

# Temple Circles

DOING JEWISH TOGETHER



“...human beings seek connection and relationship with others. Again, with the exception of some rare individuals, most of us do not want to live our lives alone. It is natural to want not only intimate one-on-one relationships, but to be part of groups.”

Jonathan Woocher,  
*Reinventing Jewish Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*



# Temple Emanu-El

SEEK ✧ ENGAGE ✧ TRANSFORM

*Temple Emanu-El and the Temple Circles Advisory Council have created this document to serve as guidelines regarding our growing Temple Circles initiative. We hope these guidelines will give you a good sense of why we have begun this initiative and what it means to either lead or participate in a Temple Circle. These guidelines lay out how the program is structured and are here to help you design or participate in your Circle in a way that will facilitate the blossoming of sincere relationships in a small group setting.*

*The guidelines were created by researching other religious organizations' small group programs, both Temple and Church alike. Through their wisdom and trial and error, we discovered what works and what doesn't work. We then produced these guidelines or best practices that you see below.*

*The guidelines that follow are just that – guidelines. As you will read in the Temple Circles Mission Statement, we are attempting to foster an environment that will create community between Temple Emanu-El members and the local Jewish community. We believe that the way in which this is done is by having the right amount of people engaging in a group – that is – not too many and not too few. And there should be enough gatherings for members within your group to get to know and trust one another.*

*Temple Emanu-El also seeks to encourage communication between Temple Circle members and your Temple Emanu-El family. When you have something to celebrate or mourn, your Temple Circles leader will help communicate that information to Temple Emanu-El leadership or clergy, when appropriate. In turn, when there are Temple Emanu-El special events, that information will be communicated to you. And you may even have a friend from your small group to attend the special event with you.*

*If you have any questions about this document or the program in general, please reach out to either [Monika Singletary](#), Director of Membership & Engagement, or [Marilynn Rothstein](#), your Temple Circles Advisory Council Chair.*

*A sincere thanks from your Temple Circles Advisory Council,*

*Fran Godchaux  
William Lehman  
Ashley Lewis  
Billie Marsala  
Marilynn Rothstein  
Monika Singletary  
Sylvia Wright*

# TEMPLE CIRCLES

## Guidelines and Best Practices

Reviewed and revised by the Temple Circles Advisory Council on 7/9/20  
Edited by Marilyn Rothstein, Chair

*Previously accepted by the Temple Circles Advisory Council on 1/20/20  
Shared with the Board of Trustees on 12/18/18*

### MISSION STATEMENT

*Temple Emanu-El's (TEE) Temple Circles initiative encourages our Temple family to form groups that have shared interests and passions in order to **SEEK, ENGAGE, and TRANSFORM** caring and supportive relationships among themselves, with the Temple Emanu-El community, and with Judaism.*

## SEEK & ENGAGE

- *Any member-in-good standing of TEE's community may start a Temple Circle. A circle becomes official when there are at least two other participants with the same interest. (Based on the mission/purpose of the proposed Temple Circle, a circle may be asked to seek and engage more than three people to start.)*
- *To create a Temple Circle, the potential leader must have a conversation with Temple Emanu-El's Director of Membership & Engagement or his/her designee. Approval will usually take a week or less.*
- *Those who desire to join a Temple Circle are asked to fill out a brief online registration/sign-up form via our website: <http://ourtemple.org/temple-circles/>. Anyone who needs assistance with this, just needs to tell us and it will be done for you.*
- *Information about Temple Circles will be posted on the TEE Website, and as needed in the monthly bulletin, weekly emails, Shabbat handouts, and on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).*

## TRANSFORM

- *Temple Circle Leaders will communicate with the Temple Circles Advisory Council and/or their Coaches about their activities and the impact that this initiative is having on relationships among participants, with TEE, and with Judaism.*
- *Transformation of TEE's culture will take place as the Temple Circles initiative evolves and grows, resulting in new relationships, greater retention, and more congregational leaders.*

## GUIDELINES for TEMPLE CIRCLES

- *Optimally, a circle will have around 8 to 12 people (5 min/16 max).*
- *Each circle has a Leader who, at some future point in time, will find/mentor a Future Leader. Both leaders must be members of TEE.*
- *Other participants may come from TEE, the wider Jewish Community, or those who have a sincere interest in Judaism.*
- *Participants who are not members of TEE may be asked to voluntarily contribute a minimal amount (a minimum of \$18) to support the Temple Circles initiative.*
- *Each circle will have a coach who is a member of the Temple Circles Advisory Council (TCAC), as well as support from TEE's Director of Membership & Congregational Engagement (or relevant staff).*
- *From time-to-time, TEE professionals, lay leaders, and other guests may be invited to participate by the Temple Circle Leader.*
- *Each circle will be financially self-supporting.*
- *It is recommended that circles meet 6 to 8 times during a session. The Fall session runs from September to December and the Spring session from February to June. Each circle leader, in collaboration with the participants, will create a schedule of get togethers.*
- *Each gathering should have an agenda, such as:*
  - *Schmoozing (getting to know each other better)*
  - *Doing something Jewish*
  - *Sharing stories*
  - *Having an activity involving the participants' shared interests*
  - *Planning for the next gathering*

## TEMPLE CIRCLES TRANSITION PERIODS

- *The Temple Circle Advisory Council will meet as needed to review and revise the Temple Circles Mission Statement, its various handbooks, prepare for the training of incoming Temple Circle Leaders and create a marketing plan for the next session.*
- *Towards the end of each session, each Temple Circle can choose to conclude or continue.*
- *A continuing Temple Circle that is getting too large may recommend that a second, similar group be started.*
- *Temple Circles that choose to continue will have an “open enrollment” period for several weeks prior to the start of the session, giving all who are interested an opportunity to join the circle. If there is a waiting list for a circle, those people will be given the opportunity to join before others.*

## RESPONSIBILITIES

### THE CIRCLE LEADER

- *is self-appointed - Willing, Ready, and Able*
- *is willing to participate in a Temple Circles Leader training shortly before the session begins and a review meeting towards the end of the session*
- *communicates with an assigned coach*
- *is willing to seek and engage others in the TEE Community with a similar interest or passion*
- *is willing to commit as the leader for at least two sessions (if possible) and help to find his/her future leader*
- *attempts to find two other “key participants” and has them commit to attending the first meeting where they will sign the Temple Circles Promise. (If the leader does not know who to invite, at least two interested people must sign up for that circle during the open enrollment period to make it an official circle.)*
- *calendars future gatherings (checks Temple, community, and sports calendars before confirming dates). Gatherings will NOT be held at the same time as services and/or holiday celebrations at Temple. (Circles are encouraged to attend services as a group.)*
- *organizes and guides the circle*
- *at the first meeting of each session,*
  - *reviews the Mission Statement and Temple Circles Promise with participants*
  - *sets goals for the session*
- *delegates tasks to other participants such as:*
  - *keeping the circle roster up-to-date*
  - *making reminder phone calls, sending emails, and posting on social media*
  - *arranging meeting venues*
    - *in homes, restaurants, stadiums, online, etc.*
    - *or if at TEE, scheduling with the Director of Congregational Engagement*
  - *providing refreshments as needed*

## **THE FUTURE LEADER**

- *is recruited by the leader or volunteers – Ready, Willing, and Able*
- *fills-in for the leader, when necessary*
- *is willing to become the next leader when the time comes*
- *is willing to attend one Temple Circles Leader meeting at TEE after the end of the current session*

## **ALL PARTICIPANTS**

- *sign a Temple Circles Promise*
- *commit to participate for the duration of the session and make attending scheduled get togethers a priority*
- *share the joys and responsibilities of the group*
- *release TEE of any liability*

## **DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP & CONGREGATIONAL ENGAGEMENT (or designated TEE professional)**

- *serves as the liaison for the Temple Circles Advisory Council with TEE's Clergy, Executive Director, and its Board of Trustees*
- *provides guidance, administrative, and technical support for the Advisory Council and the various Temple Circles*
- *works with the Advisory Council to recruit and train leaders*

## **COACHES**

- *sit on the Advisory Council*
- *provide guidance and support for up to four Temple Circles Leaders*
- *attend at least one gathering of their assigned circle(s), if possible*

## **TEMPLE CIRCLES ADVISORY COUNCIL**

- *is the team that oversees and coordinates the TEE Temple Circles initiative*
- *supports the coaches*
- *works with the Temple professionals to recruit and train leaders*



**TEMPLE CIRCLE PROMISE** (to be signed at the end of each meeting)

*Our Temple Circle, known as \_\_\_\_\_, will always be a place for transparency, vulnerability, sharing, and growing closer in relationship with each other, Temple Emanu-El, and Judaism.*

*We promise to uphold the core values of Judaism, agree to confidentiality, and commit to attending our Temple Circle Gatherings.*

*We will invite others who might share our interests and passions and welcome them with exemplary hospitality.*

*We all agree to the guidelines stated in this Promise and in the Guidelines & Best Practices Booklet and waive Temple Emanu-El, its staff and lay leaders from all liability regarding the activities of our Temple Circle.*

**Signed by:**

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**Session Dates:**

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