

Kol Tzedek Shabbat Vision and Communal Practice Guidelines

Background

In January 2008, Kol Tzedek offered a class to discuss and learn about Shabbat. Those who attended and wished to continue formed the Kol Tzedek Shabbat Study Group. This group, which met for over six months, studied Jewish texts on the meaning and practices of Shabbat. The study group considered traditional and contemporary sources, communal religious and spiritual goals, and individual practices in creating the following statement and guidelines. While we cannot and do not desire to dictate personal practice, we seek to establish communal norms for Kol Tzedek events that will enable us to keep Shabbat holy and distinct. In 2014, the policy was updated to reflect some changes in the organization vis-à-vis writing and those changes were approved at the congregational meeting.

Shabbat is an integral part of Jewish life: as the philosopher Achad Ha'am said, "It's not so much that Jews have kept Shabbat as that Shabbat has kept the Jews." Shabbat offers the opportunity for joy and delight (*oneg*), depth and meaning, transcendence of our busy daily lives and connection with the Divine and with community. Shabbat is *zecher le'ma'ase vereishit*, 'a reminder of the Creation of the world'; as such, Shabbat invites us to cease from our work and regain a sense of wonder for the world in which we live. Leaving behind work and day-to-day concerns, we sanctify Shabbat as a day for rest and renewal.

At Kol Tzedek, we encourage innovative Shabbat rituals as well as honor traditional observance. These are the values and practices that may enrich and sanctify our communal experience of Shabbat:

- *Talmud Torah* (Study): To engage with Torah, Jewish and non-Jewish texts and reflect on how they connect to our world.
- *Hachnasat Orchim* (Hospitality): To enter each other's homes for communal and family gatherings, sharing meals, prayers and song.
- *Tefilah* (Prayer): To experience meaningful connection to the Divine and community through davening (prayer), meditation, and music.
- *Menucha* (Rest): To leave behind our work-week and take time for quiet reflection and rest, restoring our souls for the week to come.
- *Oneg Shabbat* (Delight in Shabbat): To welcome Shabbat with joy and celebration.
- *K'vod HaMesoret* (Respect for tradition): To consider traditional sources and practices in order to expand our understanding of Shabbat.
- *Hitbodedut* (Self-reflection): To encourage personal reflection and growth about one's Shabbat practice; to invite individuals to ask questions, challenge assumptions and consider new practices.
- *Kehillah* (Community): To foster opportunities for community building and to create a welcoming environment for all.

Traditional observance of Shabbat incorporates prohibitions against various kinds of labor (*melacha*) that sets Shabbat apart from the rest of the week. *Melacha* is not exactly "work"; rather, it refers to activities in which people exercise creative control over their world. Many

contemporary Jews see some of these labors – such as talking on the phone or gardening – as ways to enrich their Shabbat; while other labors, such as driving to shul, may be seen as unavoidable. For some Jews an ideal Shabbat is centered on individual reflection and Torah study; for others, on communal connection through prayer; and for others, on joyous activities, such as hiking or playing music.

The following are guidelines for communal Shabbat practices in our Kol Tzedek community:

Community Business and Finance

As the philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel explained, Shabbat is a time not to “do” but to simply “be”. We honor Shabbat when we cease from our creative work in the world and foster an environment in which individuals can leave behind the cares of the week and focus on the spiritual potential of the present moment. In order to create and maintain this sacred space:

- A. We do not perform business relating to Kol Tzedek on Shabbat. This includes, but is not limited to, such areas as:
 - Communications (e.g., emails, phone calls, social media, or other online communications)
 - Photocopying
 - Meetings (e.g., committee or board meetings)
- B. We discourage members from talking about community business during Kol Tzedek Shabbat functions.
- C. We do not engage in monetary transactions on Shabbat, including but not limited to:
 - Collecting money (*tzedakah*, dues or programming): For programs during Shabbat that require payment, we will ask that people to pay either before or after Shabbat.
 - Making payments on behalf of the synagogue: For payroll, food delivery or other expenses incurred during Shabbat we will make arrangements to pay either before or after Shabbat.
 - Bookkeeping and billing
- D. When hiring someone for a position that takes place on Shabbat we will make no distinction between Jews and non-Jews in the hiring process. We will clearly advertise the responsibilities involved. This will allow Jewish applicants to determine if the job fits with their Shabbat observance.

Lights and Electricity

We value the Jewish tradition in which Shabbat has a particular beginning and ending that is affected by the seasons of nature.

- A. We recognize Shabbat’s coming and going by:
 - Lighting candles as a community only before or at traditional Sabbath candlelighting time. For those for whom this is not their custom, we will have available the option

- for people to light candles individually outside the *beit ha-tefillah* (the space of prayer).
- Making every effort to use candles that will burn out before we leave the building so that we will not need to extinguish them. However, we recognize the requirements of landlord and will, if necessary, extinguish the flames.
 - Reciting Havdallah at the traditional time, when three stars are in the sky. We may, however, begin a Saturday evening program before Shabbat has ended; in that case, we will preserve the spirit and practice of Shabbat until the Sabbath departs.
- B. To maintain the sanctity of the *beit ha-tefillah* (space of prayer), we do not permit the use of electronic devices including phones, tablets, and laptops during services. If you need to have your phone on due to an emergency, we request that it be on vibrate.
- C. In keeping with the Jewish value of *Ba'al Tashchit* (not wasting), we allow for the turning on and off heat, electric lights, fans, microphones/sound equipment.
- D. Preparing and eating food is an important part of the *oneg Shabbat*. Therefore we will *allow the reheating* of food for communal meals at the individual's discretion. However we request that individuals *refrain from cooking* in the shared kitchen once Shabbat has begun.
- E. Some Jews avoid driving on Shabbat because it is said "to kindle a fire". If an event is planned where driving is necessary, we will not rent transportation as a community.

Writing

The tradition of not writing on Shabbat presents many challenges. We value the desire to cease from creative actions that alter the world, and we also recognize the need to honor the values of *Talmud Torah* (study), *Kehillah* (community), *Tzedek* (justice), *Hachnasat Orchim* (hospitality), and *Hitnavdut* (volunteerism). Writing should not take place in the same room where a service is being held, and whenever possible, we will strive to provide creative alternatives to writing that allow people to participate according to their personal practice. Whenever writing occurs on Shabbat, it will always be optional.

- A. With this in mind, we allow writing on Shabbat for the purposes listed below:
- Children's programming and childcare (especially sign in for safety reasons)
 - Part of a program or learning activity; however, we request that programs that heavily involve writing not be held on Shabbat
 - Collecting information for recruitment/outreach
 - Activism, such as collecting signatures for a petition or signing up for an action
 - Labeling food
 - Nametags

- B. We do not write for the purposes of any other Kol Tzedek business, including sending email alerts or utilizing Kol Tzedek's social media (see Community Business and Finance, above).
- C. Video-recording and photography are considered forms of permanent writing. To maintain the sanctity of the *beit ha-tefillah*, video or still photography during services is not permitted. Photography or videography will be allowed during the *oneg* for *s'machot* (life-cycle events).

Activist/Interfaith Work on Shabbat

Kol Tzedek seeks to be a “voice of justice” where our members are dedicated to community building and *tikkun olam*, in and beyond our neighborhood. As such:

- A. We will co-sponsor or participate in actions, rallies, marches that are in keeping with the spirit of Shabbat.
- B. When in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular event or action for the community, we will defer to the Religious Life Committee for guidance.

Musical Instruments

In the words of our Sabbath liturgy, we are instructed to “Sing out to God a new song” (Psalm 96). Music, which is integral to our experience of prayer and Shabbat, fosters opportunities for connection and transcendence. We also recognize that certain kinds of music have the potential to take us out of the present moment. With this in mind:

- A. We strongly support incorporating the use of musical instruments and/or live music in prayer services and other programming if done with the spirit of Shabbat in mind.
- B. We do not allow the use of recorded music during services but would allow recorded music that is in the spirit of Shabbat for other Shabbat gatherings.

Application of these Guidelines

- A. All the previous guidelines apply to the celebration of *chagim* (holidays with similar observance to Shabbat) at Kol Tzedek, with the exception of cooking, which is not traditionally forbidden on these days. As a congregation we don't observe *yom tov sheini*, the second day of *chag* observed in the Diaspora by traditional communities for the *shalosh regalim* (pilgrimage festivals). Although the guidelines do not apply on *yom tov sheini*, we will try to create programming that respects members of the community who do observe this additional day of holiday. Please note that the category of *chagim* does not include Purim, Tu Bishvat and other days which do not require refraining from work.

- B. The guidelines should be kept in consideration for those events taking place inside a community member's home; however, we recognize the importance of *minhag hamakom* (the custom of the place) and defer to individual and familial practices.