

Jan 4, 2011

**Procedures for Adopting Congregational Positions related to *Tikkun Olam* Activities  
Approved by Columbia Jewish Congregation Board of Directors on January 4, 2011**

In furtherance of Columbia Jewish Congregation (CJC) Board of Directors' authority and responsibility to act on behalf of the congregation on issues of importance to the congregation and the Jewish community, the Board hereby adopts the following procedures for taking Congregational Positions to promote social justice and Jewish values.

The Board may consider a Congregational Position upon recommendation of the Chairperson of the *Tikkun Olam* Committee and/or a member of the clergy. If an individual Congregant wants to advocate for a Congregational Position such as those given as examples below, the individual must go through the Chairperson of the *Tikkun Olam* Committee or the clergy to obtain their recommendation. Examples of Congregational Positions may include some of the following types:

- A. A written statement expressing the Congregation's view on a current public policy issue; such a statement may relate to a "Generic" (see below: Adoption of Generic Congregational Positions) or specific policy issue.
- B. A written statement of position or policy expressing the Congregation's view on whether and/or how to conduct CJC events and celebrations within the Meeting House.
- C. Participation by Congregants, in the name of CJC, with organizations either advocating or providing networking opportunities on a current public policy issue;
- D. Participation by the Congregants, in the name of CJC, in a particular one-time policy-oriented event;
- E. Participation by the Congregants, in the name of CJC, in a particular single-issue coalition.

**Criteria to Consider in Formulating a Congregational Position**

As part of the process toward adopting any Congregational Position, the Chairperson of the *Tikkun Olam* Committee and/or a member of the clergy will provide evidence to the Board which demonstrates that:

1. The Congregational Position is consistent with the congregation's mission, purpose, and values, including evidence that it: a) fosters an environment of social responsibility, b) provides leadership in the overall community; and c) applies Jewish values to the society in which we live.
2. The Congregational Position respects the diversity of the congregation and the range of views held by its members. In a Talmudic sense, the Congregational Position could present a variety of views on the issue, and may not always clearly identify which view is the accepted one.
3. The positions or resolutions of other Jewish organizations, including but not limited to the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation (or similar or successor organization), have been taken into account. Though serious consideration is to be given to the positions of other such Jewish organizations, the Board may adopt a Congregational Position on a subject not addressed by another Jewish organization and/or may adopt a position different from that adopted by another Jewish organization.
4. In the case of type (A) Congregational Positions, the Board should consider whether such a statement will have a meaningful effect on public debate regarding the issue in question or whether, instead, there is an appropriate single issue coalition on the issue that the congregation can join.

**Factors to Consider in Adopting a Congregational Position**

The Board of Directors will apply each of the following criteria when reviewing any request for Board consideration of a Congregational Position:

1. The issue must be properly brought before the Board (see Procedure below).
2. The issue must have ethical, moral and/or social significance to the congregation and community at large.

3. The subject matter of a proposed Congregational Position must have a direct bearing on the congregation or on the Jewish community, or it must affect the society at large in a way that implicates Jewish values or laws.
4. The Board will not take any action that will likely result in disqualifying the synagogue for favorable tax treatment pursuant to Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3) or any other similar federal, state, or local law. In that regard, among other things, the Board shall not support or oppose specific candidates running for a public office.

### **Procedure for Adopting a Congregational Position**

There are two procedures for bringing a Congregational Position to the Board for approval: a standard procedure and an expedited procedure.

#### **Standard Procedure**

This procedure pertains to Congregational Positions for which time is not a critical factor. The Tikkun Olam Committee Chairperson and/or clergy will make a concerted effort to present the Congregational Position to the Congregation, to engage the congregation in a conversation about the issue, and to build broad-based community support. Appropriate means of educating and notifying the congregation about a particular issue and taking its feedback into account may include, but not be limited to, all the following:

1. Publication of the actual text of the proposed Congregational Position and related explanatory material in the *Tekiah*, special mailings and/or e-mailings, Weekly Update e-mailings, the CJC website and other appropriate publicity;
2. Depending on the sensitivity or potential controversy of the Congregation Position, it may be necessary to sponsor a congregational meeting. This determination will be made by the Board's Executive Committee. These meetings can take the form of an open community meeting, adult education class, or as part of the Annual Congregational Meeting.;
3. Update and/or modification of the proposed Congregational Position in accordance with feedback received;
4. Presentation of the proposed Congregational Position to the Board for consideration and adoption or rejection.

In all of these communications, the proposed Congregational Position's sponsors shall explicitly ask for the input of people who are for, against, and undecided toward the Congregational Position because the Board will use this input in assessing the degree of support within the congregation for the position. At open community meetings or other types of forums, people on all sides of the issue shall be given an opportunity to state their views and/or identify what additional information is necessary to enable an informed decision.

Congregants shall be invited to provide feedback directly to either the Tikkun Olam Committee Chairperson or member of the clergy that is sponsoring the proposed Congregational Position. If, in the judgment of the Tikkun Olam Committee Chairperson or a member of the clergy the Congregational Position has gained broad-based community support, it may be brought to a Board meeting for a final decision.

Whether this is a regular or special meeting of the Board is at the President's discretion. The Tikkun Olam Committee Chairperson or member of the clergy shall provide to the Board for review and consideration both 1) a summary of their outreach efforts and 2) all community feedback received to the Board for review and consideration. To demonstrate that the Congregational Position commands broad-based support, sponsors must be prepared to show that a substantial number of members favor the proposed course of action and that there is a minimum of deep-seated opposition to it. A Congregational Position shall be heard by the Board as soon as is practicable considering its relative urgency and other matters on the Board's agenda.

#### **Expedited Procedure for Time Sensitive Items**

This procedure pertains to Congregational Positions for which time is a critical factor, specifically if a decision must be made before the process detailed in the Standard Procedure above could be carried out (e.g., participating in quickly organized demonstration, signing onto a time-sensitive petition). The Tikkun Olam Committee Chairperson or a member of the clergy must:

1. Submit the proposed Congregational Position in writing via email to the President, who shall submit it to others on the Executive Board, and, in conjunction with this submittal,

2. Explain why action is urgently required,
3. Explain how the proposed Congregational Position is similar to other CJC Congregational Positions that have been previously adopted, or how the proposed Congregational Position may be different or have an effect on current positions.

The President and Executive Committee shall have sole discretion regarding the decision of whether or not the item submitted is of such an urgent nature as to require the use of the expedited procedure. Should these officers differ in their views, the President shall seek input from the entire Board. Upon consideration of this input, the final decision shall reside with the President and Executive Committee. In the event that a particular event or activity is deemed not to merit consideration under the expedited procedure, the Tikkun Olam Committee Chairperson or a member of the clergy may submit it using the standard procedure.

Once a determination has been made that the expedited procedure is appropriate, the President will distribute the Congregational Position as expeditiously as possible to all Board members. Once the Congregational Position has been distributed, the President will then convene the Board at the earliest practicable date. As an alternative, the President may decide to use e-mail and other forms of communication to poll the members of the Board for their vote.

### **Committee Based Actions Not Subject to Standard or Expedited Procedure**

The existence of a CJC Committee, in most circumstances, will imply that the CJC Board is supportive of the ongoing work of the Committee and authorizes the Chair(s) of that Committee, in consultation with the CJC Board Liaison and the CJC Staff person assigned to that committee, to pursue, at their own discretion, activities closely related to and aligned with the Committee's mission, so long as the activity does not involve committing CJC to a Congregational Position not previously adopted. These activities could include, for example, pursuing educational or learning activities, networking activities with and/or joining other organizations whose mission is closely related to and aligned with the Committee's mission, and attending conferences.

Notwithstanding the above, if joining another organization would create an inference, because of the activities of that organization, such as public demonstrations, writing petitions, etc., that CJC has adopted a Congregational Position or would be tantamount to adopting a Congregational Position, use of the appropriate procedure among those discussed above would be required.

Furthermore, if joining another organization or other activity would commit CJC to financial or staff resources, use of the appropriate procedure among those discussed above would be required.

### **Adoption of "Generic" Congregational Positions**

The *Tikkun Olam* Committee or a member of the clergy may from time to time proactively identify so-called generic policies that could lead to the recommendation that the Board adopt generic Congregational Positions. Generic refers to a policy that is general or conceptual rather than specific or particularly unique. Thus, a generic Congregational Position could be to support environmental policies that promote alternative energy sources, as distinguished from, for example, a policy to support or join a demonstration related to a specific piece of legislation.

It is anticipated that, in the absence of urgency, the Standard Procedure will be used to adopt generic Congregational Positions. With a generic Congregational Position in place, when an urgent need arises to take a policy position on a specific issue related to that generic Congregational Position, action on the specific issue, taken pursuant to the Expedited Procedure in recognition of the urgency of the matter, can be better supported.

### **Procedure for Rescinding a Congregational Position**

The Board may rescind a Congregational Position during any regular or special Board meeting.

The Board shall give reasonable notice to the *Tikkun Olam* Committee and members of the clergy that such a vote is to take place and shall invite them to take part in the discussion of the issue at the Board meeting.

### **Voting regarding Congregational Positions**

Board voting regarding Congregational Positions shall follow the voting provisions contained in the CJC By-Laws.