

Policies and Procedures

Beth El Congregation, Harrisonburg, Virginia

(As of March, 2015)

Introduction

The central purpose of the synagogue is to perpetuate Jewish life and spirituality, to keep alive the flame of Jewish consciousness in each generation. Our goals are to instill a love of Judaism within our young people, to provide a place for worship and spiritual growth for all ages, and to furnish rabbinic leadership for the many life-cycle events that distinguish our spiritual community. In order to perform these tasks Beth El employs a rabbi and religious school staff, supports a variety of youth and adult education programs, and maintains a facility where nearly all of this activity takes place.

Beth El does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all of our members, our staff, clients, volunteers, subcontractors, vendors, and clients.

Dues

1. The programs and personnel of Beth El Congregation require a steady source of funding to ensure their continued quality, and it is for this reason that members of Beth El Congregation pay annual dues as a requirement of membership.
2. Membership dues are established by the Board of Directors and are periodically modified as the financial needs of the congregation dictate. Dues levels are based on family income and the schedule is designed to be one of graduated dues amounts based on that income. The dues year runs from June 1 to May 31. Congregants that do not pay in full by the end of June must work out a payment schedule with the Treasurer of Beth El when returning the dues bill.
3. Requests for dues relief (or payment below the minimum) due to financial hardship may be made to the Treasurer, showing proper justification for the requesting relief, and may be granted by the Board of Directors. Board approval of dues relief is for one year only and does not serve as precedent for future years. If the financial hardship continues, a member may request dues relief in subsequent years.

4. It is hoped that members will support the synagogue to the fullest extent of their ability. Doing so will help to ensure the synagogue's survival along with the essential level of rabbinic and communal services.

Religious School

1. The religious school has been established to serve the children of member families of Beth El Congregation and those of nonmembers when space permits and proper tuition payments are made.
2. Students must be at least 5 years of age or enrolled in kindergarten in an organized public or private school. Beth El Religious School serves grades K-7, with exceptions made for 8th grade, as determined by the Principal and the Rabbi.
3. Students may attend for 3 consecutive years as part of non-member families. After 3 years, the families must become members of Beth El Congregation or of another regional Jewish congregation to continue.
4. Application: An approved application form must be completed annually for enrollment.
5. Tuition and fees: The Board of Directors of Beth El determines tuition and fees each year in consultation with the Principal. Beth El subsidizes part of the cost of the education for children of member families.
6. Payment of all tuition and fees must be made not later than the first class attended of the academic year, unless an alternate arrangement is made with both the Beth El Treasurer and Principal. Any tuition and fees due from a previous year must be paid in full prior to enrollment for a new school year.
7. Discipline: The Principal has the right to require that a student discontinue participation in Religious School if that student is continuously disruptive to the learning process or endangers himself/herself, other students or faculty, destroys property or commits any criminal act. The parent(s) or guardian(s) of such a child shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Principal to a committee of Beth El Congregation, which shall be chaired by the Vice President and shall consist of one Trustee and an at-large member of the Board, to be appointed as needed by the President. If a student is expelled, there will be no refund of tuition or fees.
8. Religious School teachers will be hired according to best practices established by the Principal and the Rabbi, with background checks done according to existing statutes.
9. The Rabbi will be an active presence in the Religious School.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Requirements

(Note: the Rabbi's authority to modify all/any of the rules is specified at several points below)

1. Prerequisites for Bar/Bat Mitzvah:

- a. The student eligible for Bar or Bat Mitzvah must be Jewish, and must be at least 13 years of age at the earlier of either the Gregorian or Jewish calendars.
- b. The candidate must have been a student in the Beth El Religious School for at least 3 years prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, or must have completed at least 3 consecutive years of formal religious education comprised of at least one year at Beth El and at least 2 prior years at the family's former location. The child is expected to be enrolled in religious school for at least the semester in which the Bat/Bar Mitzvah ceremony takes place.
- c. The child's family must have been members in good standing of Beth El for at least one year prior to and during the year of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony.

2. Preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- a. At least one year in advance of the proposed date of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, the student and family must participate in a meeting with the Rabbi and a designated lay coordinator from the Religious Services Committee regarding scheduling, selection of the Torah (and Haftarah) portion for study, and explanation of Beth El's requirements and guidelines concerning B'nai Mitzvah. At this meeting or at one following it by no more than 4 weeks, the family will sign an agreement acknowledging their understanding of the responsibilities and obligations of the student, the student's family and the Rabbi concerning the proposed Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It is the Rabbi's responsibility to ascertain whether obligations are being met at periodic intervals prior to the ceremony. If they are not, meetings will be scheduled to joint resolution of any difficulties and such meetings will include the lay coordinator as appropriate. The purpose of the periodic reviews will be to avoid the necessity of postponing the scheduled ceremony due to failure to abide by the agreement. Such postponement will be the result of uncorrected failures to abide by the agreement.
- b. The student must participate in individual study meetings with the Rabbi, beginning at least one year prior to the ceremony.
- c. The student must attend 12 **Rabbi-led** Shabbat services during the year prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. In the year prior to the scheduled ceremony, the student must also attend High Holy Day services (at least Rosh HaShanah morning, Kol Nidrei and Yom Kippur morning services), and the family must attend at least 2 holiday services from the following list: Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Tu B'shvat, Purim, Pesach and Shavuot (including morning services if possible). If possible, the student should also attend another Bat/Bar Mitzvah service. The attendance record will be kept and monitored by the Rabbi.

- d. Any modifications to the standard worship service and attendant rituals must be approved by the Rabbi at least 30 days in advance of the scheduled ceremony.
 - e. The student must have completed all preparation for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony at least 2 weeks prior to the ceremony and all other obligations described in these guidelines in a timely fashion in advance of the scheduled ceremony.
3. *Minimum Requirements for the Ceremony*
- a. Recitation by the student in Hebrew, of the Hiney Mah Tov, Chatzi Kaddish, Barechu, Shema, Ve'ahavta, Mi Chamocha, Veshameru, Osey Shalom, Mi Sheberach, Avot v'Imahot and Kiddush and Hamotzi on Friday evening. [Saturday morning also includes Yotzer Or.] Additional prayers may be chosen or required in consultation with the Rabbi and modifications may only occur with the approval of the Rabbi.
 - b. Reading or chanting by the student of the 12 verses (or 1 full Aliyah) from the relevant Torah portion and 6 verses from the relevant Haftarah, in Hebrew along with the appropriate blessings for each.
 - c. Oral presentation by the student of a D'var Torah or other speech regarding the significance of the day, the Torah portion, etc.
4. *Special Requirements*
- a. **Mitzvah Project:** The student will create a special project on a Jewish topic in anticipation of the ceremony. The entire family should support the research leading to the project. The completed project must be explained to the congregation by the student on the day of the ceremony. Some possible projects are: a written report on a topic of Jewish interest to the family; documentation of a family trip to a place of Jewish interest anywhere in the world; a two- or three-dimensional art project and explanation. Projects must be approved by the Rabbi.
 - b. Rehearsals: The student and family must attend all scheduled rehearsals during the 2 weeks prior to the ceremony.
 - c. Family participation in the ceremony: Family members may participate in the ceremony by presenting readings, displaying the family projects or having an aliyah. The participation will be coordinated by the Rabbi.
5. *Bar/Bat Mitzvah Day Arrangements*
- The family may schedule a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony on a Friday evening, Saturday morning, or on any other day when the Torah is traditionally read (except during the High Holy Days) at Beth El.
6. Membership in Beth El Congregation entitles the family to use the sanctuary, the social hall, the kitchen, and classrooms of the synagogue building for Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations. The family must consult with the official calendar of the congregation to secure use of the synagogue's facilities for any function and must pay the designated fee(s) in advance of any event. A member's private celebration on Friday evening may only begin after the congregational Oneg Shabbat is concluded, unless the celebration itself is the Oneg.

7. To record the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony by means of photographs and/or audio/video tape, the family must get approval of the Rabbi about her/his guidelines.

Requirements for adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah shall be determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Rabbi and the chair of the Religious Services Committee.

Use of the Synagogue Building

In its effort to protect the beauty and integrity of Beth El's building, to provide for its appropriate use, and to conserve energy and money, the Board of Directors of Beth El requires that all individuals and groups that use the building follow these guidelines while on the premises.

1. Facilities:

- a. Beth El is a non-smoking facility, including electronic cigarettes. Members and guests are prohibited from smoking anywhere in the building, and must not leave cigarette or cigar butts or other tobacco residue on the temple grounds.
- b. Groups using the building must appoint one representative who will be in charge of the keys. He/she will acquire the keys from the President of the congregation or another designated person. The representative must attend to the following listing of tasks before leaving the building:
 1. Turn off all lights in
 - a. Sanctuary, including behind the Ark doors
 - b. Choir room, including roof lights behind the stained glass windows
 - c. Social hall
 - d. Hallway and Coat room
 - e. All (3) restrooms
 - f. All classrooms & Library & Rabbi's office
 - g. Hallway closets
 - h. Kitchen
 2. Assure that the PA (=sound) system in the sanctuary is turned off
 3. Assure that all window AC units are turned off
 4. Assure that ovens and cooktops in kitchen are turned off
 5. If thermostats were reset, return to default positions
 6. Assure that the computer (in the Rabbi's office) is turned off, including speakers and monitor
 7. Assure that copy machine is turned off
 8. Assure that all (6) exterior doors are locked
 9. Reset the alarm system and close the front door securely

- c. All keys borrowed for single-use occasions must be returned within 48 hours after use of the building
 - d. Individuals or groups using the building may rearrange chairs, tables, etc. according to their needs, but they must return all furniture to the original locations.
 - e. Prior approval is needed for any group to use the clavivona (electronic piano) in the sanctuary and permission must be obtained from the chair of Beth El's music committee or from Beth El's organist.
 - f. The telephone located in the hallway may be used for local calls in cases of emergency only.
2. Kitchen and supplies.
- a. Food: Beth El Congregation has adopted food guidelines that reflect Jewish dietary laws. No foods containing pork or shellfish may be brought into the building. Members and guests that have permission to use the kitchen must adhere to these guidelines.
 - b. All dishes and kitchen utensils must be washed, dried and returned to their original storage locations unless other arrangements have been made with the Beth El Board. All food must be removed from kitchen counters, cooktops, ovens, etc. and taken away. Left-over food will be discarded unless written instructions are attached to it when it is stored (in a refrigerator). A responsible representative must check that all electric appliances have been cleaned, unplugged (as needed) and stored.
 - c. Anyone from the congregation that uses the kitchen should note any shortages of supplies and leave a written message on the counter in the kitchen listing shortages. Through efficient communication we can make repairs, replenish supplies and keep the building properly equipped for future use.
3. Resource and Energy Conservation:
- a. When the building is not in use, the thermostats are set at 65 degrees F during winter and 75 degrees F during summer. A group's representative may adjust the thermostats in the areas to be used to no more than 70 degrees for heating and no less than 72 degrees for cooling; no more than 1 hour before the group's use of the building. Please see item 1.b.5 above.
 - b. A group's representative should be sure to attend to items 1.b.1-9 above.
4. Children must be under adult supervision at all times.
5. Groups wishing to use the building must complete the Building Use Request Form and adhere to the requirements therein. Groups using the building will be held responsible for repairing any damage that occurs when they are using the building. Damage to the building, its contents or the outside grounds must be reported to the President of the congregation.

6. Failure to comply with any of the provisions above may result in a group being denied a request for future use of the facilities.

Weather Cancellations

1. Religious school: the decision to cancel Religious School will be made by the Principal not later than 7 AM Sunday. Information about cancellations may be recorded on the Temple's telephone answering machine, communicated by electronic means (email or posting on the Beth El website).
2. Shabbat and other Worship Services: The decisions to cancel Friday evening and other services will be made by the Rabbi in consultation with the President of the congregation. If the President is unavailable, the Rabbi will consult with at least one Trustee or the Vice President. A decision to cancel should be made no later than 3 hours before the service is scheduled to begin whenever possible. Information about cancellation may be recorded on the Temple's telephone answering machine, communicated by electronic means (email or posting on the Beth El website), and will also be announced on local media outlets.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment and sexual exploitation will not be tolerated at Beth El Congregation. Not only is such behavior illegal, but it is a violation of our Jewish tradition, which requires respect for all persons. In Genesis we read that we are each, female and male, created in the image of God. In an interpretation of this concept, Leo Baeck reminds that, "Whoever bears this image is created and called to be a revelation of human dignity."

Sexual harassment and sexual exploitation include, among other things unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favors, and other unwelcome verbal, physical or visual conduct of a sexual nature. These would include particularly the following cases: (1) when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; (2) when submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting the person, whether or not such decisions have direct economic consequences; (3) when such conduct as the purpose or effect intentionally or unintentionally, of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment; or (4) when there is a pattern of such conduct in connection with Congregational activities.

Because we are a Congregation committed to maintaining an environment that supports the highest level of personal conduct, this policy applies to everyone that participates in Congregational life and within all our Congregational activities. This includes professional and support staff, member, and volunteer.

An allegation or complaint about such behavior should be reported to a member of the Board of Directors for resolution.

Marriages in the synagogue

1. Weddings in the temple are prohibited on Shabbat, the Pilgrimage Festivals, Chol Hamoed (intermediate days of Pilgrimage Festivals), Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur. Additional restrictions may apply and the Rabbi serving Beth El must be consulted.
2. A Jewish marriage ceremony between a Jew and a non-Jew may take place in Beth El's sanctuary if conducted by a rabbi ordained by a major branch of Judaism. It is the responsibility of the couple to be married to locate and engage the rabbi, whether it is the rabbi then serving Beth El or another. All other policies and requirements that are pertinent to marriages set forth in the Policies and Procedures of Beth El Congregation also apply.
3. A rabbi or lay officiant other than the rabbi then serving Beth El must obtain the consent of the latter to perform a marriage at Beth El.