

Building Kehillah Kedosha- Holy Community

Congregation Torat El is a *Kehillah Kedosha*, a holy community.

The notions of holiness and community are central to our tradition. In a verse found in the heart of the Torah, we are instructed to strive for holiness as a collective. The Torah teaches:

Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy (Leviticus 19:2).

By prioritizing community and mandating holiness, this verse establishes the foundation for synagogue life.

To be holy, *kadosh*, is to be sacred and distinct. As a synagogue, while we recognize we are part of a larger local, national and global community, we must continually remember that belonging to Congregation Torat El could and should be a unique Jewish experience for each of our members, both as individuals and as a part the collective. As a community we continually strive to honor our heritage, even as we envision our future.

At Congregation Torat El, we continually strive to create a community that embodies the values, practices, and beliefs of Torah. Our connection to the Conservative Movement and our commitment to Egalitarianism help us to frame the Judaism that we practice.

As a holy community, we aim to be warm, welcoming, and inclusive in our words and in our actions, recognizing that all human beings are made *betzelem elohim*, in the image of God. We take this mandate seriously, in the ways that we speak to, and act towards, one another -- in meetings, in classes, at services, and in the halls of our synagogue. We take this mitzvah as a reminder to care for, support, and nurture one another through good times and bad. We strive to live up to this responsibility and we recognize that God's presence can be found through these interactions. We understand the divine worth of every member of our community, and believe that everyone has something valuable to contribute.

A central component of holiness is working to discover God's presence in our lives and in the world through embracing tefillah, daily prayer both inside and outside of the synagogue. As the people *Israel*--literally, those who "struggle

with God"--we embrace the struggle to discover God's presence, and we allow our lives to be enriched by this struggle.

Our congregation is dedicated to life-long Jewish learning, and to translating study into action by actively encouraging our members to incorporate *mitzvot*, Jewish practices, into their daily lives. We recognize and celebrate the idea that individuals are in different places along their Jewish journeys. And we seek to nurture, support, and encourage growth in Jewish practice for all in our community.

We commit ourselves to bringing justice and equality into the broader Jewish and non-Jewish community through acts of *tzedakah* (righteousness) and *tikkun olam* (healing the world).

A synagogue is called a "*beit kneset*," a house of gathering. As a *kehillah kedosha*, we share in life's joys and struggles together and recognize the inherent value in community itself. We value the experience of gathering to develop and deepen relationships with one another and with God. We respect the multiple voices in our congregation and seek to empower individuals to partner with us in the work of creating *kehillah kedosha*.

We work to create meaningful experiences for our members of all ages and stages of life, seeking to serve as a home away from home for all who come to gather for spiritual, educational, and social needs. We work to create multiple, accessible points of entry, and a diverse set of opportunities, for all who wish to join us.

We recognize the Jewish community beyond our synagogue walls, locally, in Israel, and around the world, and commit ourselves to reaching out and partnering with other Jewish organizations in the common pursuit of connecting the disconnected to the blessings of Jewish life.

Lastly, in order to accomplish our vision, we require strong leadership and a healthy governing structure based on best practices. We continually work to ensure the financial security necessary for creating and maintaining this *kehillah kedosha*. We strive for openness and transparency in all of our interactions with our members and the broader Jewish community.

Our mission states that we are a community building relationships with God, Judaism and each other, through prayer study, discussion and action, guided by Torah, our traditions, those who came before us, and our vision for our future. By embracing this mission, we strive to work towards our vision and aspiration as a kehillah kedosha, a holy community that inspires and empowers its members to continually live out the values for which we stand.

