

## POLICY ON MARRIAGE AND WEDDINGS 12-19-04

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM is committed to facilitating the creation of Jewish households, strengthening the Jewish family and building up Jewish community. To that end, it is our desire and intention to be welcoming of every individual person who wishes to participate in the life of our community.

When a couple, one of whom is Jewish and the other of whom is not Jewish, approaches us asking that we assist in their creation of a household by facilitating the celebration their marriage the following policies apply:

**A) In the circumstance in which the non-Jewish partner is willing to consider becoming part of the Jewish People through conversion,** the couple will (a) join the congregation as a family unit and (b) begin meeting with the Rabbi to learn more about this way of life in order eventually to undergo a conversion ceremony. After the conversion, a Jewish wedding will be performed.

The congregation will commit to inviting the couple into the life of the congregation and reaching out to them in a significant and substantial way. Specific examples of this may include:

- 1) Inviting couples into our homes regularly for meals and to celebrate home rituals;
- 2) Socializing with these people who are at a critical time of their lives;
- 3) Checking in with them on a regular basis to see how things are going for them;
- 4) Sending them personal invitations to all congregational events in the first year;
- 5) Inviting them to the congregational Passover seder free of charge;
- 6) Offering to help around the time of the wedding itself;
- 7) Hosting a Shevah Berachot ceremony in their honor shortly after the wedding;
- 8) Reaching out in other ways that the couple might suggest.

No weddings will be performed on Shabbat or Jewish holidays or traditional Jewish fast days or periods of mourning.

**B) In the circumstance in which the non-Jewish partner cannot see him- or her-self at this time joining the Jewish People through conversion, but both partners are interested in establishing a Jewish household**

- in which Jewish holidays would be celebrated and Jewish children would be raised,
- with a membership in our (or another out-of-town) synagogue
- in which Jewish objects help to maintain a Jewish atmosphere;
- in which Judaism would be the dominant religious tradition and;
- in which one partner would be Jewish and the other partner supportive of things Jewish;

then

- Temple Beth Shalom will welcome both the Jewish and non-Jewish partners as part of our community;

- the couple will join the congregation (or their out-of-town congregation) and meet several times with the Rabbi to discuss the nature of their relationship (as would any couple the Rabbi is marrying).

In the course of those discussions the couple with the Rabbi will

-learn about Jewish communal and home observances and  
-create a written description of the household and household practices they envision for themselves. That written description will serve as the basis for their wedding contract.

A creative, non-traditional wedding ceremony in keeping with the Guidelines of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association may be performed in the Sanctuary by the Rabbi with the assistance and participation of members of the Temple Beth Shalom community. In particular, as these guidelines stipulate, the wedding ceremony will be a creative Jewish ceremony indicating that this is a new element in the life of the Jewish people. No rituals specific to traditional Jewish wedding ceremonies will be utilized. Rather, a creative ceremony fashioned out of other Jewish elements will be developed. The ceremony will not include inter-religious co-officiation. Please refer to the RRA and JRF Guidelines for further clarification.

As an indication of their interest and involvement, and also so that they can come to know and be known by members of Temple Beth Shalom, the couple will join the congregation as a family unit as part of preparing for their wedding.

The congregation will commit to inviting the couple into the life of the congregation and reaching out to them in a significant and substantial way. Specific examples of this may include:

- 1) Inviting couples into our homes regularly for meals and to celebrate home rituals;
- 2) Socializing with these people who are at a critical time of their lives;
- 3) Checking in with them on a regular basis to see how things are going for them;
- 4) Sending them personal invitations to all congregational events in the first year;
- 5) Inviting them to the congregational Passover seder free of charge;
- 6) Offering to help around the time of the wedding itself;
- 7) Hosting a Shevah Berachot ceremony in their honor shortly after the wedding;
- 8) Reaching out in other ways that the couple might suggest.

No weddings will be performed on Shabbat or Jewish Holidays or traditional fast days or periods of mourning.

**C) In the circumstance when the couple who intend to marry wish to connect with and be supported by our synagogue, but are genuinely and sincerely not decided on a commitment to conversion (as in instance "A") or on a commitment to a Jewish household (as in instance "B"), but who may be open to such options in the future, the following options may still apply:**

If one member of the couple is a member of Temple Beth Shalom or if one member's parents are members of Temple Beth Shalom, we can provide the Temple Beth Shalom grounds or social

hall for a civil ceremony and/or reception conducted or hosted by a secular officiant. Any religious readings to supplement the civil ceremony must be supportive of our Jewish heritage and culture and reviewed by the Rabbi. The Rabbi may welcome the couple and provide suitable comments on the occasion but will not officiate at the ceremony.

Prior to any ceremony, the couple will meet with the Rabbi and will come to know some member households of Temple Beth Shalom.

The congregation will commit to inviting the couple into the life of the congregation and reaching out to them in a significant and substantial way, to the extent that the couple does not feel this as undue pressure. Specific examples of this may include:

- 1) Inviting couples into our homes regularly for meals and to celebrate home rituals;
- 2) Socializing with these people who are at a critical time of their lives;
- 3) Checking in with them on a regular basis to see how things are going for them;
- 4) Sending them personal invitations to all congregational events in the first year;
- 5) Inviting them to the congregational Passover seder free of charge;
- 6) Offering to help around the time of the wedding itself;
- 8) Reaching out in other ways that the couple might suggest.

No weddings will be performed on Shabbat or Jewish Holidays or traditional Jewish fast days or periods of mourning.

**D) In the circumstance when the couple is not open to the idea of having a connection to the Jewish community, or when the couple has clearly decided to create a household in which another religious tradition is dominant, or in which Judaism and another religious tradition are competing with each other for dominance or are blended together, and/or in which it is felt that children in the household are to be raised as other than Jews, we will suggest alternative officiants and alternative settings for their wedding ceremony and reception.**

In all cases, couples will be welcome as members of our community.

Approved by Temple Beth Shalom Board of Directors, November 23, 2003  
and December 19, 2004.