

# **Policy on the Sanctity of Shabbat**

## **Beth Samuel Jewish Center**

*passed by the Ritual Committee - March 2007  
reopened, April 9, 2007 for additional discussion*

This document pertains to functions held in the sanctuary and other functions held in the Synagogue on Shabbat. For situations not covered by this document please see either the service leader or a member of the ritual committee in attendance.

Shabbat is our day of rest. On Shabbat, we come to Beth Samuel to seek respite from the daily dealings of business, shopping, and material occupations. On Shabbat, we come to Beth Samuel to connect to God and to our Jewish community. Shabbat is about the value of the present moment, a time where we put the cares of past and future aside. Our congregation honors both religious tradition and the realities of the present.

### **Candle Lighting**

The lighting of the Shabbat candles ushers in Shabbat, and traditionally occurs 18 minutes before sundown. For practical considerations, Beth Samuel holds services on Friday evening throughout the year at the same time (7:30pm) and thus in the winter, the service begins after the commencement of Shabbat. However, we still light candles at the start of each service even in the winter because we know that many people do not light candles at home. Additionally, the kindling of candles at the start of every Shabbat evening service enhances our appreciation of Shabbat and has become a regular, anticipated custom of the congregation. Candles may be lit for decorative purposes as long as they are lit before the start of Shabbat.

### **Notable Restrictions**

While certain activities are permitted under the policy. Congregants must be cognizant that other members of the congregation may be personally more or less observant. No congregant should be expected to participate in an activity on Shabbat that is not consistent with their personal beliefs.

### **General Guidance**

Our sanctuary is a place of reverence. In an effort to maintain an atmosphere of holiness and prayer, the use of the following is not permitted in the sanctuary on Shabbat:

- cell phones, PDAs, and beepers (should be silenced)
- cameras with flash
- noisy toys (stuffed animals are okay)
- electronic devices
- writing
- handling money

If absolutely necessary, such items may be used with discretion in contained areas or outside of the building, so as not to disturb the service or communal activities. Activities such as writing and handling currency are not encouraged. However, when necessary, that may be employed with discretion, away from public view.

### **Decorum**

Respect for our religious services is expected. Talking during services and unruly children are disrespectful to both other congregants and the service leader. If you must have a conversation during

services or must deal with an unruly child please step outside.

### **Dress Code**

Service leaders and congregants alike are expected to dress for services in attire which is appropriate, clean, neat and in good taste. Modest dignified dress is required. (Sleeveless shirts, tank tops, crop tops, and short-shorts are not permitted.)

### **Utilities**

The turning on and off of lights and of devices to heat water for coffee and tea is permitted at Beth Samuel. For restrictions on use of the kitchen, refer to the BSJC kitchen policy.

### **Photography**

Photography on Shabbat is generally prohibited. However, in the event of a special occasion, a person may take pictures using camera without flash from the door to the right of the *bimah*. S/he may not take pictures of the congregation; only of the participants on the *bimah*. S/he must consult with the service leader before the service.

When there is a Bar or Bat Mitzvah or other special occasion at Beth Samuel, the family may wish to record the event. In this circumstance, a stationary video camera may be placed discreetly in the rear of the sanctuary and/or in the corridor adjoining the sanctuary at the right side of the *bimah*. If the family would like to take posed pictures, they may take the opportunity to do so well before the start of the service on Shabbat morning and must stop before the arrival of guests at 9:30am. Alternatively, they may also take group pictures no earlier than 2:30pm, well after all congregants and guests have left the building. However, they would be encouraged to take such pictures before the arrival of Shabbat, perhaps on Friday afternoon.

Recognizing that the reception after the service may be the only opportunity for gathering of family and friends, limited photography is permitted outside the sanctuary. Photographers should be sensitive that not all guests feel comfortable being photographed or videographed on Shabbat *and should ask attendees if they mind having their photos taken.*

### **Instrumental Music**

Instrumental music is allowed on Shabbat during the Friday evening service but not on Saturday morning, due to the more traditional nature of the service and because of time restraints. However, Hebrew themed music recorded or live (Israeli, klezmer, etc.) is permitted during the reception. A general guideline is that music on Shabbat should only be used to enhance the spirit of the day.

### **High Holy Days and Festivals**

At Beth Samuel, it is our custom not to blow the Shofar on Shabbat. However, with regard to other festival traditions that are usually not permitted on Shabbat, creative solutions may be employed (with the approval of the Ritual committee) to educate the congregation about these honored customs when holidays fall on Shabbat, since we do not usually hold services on weekdays.

Sometimes, those in charge of the children's program on Rosh HaShanah or Yom Kippur may wish to do an art project. While it is not customary to use items such as drawing utensils or scissors on Shabbat (since Jewish law bids us not to "create or destroy") art projects that give emphasis to the spirit of the holiday may take place, so long as they are contained in the Religious School area upstairs.