



Shir Tikvah  
שיר תקווה

10 January 2017  
12 Tevet 5777

Shalom Shir Tikvah!

For all of us who have been to a Shabbat service, minyan, or other congregational gathering in the last several weeks, it's clear that the current political climate has made many of us uneasy, angry, fearful, or at the least wide-eyed with trepidation or curiosity. Many of you have taken to social media and other venues to vent and act -- and you've asked about how we respond as a synagogue. **The attached statement**, developed by the Executive Committee (following a model expressed by other faith communities) serves as an affirmation of our values as we move forward in this period. Your Board of Trustees has also been working since the election to respond on two levels: a) Does the shift in our broader communal and national environment move us to change or adapt our current congregational priorities and plans? and, b) How do we respond and step forward, when appropriate, to address pressing issues as they arise?

To the first point, we are thinking through our current priorities around racial justice, education/learning, and facilities and will find ways to infuse pressing priorities into those buckets of activity. We will likely also make room for opportunities emerging from broader social change movements as the next few months unfold. As that happens, Staff and Trustees will also consider what activities may need to be reduced/diminished in order to manage work flow and expectations. We'll communicate in as clearly and timely a fashion as we can as any of these shifts take place.

To the second point, Shir Tikvah's Board of Trustees is a governance board – establishing broad direction, setting policy and ensuring that the organization's annual budget reflects our direction, priorities, and values. We have a set of policies on a variety of issues that have been developed over the years. We are also refining our protocol to ensure that we have a transparent and effective process for future endorsements and congregational engagement.

Generally, committees or active projects that have budget/spending associated with them are authorized to pursue their work (and any allocated budget) when it is within the scope of their charge and any existing budget. We seek discussion and action from the Board and/or Executive Committee when:

1. Policy issues are new to Shir Tikvah or extend beyond the scope granted by the board to a particular committee (or staff person);
2. Requests for funds are not in the budget;
3. Issues in which two or more committees, staff or groups of congregants are in conflict or at cross-purposes; and, Sponsorship or endorsement of an outside or collaborative event is requested that has not been previously approved.

Over the years, congregants and/or organizations have stepped forward to ask Shir Tikvah to support various causes including environmental, social, and political actions. As a place of worship, we cannot support individual candidates for electoral office, but we can and have organizationally supported a wide variety of actions and organizations.

Shir Tikvah's endorsement process can begin with an individual congregant or committee. Individual congregant requests are strengthened with a committee's support. Committees bring recommendations for endorsements to the Board and/or Executive Committee, who have the authority to approve and provide Shir Tikvah's endorsement (publicly lending our name and/or limited financial support or "membership" in an organization). This can happen at a regularly scheduled meeting or a vote could take place via email, if needed.

The Rabbis provide leadership from the Bimah and, within the framework of Shir Tikvah's values, established policies, and priorities, can voice support for a wide variety of issues and causes. While charitable organizations are prohibited from campaigning on behalf of a political candidate; once elected, charitable organizations are free to engage in political speech about policies and appointments, as is useful in the organization's work.

As we go forward in what is surely to be a "season" of action, engagement, protest and advocacy, we hope this helps to clarify some of the ways in which our *kehillah kedosha* can and will act together to bring our Jewish values into our world. We look forward to continuing to pray, learn, and work together to bring healing and wholeness to ourselves and our community.

B'Shalom,

Luke Weisberg, President, Board of Trustees

Michael Adam Latz, Senior Rabbi

Debra Rappaport, Associate Rabbi & Director of Lifelong Learning

John Humleker Executive Director



In this time of extraordinary political division, continuing world violence, and a recent rise in our own country of hatred and behavior denigrating immigrants, people of color, the LGBTQ community, and others who may be marginalized for their beliefs, we take this moment to affirm for our congregation and our community Shir Tikvah's vision and values. We will continue to be a nurturing home and supportive environment for our members; and, we will continue to be a vocal and visible presence in the communities of which we are a part – to not stand idle amidst hatred or destructive action.

The prophet Micah cries out: We are called to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God. Our duty as Jews compels us to speak out for justice and the full human rights of all persons. In the present moment, we feel the need to speak most forcefully for those whose rights are most at risk—for immigrants' rights, for women's rights, for the rights of the LGBTQ community, and for rights of religiously and racially diverse members of our community and society.

We recognize that when the nation reacts to the fears which divide us, we are not showing our best selves. Instead we strive to deepen our understanding of what divides us, in an effort to build unity and trust. We renounce all expressions of hatred.

We renounce in the strongest possible terms the proposed immigration policies of the incoming Administration. The unimaginable human costs of deporting millions of undocumented persons from our nation should not be incurred or tolerated. We urge instead the creation of a just and humane immigration policy. As Jews, we believe in words of Genesis: God created humanity in the Divine image. Every human being is of infinite worth.

We seek nonviolent means to deal with political difference. We oppose violent displays of state-sanctioned police powers, as was displayed at Standing Rock, and in black and brown communities across this nation. And, as people committed to human dignity, we deplore the proliferation of gun violence and call upon our national leadership to address the scourge of gun violence that kills 33,000 Americans each year.

As stewards of the earth, we are dedicated to preserving God's creation. We strongly urge the support of the Paris Peace accord, as a means of saving our planet from destruction.

As a holy community, we also commit to listening with open minds and hearts to the pain – emotional, economic or otherwise - held by those who may not share our political views or values. We do this while nevertheless choosing the side of justice. There cannot be justice without full humanity, dignity, and inclusion for those most vulnerable and for those whom the Torah calls "the least of these." We affirm the rights of all people to equitable access to conditions that foster human life and the flourishing of that life.

We welcome the peaceful transition of power, the freedom of political expression we continue to hold dear, and the free observance of religious practices. We stand ready to support these rights, and those of others, and, by our covenant testimony, to build community and to resist evil non-violently.

*Inspired by the Executive Council of First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC*

Shir Tikvah is a *k'hilah k'doshah* (holy community), joyfully revealing the intersections of *talmud torah* (lifelong Torah study), *t'filah* (prayer), *tzedakah* (justice), and *hachnasat orchim* (radical hospitality). We creatively wrestle with tradition and innovation as we invigorate Jewish spiritual life and transform the world.