



*Welcoming your  
Interfaith Family*

TEMPLE BETH SHOLOM





## TEMPLE BETH SHOLOM



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## *Introduction*

Temple Beth Sholom (TBS) endeavors to help create strong Jewish families. Interfaith marriages and Interfaith families are a significant part of those Jewish families in today's congregations. We hope that all who want to create a Jewish family and be part of the Jewish community can take advantage of the many opportunities for participation and feel comfortable doing so at TBS.

In response to a demographic study and a directive from the Union for Reform Judaism, a specially designed TBS task force reviewed our bylaws and policies regarding Interfaith families. Over a period of two years, the task force studied the issues, explored the views of other congregations, evaluated and revised Temple Beth Sholom bylaws and policies and recommended changes for approval by the Board of Directors and the congregation. This booklet is the culmination of those efforts.

The information on the following pages represents a brief overview of Interfaith policies at TBS. Should you have additional questions, after reviewing this brochure, please contact a TBS rabbi.



## Conversion

Non-Jews who have completed the “Introduction to Judaism” class (or the equivalent as determined by the sponsoring rabbi) are eligible for conversion to Judaism through TBS. All candidates seeking conversion also meet regularly with a TBS rabbi. Following the conversion, the Jew-by-Choice (or Convert) is considered Jewish in all regards.

Minor children under the age of 13 are considered to be converted along with the Jew-by-Choice (on condition that they reaffirm the conversion at age 13), unless otherwise stipulated by the parents. Both custodial parents must agree to the conversion of a minor child.

## Membership

Both Jewish and non-Jewish spouses shall be entitled to the privileges of membership at TBS.

## Leadership

According to TBS bylaws, officers and directors on the Temple’s Board of Directors shall be of the Jewish faith. All permanent representatives of auxiliaries on the Temple Board of Directors shall be of the Jewish faith.

Chairs of all TBS committees should be of the Jewish faith. Exceptions may be approved by the executive committee of the Board of Directors, when appropriate. All TBS committees must comprise a majority of members who are of the Jewish faith. The TBS worship committee must comprise members who are all of the Jewish faith.



## *Camp Programs*

The children of all TBS members may participate.

## *Youth Programs*

The children of all TBS members may participate. The president and board members of the youth programs shall be of the Jewish faith.

## *Religious School Program*

Because TBS welcomes Interfaith families and believes that children should be given clear guidance in the development of their religious identities, we expect that parents who enroll their children in the TBS religious school have made a decision to raise their children exclusively as Jews. In the spirit of the Union for Reform Judaism resolution, parents are strongly encouraged not to educate their children in two faiths. Exceptions may be made when the parents seek counseling with a TBS rabbi to discuss the ramifications of their situation.

All parents, Jewish and non-Jewish, are invited, welcomed and encouraged to participate in all aspects of their child's learning experience. This includes participating in family programs, meeting with the teachers, attending field trips and helping to complete at-home assignments.

Adult courses that are open to the public are for Jews and non-Jews. Adult courses that are open to TBS members only are for congregants regardless of religion, with the exception of classes leading to lifecycle events, such as B'nei Mitzvah (Bar or Bat Mitzvah) and Simchat Hokhmah (celebration of achieving wisdom after age 50).



## *Sanctuary Events*

Jews believe we are “commanded” by God to perform certain rituals.

For the following Temple Beth Sholom sanctuary rituals,  
a person must be Jewish to:

- Light the Shabbat and/or Festival candles.
- Lead the candle blessing.
- Recite the Kiddush (blessing over the wine).
- Hold the Torah during the Torah service.

Anyone may be invited to sit on the Bimah (pulpit). Anyone who is invited to do so may walk in the Torah procession. Anyone may be invited to be blessed on the Bimah for a birthday or anniversary. Kaddish (prayer in memory of the dead) may be recited for anyone, both Jew and non-Jew.



# *Life Cycle Events:*

## BRIT/NAMING EVENTS

A Brit Milah (for a son) or Brit Bat (for a daughter) ceremony marks a newborn Jewish child's entrance into the Jewish community. Parents who request a Brit Milah or Brit Bat ceremony through Temple Beth Sholom must agree to raise their child exclusively as a Jew. Both parents of an Interfaith family may participate in the blessing ceremony.

Parents who wish to have their child named through TBS must agree to raise their child exclusively as a Jew. Both parents may be invited onto the Bimah (pulpit) for the ceremony and may participate in the blessing.

## BNAI MITZVAH SERVICES

Upon completion of TBS religious school requirements, Jewish boys and girls at about age 13 read from Torah for the first time publicly and participate as prayer leaders as a Bar Mitzvah (for a boy) or a Bat Mitzvah (for a girl). The plural is B'nei Mitzvah.

For the Friday evening candle lighting, the immediate family is invited to participate. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah lights the candles. The entire family may recite the candle blessings together, but the blessing must be led by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.



Both parents are invited to sit on the Bimah with their child during B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies on Shabbat morning. For the ritual of passing the Torah from generation to generation, one member of each generational couple must be Jewish. One must be Jewish to recite the Aliyah (blessings over the Torah). A non-Jewish parent may read the English translation of the Torah reading. One must be Jewish to hold the Torah following the Torah readings.

Non-Jews Other non-Jewish participants may have the following roles in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony:

- Presentation of the Tallit (prayer shawl)
- Opening the Ark
- Holding the Torah ornaments

## WEDDINGS

Temple Beth Sholom welcomes all couples that make a commitment to establish a Jewish home to have a betrothal blessing at a Shabbat service.

We are committed to facilitating the marriages of Interfaith couples. Temple Beth Sholom welcomes all couples that make a commitment to establish a Jewish home to have a betrothal blessing at a Shabbat service. If there is no TBS-affiliated member of the clergy available to perform Interfaith weddings consistent with the TBS wedding policy, after meeting with the couple, our rabbis will recommend another member of the clergy or a non-clergy officiant to perform the service. Details are available in our wedding brochure, Covenant and Choice.



## INTERFAITH WEDDING POLICIES

Temple Beth Sholom strives to be a welcoming congregation in helping couples to marry and become part of the Temple Beth Sholom family. Interfaith couples seeking to be married through TBS are invited to do so and may also use Temple facilities for the wedding when the following criteria are met:

- The couple commits to establish a Jewish home and raise the children exclusively as Jews, providing them with a Jewish education and identity, including appropriate life-cycle experiences such as Brit Milah/Brit Bat and Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- When an inquiry about a wedding is made with the Temple office, a date may be temporarily held subject to meeting with a TBS rabbi for confirmation of the date.
- The couple agrees to complete an Introduction to Judaism class and/or a program designed with a TBS rabbi.
- In addition to the initial meeting with a TBS rabbi, the couple agrees to meet with a TBS rabbi on a regular basis, established by the rabbi, prior to the wedding date.
- Couples must consult with a TBS rabbi prior to making inquiries with a potential officiant. No clergy other than those approved by a TBS rabbi may participate in the ceremony.
- Wedding ceremonies arranged through TBS (whether performed at TBS or at another location) may be conducted by a TBS trained and qualified non-clergy officiant (a judge or other individual authorized by the civil authorities) and may include the services of a cantorial soloist or other musical participant approved by a TBS rabbi.
- A TBS rabbi must approve the liturgy used for the service at TBS.
- No prayers or symbols or music of another faith may be part of the ceremony.



## FUNERALS & MOURNING

TBS rabbis may officiate at funerals of any Temple member as long as the rites of another faith are not observed. Non-Jewish clergy may not conduct any ritual or liturgy at a TBS-officiated funeral.

The gravesites owned and sold by TBS are located in hallowed Jewish ground. Therefore, it is not appropriate for any non-Jewish religious rites to be conducted for persons buried in the Temple Beth Sholom section of the cemetery, nor is it appropriate that non-Jewish religious symbols be displayed on stones or markers. Burial in the TBS sections of cemeteries is subject to any agreement or covenants made with the cemeteries.

The custom of reciting the name of a recently departed loved one for a month may be observed for both Jews and non-Jews. Both Jewish and non-Jewish family members may be memorialized for the observance of Yahrzeit (the anniversary of a death).

## *Recommendations*

We also recommend the following books and pamphlets:

### Brochure:

Intermarried? Reform Judaism Welcomes You (URJ Press)

### Books:

- Kertzer / Hoffman, *What Is a Jew?*
- Andrea King, *If I'm Jewish and You're Christian, What Are the Kids?* (URJ Press)
- Wendy Mogel, *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee:*  
Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Children
- Stephanie Hubert Schneider, Ph.D., *Raising a Spiritual Child: A Jewish Perspective*



## *Resources*

Temple Beth Sholom offers an Outreach program to address Interfaith issues and provide classes and other events to educate and welcome Interfaith families. The Temple office will provide details on this warm, sensitive approach to your questions. You may call us, e-mail us or drop by with your questions:

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2625 N. Tustin Avenue  
Santa Ana, CA 92705  
Phone: 714.628.4600  
E-Mail: [info@tbsoc.com](mailto:info@tbsoc.com)

The Union for Reform Judaism also provides a variety of resources.  
For more information, please contact:

Commission on Outreach and Synagogue Community Union for Reform Judaism  
633 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10017-6778  
Phone: 212.650.4230  
Fax: 212.650.4239  
Website: [www.urj.org/outreach](http://www.urj.org/outreach)

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Welcome

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