

Congregation Etz Chaim Policy on Communications

As a prominent synagogue in the East Cobb/Atlanta community, Congregation Etz Chaim and its Rabbis, professional staff, lay leaders, volunteers and other members of the congregation may be approached by media organizations or others to provide comments on current events, topical issues, or events occurring at the synagogue or which the synagogue may sponsor or support. In other instances, someone from the congregation with a professional or lay leadership position may be asked to speak, appear on a panel, or otherwise present or discuss an issue of interest with a media outlet or another organization. Some requests may be innocuous while some may be more controversial.

Knowing the communications actions Congregation Etz Chaim, its staff and members should take will ensure the synagogue is reacting to anticipated situations strategically rather than in an ad-hoc or unorganized manner, and with an aligned message and viewpoint.

While every situation/request will require some flexibility in its management, the Congregation Etz Chaim approach for responding to media inquiries is as follows:

- Follow a unified process for identifying, evaluating and if warranted, responding to media request for comments
- Align on directional language for external responses and statements
- Ensure Congregation Etz Chaim is prepared to respond quickly and efficiently
- Minimize any negative impact on Congregation Etz Chaim, its leaders and congregants as well as the overall Jewish community

All media inquiries should be directed to the Congregation Etz Chaim leadership team comprised of the Senior Rabbi, Executive Director and President of the Congregation. These are the only people that should engage with the media on any subjects pertaining to Congregation Etz Chaim, including but not limited to policy and procedure, personnel/human resources, and community relations. No other employee (including but not limited to assistant, associate, and emeritus rabbis, education, youth or programming/engagement directors) or member of the congregation is authorized to speak on behalf of the congregation at any time unless expressly authorized by the leadership team.

The Congregation Etz Chaim Leadership team will:

- Evaluate the situation
- Determine the appropriate communications strategy, response and actions
- If not contacted by media, determine if proactive media outreach officially on behalf of Congregation Etz Chaim on relevant topics with aligned messaging is beneficial for Congregation Etz Chaim and the Jewish community
- Respond and/or provide further direction to continue managing the situation

If other leadership team members, synagogue staff or congregants receive inquiries from media or any other source requesting a statement on behalf of Congregation Etz Chaim, those inquiries should be directed to the leadership team with the following holding statement:

“Thank you for contacting us. While I may not be the best person to answer your question, if you can provide me with your contact information, I will connect you with someone who can discuss this with you further.”

Should any person other than the leadership team listed previously wish to write or speak on synagogue or community related topics, they must disclose that their communications are not the official position of Congregation Etz Chaim but rather their own personal opinions.

Additionally, any person who is writing, speaking, participating in a panel, presenting at a professional forum, offering opinions or commentary on any subject where they will be introduced or identified as: Name, the current/former/retired (position) of Congregation Etz Chaim, or where a by-line or other identifying information could or will be included referencing Congregation Etz Chaim, that person must preface any and all writings and remarks with the following or substantially similar language:

“The opinions and positions which I am discussing today are solely mine and I do not represent or speak for Congregation Etz Chaim while writing/appearing here today.”

All persons who hold current or former positions of professional or lay leadership at Congregation Etz Chaim, and who continue to be affiliated with Congregation Etz Chaim, are encouraged to remember that what each of us does and says reflects

upon our congregation and our community. Each of us has the obligation to speak and act in consideration of our responsibility to our community.

Any questions or uncertainties about this policy, or any policy or position held by Congregation Etz Chaim should always be directed to the leadership team for consideration and resolution.

Approved by action of the Board of Trustees, September 13, 2020.