K’hilah K’dushah: Creating a Sacred Community

A CHECKLIST FOR REFORM COMMUNITIES

STRIVING TO CREATE GENDER EQUITY

From the Task Force on the Experience of Women in the Rabbinate

Central Conference of American Rabbis

As we in the Reform Movement work to bring about the full potential of our community to carry Torah forward and inspire the Jewish people, we offer this checklist as a means to consider how your institution is striving to encourage women and men’s leadership. We suggest using this checklist with your board or committees, as well as with staff, and following up the completion of this checklist with a conversation about next steps based on the responses.

How are your clergy addressed?

Our words are reflections of the Holy. Do we address female/male clergy in the same way?

Is there a differential in how we refer to clergy? For example, do we call the male “Cantor,” and the female by her first name? Do we reject diminutive terms like “sweetie” or “hon” when addressing female leaders? Do we say anything when we hear female clergy or leaders being called names like this?

How are public meetings managed?

Hearing women’s and men’s voices is a means of hearing the diverse chorus of blessing in God’s creation.

In public meetings, do we strive to call on both men and women in a balanced way when taking questions? Are we creating a culture of listening working to ensure that
we neither talk over a person, nor take up all the air time with a single person’s viewpoint?

Who is on public display?

“Seeing your face is like seeing the face of God!”

Do we commit to making sure that both female and male faces are equally on display as leaders and activists in our institution? If we were to survey the paintings and photos in your building, are women represented, or missing? Are only men shown in religious leadership moments—like carrying a Torah, or are women also shown? How can you commit to changing the representation of your community to create more equity?

Who appears in your printed and social media?

Commit to always surveying gender balance in your printed and social media.

Are your female clergy being presented as leaders or are they invisible in your marketing and social media? What about in the media and resources shared with your religious school? Are there books that portray women as cantors or rabbis? When teachers do mock weddings or make art projects, are both genders represented as clergy?

Who appears in your public presentations?

Public presentations say a lot about the values of your institution.

Are you committed to ensuring that your panels and events reflect the gender diversity of your organization? Do you have internal guidelines on your planning form for programmatic organizing that ensure gender balance on panels and when engaging major speakers? What can you do to make sure there is attention given to these questions?

How does your nominating committee work?

Lay leaders reflect institutional values as well.
Does your nominations committee include gender diversity as one of its guiding principles? Has there been balance in the lay senior leadership? Is there a clearly articulated value placed on the importance of having both females and males as presidents, leading volunteers, and honorees at major functions?

Zachar Un’keivah Bara Otam – We are taught that God made us male and female, with a full range inbetween, of diverse color, sexual identity, and size. A Beit Knesset, a synagogue, is a gathering for a wonderful diversity of people willing to carry Torah forward. We hope this checklist will aid you and your community in this effort of K’hilah K’dushah, creating a sacred community.