

## NEW BYLAWS: THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES

CBT's Bylaws, originally enacted in 1981, were last thoroughly revised in 1996. These 1996 revisions followed the Bylaws of another synagogue. Although CBT made a minor revision to the Bylaws in 2011, they remain essentially unchanged since 1996.

However, in the intervening years CBT has changed dramatically. In 1996 the core of our membership consisted of our founding families. Our clergy were our founding Rabbi and our first Cantor. Since 1996, our membership has grown dramatically, and we have added many new programs designed to broaden our appeal to the Jewish community of the East Bay. We have doubled the physical size of our building and added our social hall. In 1996 the office could be run by a Temple Administrator. Now in recognition of our increased size and complexity, we have an Executive Director.

Also, organized religion has changed. Synagogue membership has generally declined. More Jews consider themselves unaffiliated and are unwilling to join a dues-based synagogue when they can get their spiritual enrichment from a wide variety of institutions. Despite this decline in organized religion, CBT is thriving and experiencing great growth due to our clergy and programming, which is both innovative and traditional. CBT is poised on the threshold of a great future; the new Bylaws are intended to help us realize that future.

The new Bylaws are intended to meet these changes as well as give CBT the tools to meet future challenges with flexibility and grace. The new Bylaws are also designed to meet a few additional challenges that have become manifest over the past few years.

First, a perception exists that Executive Board decision making and communication with the General Board lacks transparency. The new Bylaws eliminate the distinction between the two boards. CBT will have only one Board once these Bylaws are enacted.

Second, the new Bylaws recognize the function of a synagogue board should be to govern the institution, not to manage its day to day operations; that's the job of the Executive

Director. Indeed, the URJ encourages its members to revamp their Boards to commit to these practices. Here is a link to the URJ's booklet on Leadership and Governance from which we garnered many ideas and suggestions:

[https://urj.org/sites/default/files/movingtotheleadingedge2019\\_volume2\\_leadershipgovernance.pdf](https://urj.org/sites/default/files/movingtotheleadingedge2019_volume2_leadershipgovernance.pdf)

This change allows the Board, along with the Clergy, Executive Director and staff, and CBT Committees to concentrate on strategic planning, programming, and membership growth and engagement.

Third, the current Board, with guaranteed seats for committee chairs, an eight-member Executive Board and at large members is too large and unwieldy. The Board will have 11 members. This allows for the flexibility to meet on short notice if necessary, which was one of the justifications for needing an Executive Board.

Fourth, although the current Bylaws provide for succession of officers, they are vague and lacking in specific details. The new Bylaws have firm procedures for the selection of the president and the other 4 other officers as well as automatic succession into different positions.

Fifth, the new Bylaws encourage the broadening of Board membership by imposing term limits on all Board members, including officers. Term limits insure turnover of Board members allowing for greater participation by different congregants in the governance of CBT.

Sixth, the new Bylaws allow for flexibility in the creation of committees and committee assignments. The committees, created and overseen by the Board, are true working groups of the synagogue. There are still standing committees, but the Bylaws allow for the creation of other committees and short term ad hoc committees. Any committee currently in existence, but not mentioned in the Bylaws, such as the Social Action Committee and the Israel and World Jewry Committee, will still exist under the new Bylaws. The ad hoc committees can be created by the Board for a specific purpose, must be given specific instructions as to their task and authority,

and then disbanded once their task is complete. Not only does this foster greater participation by congregants in CBT, but it allows for efficient work flow and task management to accomplish needed projects in a timely manner.

It is important to remember that Bylaws meant to provide overall governing rules and structure. They do not, and should not, set forth the details of how the rules and structure are implemented. These implementing rules and procedures will be set forth in various policies and procedures, which will be created/revised by the Board through committees in the coming months.

Lastly, and most importantly, with all these changes the Bylaws do not change the essence of CBT. We are and will be a Reform congregation adherent to the tenets of Reform Judaism and a member of the URJ.