- Confidentiality will be maintained throughout any Ethics Committee process to the extent practicable, consistent with thorough assessment and restoration of the matter.
- All attempts will be made to protect those who make an allegation of unethical behavior from retaliation.
- The 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 for everyone involved including the congregation.
- 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 the many factors in the totality of circumstances considered by the Ethics Committee.
- Consideration of a resolution to a violation of this Code of Ethics shall take into consideration disciplinary actions outlined in the bylaws where applicable.
- Decisions regarding transparency about the resolution of a violation of this Code will be made by balancing the need for reconciliation and healing for The Community with the privacy of the individuals involved.

*If the alleged activity, based on the information already obtained, may be a violation of State or Federal criminal law, then no further inquiries will be conducted until law enforcement is consulted, as further

inquiry by synagogue staff or community members may serve to hamper any potential criminal investigation.