

# Temple Emanu-El Social Justice Council

## Congregational Advocacy Proposal: LGBT Equality

The LGBTQ leaders in our community believe that Temple Emanu-El should formally adopt an advocacy position that seeks to secure full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Texans through political action, education, community organizing and collaboration. As an organization that values, honors and respects diversity – including that of the LGBTQ community – we propose that Temple Emanu-El support, through its educational, advocacy and social justice work, mobilization and direct advocacy to our lawmakers.

Temple Emanu-El emphasizes the ethical ideals of social justice at the core of the Jewish tradition. It is our obligation to engage in the ongoing task of world repair. We value being an integral part of and contributor to the total Dallas and Texas community, and have a longstanding history of equality through congregational practice and policy. For over 25 years, our congregation has sanctified the love between same-sex partners in ways great and small—from ceremonies under the chuppah, to the 2005 unanimous Board approval of the Social Justice Council’s opposition to the adoption of proposed Constitutional Amendment No. 2 to the Texas Constitution. This opposition included advocating on a state-wide basis to defeat Proposition No. 2, as well as a holding a forum at Temple around voter education. As Reform Jews, we believe that marriages are founded on kedushah or sanctity—and that all human beings can make this holy commitment. We believe all are entitled to the rights and responsibilities of a legal union.

As a parallel, the Reform Movement and the City of Dallas are both advocates of LGBTQ equality. In 1965, the Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) first passed a resolution calling for the decriminalization of homosexuality. Additionally, in its 1996 [resolution](#), the CCAR proposed to “oppose governmental efforts to ban gay and lesbian marriage.” In 2002, the City of Dallas passed an anti-discrimination ordinance, which has since been amended to include language that protects the rights of everyone, and makes it illegal to discriminate against someone based on sexual orientation or gender identity. In keeping with this tradition, the Reform Movement and the City of Dallas must continue to voice opposition to any governmental action that discriminates against the rights of LGBTQ individuals.

## OUR RIGHTS AND RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY OF OPINION

We believe that it is essential for Temple Emanu-El to be a place of open dialogue and discussion, where people with differing opinions can talk openly and safely about the important issues affecting society. There is a diversity of opinion within our congregation and among people of faith throughout the country about specific policy proposals that would help increase awareness and equality for members of the LGBTQ community. As congregational leaders, we recognize that issues-based advocacy positions may appear to be consistent with a partisan position of a political party. However, we cannot legally and will not ethically support a specific political party.

The Temple Emanu-El LGBTQ leadership team recommends specific issues-based advocacy positions that represent broadly held and deeply felt beliefs from within our community. Thus, we want Temple to support issues-based positions that uphold the rights to equality for all humans, while advancing policies which will help to increase and protect LGBTQ equality and policies of non-discrimination. These positions reflect the Jewish values of our community.

## OUR JEWISH VALUES

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam, sh'asani b'tzelem Elohim. Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has made me b'tzelem Elohim, in the image of God. ~ Nisim B'Chol Yom—Daily Blessings

Our tradition teaches that every morning, we praise and thank God for being created b'tzelem Elohim, in God's own image. When we fully acknowledge that we ourselves are made in the image of God, we also recognize that every other human life is sacred and deserving of blessing.

*Achrayut* - social responsibility - It is our responsibility as Reform Jews to make sure all people are treated equally, regardless of their sexual identity, and to educate others on the importance of equality.

*Tzniut* - modesty - We support the rights of all people to have access to safe spaces, both public and private, regardless of their gender identity.

*Yira* - We stand in awe of God's ongoing creation. Diversity of gender and sexual identity expressions are a symbol of God's awesome creation.

*Rachamim* - compassion - We have compassion for people who are going through transitions in their life and feel called to oppose discrimination of individuals on the basis of race, creed, ethnicity, or sexual identity.

## OUR PARTNERS

### URJ - UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM

Resolution on the Rights of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People (2015)

Resolution on Civil Marriage for Gay and Lesbian Jewish Couples (1997)

Resolution Promoting Equal Employment and Leadership Opportunities for Lesbians and Gays in the Reform Movement (1995)

Resolution on Recognition for Lesbian and Gay Partnerships (1993)

Resolution on Gay and Lesbian Jews (1989)

Resolution on Support for Inclusion of Lesbian and Gay Jews (1987)

### CCAR - (CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS)

Resolution in Support of Marriage Ruling: Opposes Efforts to Undermine Equality for Same-Sex Couples (2004)

Resolution on Gay and Lesbian Marriage (1996)

Resolution On Convening in States Denying Legal Protection of Civil Rights for Gays and Lesbians (1993)

Resolution on Rights of Homosexuals (1977)

### WRJ - WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM

Resolution on Transgender and Bisexual Rights (2003)

Resolution on Gay and Lesbian Rights (1997)

[Keshet](#)

[Religious Action Center](#)

[Human Rights Committee \(HRC\)](#)

## ADVOCACY PROPOSAL

Temple Emanu-El will work to secure full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Texans through political action, education, community organizing and collaboration. Our advocacy goals will include, but are not limited to:

- Preventing Discrimination
- Building Strong Families
- Protecting Youth Development
- Preventing Violence
- Preserving Human Dignity

Pursuant to the procedures set forth in the Social Justice Task-Force Report (see Appendix A below), the LGBTQ Leadership Team recommends its adoption by the Temple Emanu-El Board of Trustees. If approved, our advocacy efforts would be developed by a congregational leadership team appointed by the Social Justice Council and LGBTQ Leadership Team, and may include such actions, among others, not limited to:

- Communicating educational + advocacy opportunities through Temple vehicle's (Window, website, Shabbat handout, etc.)
- Building a coalition with like-minded congregations and organizations in the area (i.e. Equality Texas, other faith-based organizations)
- Circulating petitions, and notifying congregants of opportunities to sign other organization's petitions (i.e. RAC and Keshet)
- Working with clergy and leaders to provide educational opportunities for congregants (i.e. Equality Project, a customizable "how-to" training on advocacy led by Equality Texas)
- In-person lobbying efforts/initiatives, including post card, email or phone drive

We ask the Board for a motion to adopt the proposal presented by the Social Justice Council to advocate as a Congregation for LGBTQ Equality and to work to bring awareness to, and community support of these policies.

## APPENDIX A

### EXCERPTED FROM 2010 SOCIAL JUSTICE TASK-FORCE REPORT:

Action and advocacy go hand-in-hand, and the Social Justice Council will reflect that. It is not enough to work to feed the hungry, for example: We must also work to end the causes of hunger. Advocacy is central to Reform Judaism and to Temple Emanu-El. The SJC will foster advocacy among all its committees and projects, not only the Just Congregations effort, which includes specific advocacy goals in its charge, but also from all service projects. The SJC will seek Board approval of new advocacy positions and efforts. Our advocacy is issue-oriented; not partisan, but often political. In the past, we have worked to support funding for a new public hospital in Dallas, for example, and opposed cuts in the Texas children's health insurance. We will regularly and tirelessly work to encourage government and elected leaders to respond to the needs of our community.

The current Task Force is in agreement with the following principles, outlined by the 2003 Task Force:

- Temple rabbis have always had, and continue to have complete freedom of the pulpit. Temple rabbis have the same right as any congregant to speak out as individuals in other arenas.
- There are certain moral imperatives that we, as Reform Jews, agree are bedrock principles of our sense of social justice.
- Reform Judaism's belief in social action is not synonymous with a particular partisan agenda

The current Task Force also agrees with these concepts from the 2003 Task Force (which have been adjusted to be consistent with the modified structure). The congregation should:

- 1) Speak out powerfully as a congregation on the contemporary moral imperatives that are identified through the Just Congregations listening process and approved by the Board. Advocacy issues should be brought to the Board by the SJC for congregational approval.
- 2) Avoid channeling the congregation into one partisan point of view.
- 3) Assess specific legislative issues, educate the congregation with solid information on all sides of the issue enabling them to make individual decisions on their stance, and promote any appropriate “call to action.”
- 4) Commit sufficient staff and financial resources to make public affairs and advocacy work more effectively.
- 5) Empower the senior rabbi, the president of the congregation and the officer over Social Justice, in consultation with the Executive Committee, to decide upon a course of quick action when an issue is urgent enough that it demands an immediate response based on our moral imperatives to speak out as a congregation.