

Proposed Bylaw Regarding the role of the Non-Jew at the TIOH

Background:

In 2004, as more Interfaith families were joining TIOH, the Board convened a task force headed by Darcy Veber and later co-headed by Ellen Aprill, to clarify and codify the role of the non-Jew at the Temple. The task force published a white paper with specific recommendations some of which were proposed by-law changes. In 2008 the Temple by-laws were extensively revised and among the revisions were two provisions that came out of the task force report.

Provision 1: The unit of membership of the Temple went from individuals to families, and each family unit was required to have at least one Jewish member and one adult member, though the Jewish member did not necessarily have to be an adult. Also, the by-laws now stated that once a person was part of such a membership unit, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, the individual could retain membership permanently regardless of whether the Jewish person in the family was still a member or not.

Provision 2: The by-laws were amended to state that any member of the Board of Trustees must be Jewish, and, in addition, if the chair or co-chair of one of the auxiliary committees was not Jewish, they would have all the rights and privileges of that office except for the ability to vote on the Board. There was a procedure put into place where either the Jewish Co-chair would cast the single vote of the auxiliary committee or the non-Jewish chair could designate a Jewish proxy to cast the vote.

Where We Are Today:

It's clear that these by-law changes were not taken lightly by the Board or by the Congregation. Extensive and deep conversation took place among the Board, the clergy, members of the task force, and the congregation at large before adopting the new provisions.

However, in the intervening years much has changed in our world and specifically in the world of Reform Judaism. As a greater and greater percentage of Jews married non-Jewish spouses, we have welcomed even more interfaith and mixed heritage families into our congregation. Many more non-Jewish individuals (or Jewish-adjacent individuals as they are sometimes referred to) have become integral parts of our community, served in leadership roles, and are parents in our schools. Some of these members joined when our former senior Rabbi John Rosove changed his point of view on performing interfaith marriages, some ultimately converted to Judaism after joining, some have undertaken all the educational aspects of conversion but not taken the ultimate plunge for want of alienating a parent, still others have embraced our values and mission without converting. There is no denying that our Jewish adjacent members are part of the reason why our congregation continues to thrive in a world where organized religion is in decline.

And, where once we may have been in the vanguard in terms of welcoming and integrating Jewish-adjacent individuals, we are now behind many of our peer congregations. Other reform congregations in our city and in cities like ours have invited non-Jewish members who share their values and ideals into membership. Many have also encouraged their Jewish-adjacent members to serve their institutions at the highest levels of leadership with full privileges and

responsibilities. Even the Conservative movement changed its longstanding policy in 2017, now encouraging their member congregations to extend membership to non-Jews who are vital parts of their communities.

Also in these intervening years our social justice efforts have come into far greater focus, with equity and inclusion becoming two of our most sought after principles. More and more we've chosen policies and procedures that are welcoming and encourage diversity at the temple. Allyship has also become an important principle - with our social justice minded congregants looking for ways to express solidarity with other groups experiencing injustice or discrimination, as well as looking for ways to welcome others into solidarity with our own experience of anti-Semitism. In both of these cases, our priorities as an institution are now much more on the side of increasing inclusion.

Perhaps most importantly, we've hired a new Senior Rabbi who is considered a thought leader in our movement, Rabbi Mari Chernow. In hiring Rabbi Chernow, we were focused on finding someone who would push us forward on issues of diversity and inclusion, as well as reflect our own dynamic points of view on interfaith and mixed heritage families and their role in the congregation and Judaism at large.

And so, while recognizing how previous by-law changes served our temple's needs in the past, the Board of Trustees felt it was necessary to reexamine those changes with an eye toward updating them for the TIOH of today and the TIOH of tomorrow.

With regard to the composition of our membership, these proposed changes would empower our Senior Rabbi and our President with the flexibility to occasionally and when circumstances warrant extend membership to those Jewish adjacent individuals who share our values and mission and whose contributions to our community would be missed if they were excluded. Examples might be: the Jewish-curious individual who is in the process of conversion but hasn't yet finished for whatever reason or the Jewish-adjacent teacher in our schools who we trust to instill our values in our students but who cannot send their own child to our schools because membership is a prerequisite for admission. And, as far as leadership is concerned, the temple leadership would now have the flexibility to mine the talents of each and every one of our members as well as demonstrate that, within the limits we set up, anyone and everyone at the temple has our encouragement as a community to serve.

Proposed Language for Bylaw Changes:

1. *This proposed change would allow the President and Senior Rabbi, on a case by case basis, to offer membership to an individual or family unit that does not include a currently Jewish member.*

ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

Section 2. The Board of Trustees may create various categories of membership, provided that each membership unit contains at least one individual who is at least 18 years of age and at least one individual who is Jewish. The person within the membership unit who is at least 18 years of age and the person within the membership unit who is Jewish may be the same

individual or different individuals within the membership unit. Each individual within a membership unit, whether or not Jewish, permanently retains ~~his or her~~ their eligibility for membership.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT:

A. "In the event that the Senior Rabbi and the then President of the Board of Trustees both determine it is appropriate and to the benefit of the TIOH community at large, membership may be extended to a family unit that does not include an individual who is Jewish, so long as the family includes an adult over the age of 18."

2. This proposed change would allow non-Jewish members to serve on the Board of Trustees. It would also extend Board voting privileges to non-Jewish auxiliary group Chairs or co-Chairs.

ARTICLE VIII - BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Section 1. The Board of Trustees will consist of the officers and up to fifteen (15) and no less than ten (10) trustees elected by the congregation. In addition, the following will all be ex-officio members of the Board of Trustees with the right to vote:

- A. The two immediate past-presidents in good standing.
- B. Chair(s) of the Religious School Parent Association.
- C. Chair(s) of the Bay-Nimoy Early Childhood Center Parent Association.
- D. Chair(s) of the Briskin Elementary School Parent Association.
- E. Chair(s) of the Hillside Council of Directors.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT:

F. Presidents of any other auxiliary groups affiliated with the congregation and approved by the Board, such as Women of TIOH, Men's Club, and a high-school-age youth group. All voting members of the Board (~~must be Jewish and~~) must be part of a membership unit that is in good standing. No person may serve on the Board of Trustees if ~~he or she~~ they or any other adult member of ~~his or her~~ their membership unit is a full-time employee of the congregation. In the event that there are co-Presidents or co-Chairs of any commission, council, or auxiliary, the co-Presidents and co-Chairs may both serve as ex-officio members of the Board, but they may cast only a single vote per commission, council or auxiliary. ~~In the event that any Chair or President is not Jewish, that person will have all the rights and responsibilities as a member of the Board other than the right to vote. In such a case, if there is no Jewish co-Chair or co-President, the commission, council or auxiliary may designate a Jewish member to serve as its representative for purposes of voting.~~

3. This proposed change would limit the office of President to our Jewish members.

ARTICLE IX - OFFICERS

Section 1. The elected officers of the congregation will consist of a President, up to seven Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and an Assistant Treasurer. All elected officers will be elected for a one-year term. Elected officers may serve no more than six consecutive terms in the same office.

Section 2. The President will:

- A. Preside at all meetings of the congregation and the Board of Trustees;

B. Appoint all committees and committee chairs unless otherwise expressly provided by the Bylaws and be an ex-officio voting member of all committees except the nominating committee;

C. Vote at Board and congregational meetings only when there is a tie vote;

D. Perform other duties provided herein and such other duties as are customarily incident to the office of President.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

E. Be Jewish.

4. This proposed change is a small housekeeping matter that removes a requirement that the Hillside General Manager be an ex-officio member of the Temple.

ARTICLE XVI - HILLSIDE MEMORIAL PARK AND MORTUARY

Section 10. The General Manager will have responsibility for the day to day operations and management of Hillside. The General Manager and his/her family (as that term is defined in Article V, section 2 of these Bylaws) ~~will~~ **may** be an ex-officio member of the congregation but will not be entitled to vote or hold office.