

## **Larchmont Temple Social Justice Initiative Policy**

The policy is adopted by the Board of Trustees (the “Board”) of Larchmont Temple to provide support and guidance to our congregation’s initiative (the “Social Justice Initiative” or “SJI”) to the pursuit of social justice as embodied in the following Mission Statement.

Drawing inspiration and obligation from our sacred Jewish texts and from the teachings of the Reform Movement, we’re committed to:

- Bringing together LT members based on shared interests and concerns about the state of our world, from local to global.
- Educating ourselves and each other about the range of perspectives on a given issue of justice, from Jewish wisdom to policy experts and other relevant sources.
- Organizing collective action and advocacy to address root causes of social injustice and to build a more fair and righteous society.

As people of faith, we find reason to bring our values into the public arena.

- 1. Structure:** The Social Justice Initiative will be led by a group of members (the “Social Justice Leadership Group” or “SJLG”) constituted as follows. The SJLG will consist of a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 10 members. The initial members will be appointed by the Social Justice Task Force (“SJTF”); thereafter the members shall be appointed by the SJLG subject to the approval of the Executive Committee (“EC”) of the Board. A member of the Clergy shall act as an Advisor to the SJLG.
  - A. The members of the SJLG shall be selected in a manner that seeks to reflect the diversity in the congregation.
  - B. The terms of the members shall be for a period of 3 years and shall be limited to two consecutive terms; provided that the initial members shall be divided into terms of 1, 2 and 3 years as selected by the SJTF. Terms shall commence on the first day of the Temple’s fiscal year; provided that the initial terms shall commence upon formation of the SJLG and the period from that date until June 30, 2018, shall not count for the purposes of the limitations described in the prior sentence, and members with initial 1 year terms may serve three consecutive terms.
  - C. The SJLG shall establish procedures and roles necessary to assure the efficient and effective operation of the group.

- 2. Bringing Together LT members:** The SJLG will engage in ongoing outreach and conversation with members of the congregation to discern issues of shared interest and concern.
  - A. The process of identifying issues shall be as inclusive as possible and may include informal outreach by the SJLG to congregants and Clergy; open meetings to discuss topics; solicitation of interest based on surveys. Congregants may also individually or in groups approach the SJLG to submit an issue for consideration.
  - B. The time period to identify and consider issues will be sufficient to allow reasonable congregational input, and not so lengthy that it impedes the goal of the SJI. Certain issues may be of urgent concern and the process for considering such issues may be relatively short in those circumstances.
  - C. All SJLG issues shall be rooted in Reform Jewish ethics, traditions, values and laws and shall recognize that we strive to be inclusive of the voices of all of our members in coming to a decision. Issues should be related to public policy. A position is not limited by geography and may have local, regional, national and/or global relevance.
  - D. All SJI issues (and related policies and positions) will be limited to issues (and the related policies and positions) developed by the Union of Reform Judaism ("URJ") and the Religious Action Center ("RAC") unless the Board (including by acting through the EC) otherwise approves.
  
- 3. Educating Ourselves and Each Other:** After an issue has been selected as described above, the SJLG shall inform the congregation of the issue and shall organize a committee ("SJC") of congregants who are interested in working on the issue. The SJLG and SJC shall organize educational programs and provide resources on the issue. The goal of the educational phase of the process is for the congregation to both study and discuss the issue and to also get a sense of how the SJLG and SJC might take a position on the issue.
  - A. The level of education will depend on the nature of the specific issue but might include: educational forums, articles in Temple newsletters, congregational emails, or letters to the congregation.
  - B. Education shall cover both working with the Clergy to consider the underlying Jewish connection to the issue; and working with lay leaders and experts in the field to consider secular and political aspects of the issue.
  - C. The time period taken to identify to complete this process should be sufficient to allow input from the congregation but not so lengthy that it impedes the goal of the SJI. It is recognized that certain issues may be of urgent concern and that this process may be relatively short in those circumstances.

**4. Organizing Collective Action and Advocacy:** Following the educational phase, the SJLG shall formulate a position on the issue and plan for activities to be undertaken by the Temple community on the issue. To adopt a position on an issue, there must be meaningful support in the congregation for the position. It is recognized that there may be dissenting opinions on an issue, and those opinions should clearly be respected, but dissenting opinions should not prevent a position from being pursued.

- A. After following the process described above, the SJLG shall report to the EC and the Board on the adopted position, the level of support in the congregation for the position and the plan for activities.
- B. The following activities may be pursued in support of the adopted position:
  - i. Building and participating in coalitions
  - ii. Grass-roots organizing
  - iii. Lobbying and advocacy
  - iv. Participation in rallies, marches, protests or demonstration
  - v. Providing services for needy individuals or groups
  - vi. Advocacy Education (speakers, films, panels, public forums, classes, workshops, informational articles and handouts)
  - vii. Other activities in support of the foregoing
- C. The following actions shall not be permitted:
  - i. Engaging in any activities on behalf of, or in opposition to, any particular party or candidate.
  - ii. Fund raising for a particular candidate, party or cause.
  - iii. Any other activity that would jeopardize the Temple's nonprofit tax status under the Internal Revenue Code or the State of New York.

The SJLG is intended to act independently of the Board; provided that the Board (including by acting through the EC) shall have oversight over the SJLG and at any time may direct the SJLG to modify, suspend and/or end work on an issue (or specific activities), if the Board (including by acting through the EC) determines that considering an issue, pursuing a position and/or engaging in planned activities are not in the best interests of the Temple. At all times the SJLG shall provide open communication with the EC, Board, Clergy and Congregation at large to be inclusive and respectful of the larger community, including that not all members will be supportive of the Temple's involvement in Social Justice activities or will have differing views from the adopted positions.