

## Committee on the Role of Non-Jewish Members at Temple Shalom:

### A. Proposed Policy Statement

#### Role of Non-Jewish Members at Temple Shalom With Respect to Membership and Governance

Temple Shalom is a Reform synagogue, whose primary purposes include both the promotion of Jewish religious and social life and the deepening of Jewish ties in the lives of all of our members. We are a warm, diverse and caring community that includes many different kinds of families. Our congregation extends a heartfelt welcome to all who wish to join with us in prayer, celebration, study, and Tikkun Olam (work towards making the world a better place). We value lifelong Jewish learning and are dedicated to enhancing the Jewish experience in the lives of all of our members.

We recognize and appreciate that many of our families include a Non-Jewish partner who often plays an integral role in keeping a Jewish home, celebrating Jewish holidays, ensuring the religious education of the family's children, and participating in the life of our congregation. Every family reflects its own unique story and, as a congregation, we are united in our wish to honor the many important contributions of our Non-Jewish members. While we strive to have greater inclusiveness and welcome our Non-Jewish members, we also believe that being Jewish matters.

Over the past two years, Temple Shalom has reviewed our policy on the role of Non-Jewish members with respect to membership and governance.<sup>1</sup> That process has included the forming of a Committee on the Role of the Non-Jew at Temple Shalom. This Committee has: reviewed the history of Temple Shalom's existing policy with those who served on the prior committee that drafted the existing policy; consulted with the Senior Rabbi, Rabbi Emeritus, Cantor, and Director of Religious Education; held meetings with various Temple committees, auxiliaries and representatives; collected and reviewed the policies of many other congregations; consulted with the Union for Reform Judaism; read and discussed

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<sup>1</sup> The role of the Non-Jew in our worship services and other Jewish ritual is decided by the Senior Rabbi of the congregation, and in consideration of the Reform movement, views of the congregation and views of the Board of Trustees.

Reform *responsa* (responses based on the Jewish legal tradition to questions that arise out of our communal life); consulted “Defining the Role of the Non-Jew in the Synagogue,” a resource published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; published an article in the Summer 2010 issue of the *Shofar* soliciting views and inviting Temple members to contact the Committee; mailed an “open letter” to all members in December 2010; invited all members to two open parlor meetings in January and February 2011; interviewed a number of long-time Temple families; and discussed the existing policy and alternatives with the Board of Trustees on multiple occasions.

As a result of this process and to further the goals expressed here, the Board of Trustees recommends the following changes to membership and governance structure:

- Any person 18 years or older of the Jewish faith or any partner of a Jewish member or any surviving partner or spouse of a Jewish member who so desires, shall be a member of Temple Shalom.
- All members in good standing shall be eligible to vote.
- All members shall be eligible to serve on all committees.
- All members shall be eligible to chair any committee, except as specified by the Board of Trustees.
- Positions on the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees shall be limited to Jewish members.

In order to accomplish these changes, the Board of Trustees recommends the following changes to Article III, Section 2 and Section 3 of the Temple Shalom constitution:

“Section 2. The membership unit shall be an individual or a group of individuals residing in the same household declaring themselves to be a family unit. In the case of a family unit, all members of the family unit over the age of eighteen (18) shall each have one vote where a member is entitled to vote. Non-Jewish partner or spouse and Non-Jewish children shall be considered members of the family unit. They shall have all rights enunciated in the Article I, Section 6, except paragraphs E, and except as specified by the Board of Trustees regarding paragraph F.

Section 3. In the event of the death or divorce of a member, the partner or spouse may continue to be a member if the partner or spouse so desires, subject to the limitations provided for in Section 2 above.”<sup>2</sup> (*Revised text underlined.*)