

Summary of Changes to the CST Constitution

Over the past several years, Congregation Shaarie Torah's Board, Staff, and Clergy have recognized that our Constitution no longer accurately reflects the current realities in which we operate. Beginning in mid-2024, the CST Board initiated a review of the Constitution with several goals in mind—some relatively simple, such as clarifying language and correcting grammar, and others more significant. Notable updates include:

- Building more openness and transparency into processes, such as nominations and elections of Board members.
- Restructuring the membership and committee Articles to reflect both the current and future state of how our Congregation would like to operate.

We are now launching a four-month process for the Congregation* to review, provide feedback, and vote on the proposed revisions to the Constitution:

- Sunday, May 4th, 1pm – In-person Town Hall Discussion at CST
- July/August, TBD, as Needed - Virtual Town hall Discussion
- Sunday, September 7th - Congregational Vote on the Constitution Final Version, In-person at CST

*To participate in this process and vote, you must be a CST Member in good standing. If you are unsure about your membership status, or would like to become a member at this time, please contact Jemi executivedirector@shaarietorah.org or speak with a Board member for more information.

Rabbi Oren's Framing of our Constitution:

A synagogue constitution is more than a document; it's a covenant that reflects our shared values and guides how we work together to sustain and grow our community. It provides structure, ensuring fairness and transparency in our decisions, while safeguarding the traditions and priorities that define us.

This constitution connects us to our past and serves as a foundation for future generations. It reminds us that sacred spaces thrive when nurtured with intention and care, empowering us to adapt while remaining true to our mission. It is both a practical guide and a profound commitment to our collective vision.

"My house will be called a house of prayer for all people."—Isaiah 56:7

When the prophet Isaiah spoke of a house of prayer for all people, he cast a vision that still challenges and inspires us. It reminds us that the sacred spaces we build—both physical and communal—are meant to be inclusive, embracing all who seek connection, meaning, and community.

In 2017, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism took an important step forward and affirmed that each congregation has the right and responsibility to define its own membership standards—standards that reflect the evolving nature of Jewish community, life in general and in our community in particular. Many synagogues across North America have since revised their by-laws to reflect broader definitions of belonging, welcoming individuals from diverse faith backgrounds who are raising Jewish families, supporting Jewish life, and seeking spiritual community.

Now it's our turn. Updating our by-laws and membership categories is not simply about language or structure—it's about values. It's about recognizing the reality of our community: that we are made stronger by the presence of beloveds from different backgrounds, identities, and traditions. It's about codifying what we already know in our hearts—that people who show up with love, commitment, and a desire to grow Jewish life belong here.

This effort allows us to open our tent wider, affirm the diversity already among us, and more clearly

articulate what it means to be part of our sacred community.

Together—with open minds and full hearts—we are moving toward a future in which our synagogue more fully reflects the depth, complexity, and beauty of the people within it. This is holy work. And it's time.

The following is a summary of the key changes for the Congregation to consider.

Membership Related Changes

This is an overhaul of the membership Articles (III and IV). Eligibility for membership is clarified and categories of membership are codified.

Rabbi Oren: We are updating our membership categories to reflect who we truly are—and who we aspire to be as a community. These changes bring our constitution into alignment with our lived practices and open the door wider to belonging. They honor the beautiful complexity of today's Jewish families, embrace the evolving ways people seek connection, and create meaningful entry points for those who want to support and engage with our synagogue. In doing so, we affirm that everyone who seeks a place in Jewish community can find one here.

IMPORTANT - Article IV section 1d clarifies that the member must be Jewish (as defined in Article III Section 1) to serve as President or serve on or chair any committees that pertain to religious matters. We will be requesting a vote on Article IV section 1c which allows non-Jewish members to serve on the Board. **CHOICE**: To be put to a vote of the Congregation as to whether a non-Jewish member can serve on the board. This will be a yes or no vote.

Nomination and Election Related Changes

Article IX is overhauled to create a more open and transparent nomination and election process of Board members. This includes a call for nominations to go out to the Congregation. A nominating committee is still used, and the process for board acceptance or rejection of the slate is laid out. The approved slate, with detailed candidate backgrounds and qualifications will be shared with the Congregation following approval and prior to Congregational vote.

Committee Related Changes

Article XIV (formerly XIII) is overhauled to state the purpose and need for standing and ad hoc committees, set core values for committees, and committee operations.

The core values guiding committee operations are:

- Kavod (Respect)
- Kehillah (Community)
- Tzedek (Justice and Integrity)
- Chesed (Kindness and Compassion)
- Hachnasat Orchim (Hospitality)
- Talmud Torah (Commitment to Learning)

A new list of standing committees is identified and described. The standing committees are: Cemetery, Development, Finance, Membership, and Ritual. (Note - the current Chesed Committee will be a subcommittee of the Membership Standing Committee).