

Dear Fellow Members,

The past few days have seen the coronavirus (COVID-19) and its impact spread rapidly throughout our nation and our news. Our paramount concern, as always, is the physical and spiritual well being of our congregational family. Charting a course through this unprecedented situation requires a delicate balancing of conflicting needs and desires, reflecting what our sages call *shikul ha-daat*, thoughtful, balanced, fact-based reasoning.

As such, we wanted to reach out to share our current thinking, address concerns and provide information about upcoming services and programs.

Our sages have repeatedly emphasized the principle of *pikuach nefesh*, the actual or even the potential saving of human life, as taking precedence, without any hesitation, over other mitzvot, including the observance of Shabbat. During the Cholera epidemic of 1848, the eminent Rabbi Israel Salanter publicly advocated eating on Yom Kippur so as to not make his community more vulnerable to the disease.

We remain in regular contact with the appropriate local and state-level medical and governmental authorities and our actions are based on their leadership and guidance with the best interest of our and the greater community in mind.

As such, Shabbat Services as well as regular minyanim and adult education programs will not take place until such time as the appropriate authorities recommend that they be resumed.

Rabbi Eligberg is exploring how we might be able to create a virtual minyan experience as we weather the current crisis.

While nothing can replace the emotional and visceral nature of communal prayer, especially in a devoted sacred space, we can preserve a powerful sense of community by reaching out to each other in the days and weeks ahead, negating the sense of separation and isolation precipitated by the current crisis.

We reiterate the importance of being responsible to our loved ones, our community, and ourselves during this time.

- Please continue to wash your hands regularly, use hand sanitizer, and avoid touching your face as much as possible.
- Please remember to avoid direct contact like shaking hands, hugging, or kissing. There are many ways for you to acknowledge others, and we encourage you to use alternatives such as a wave, a finger point, a head nod, or the Rabbi's favorite, the Vulcan salute.
- Medical professionals suggest maintaining a safe personal space of two meters, or over six feet for us Americans.

We will continue to update you as this coronavirus situation unfolds and we will continue to work closely with our local and state-level medical and governmental authorities to provide you with the best services, information, and leadership. We pray that the Holy One send healing to those afflicted and strength to all of us as we confront this challenge.

Thank you, Shabbat Shalom, and please stay safe,

 Rabbi David Eligberg	 Cantor Rogerio Marx	 Gary Ginsburg President	 Debra Lambert, Executive Director
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