



Chaverim,

We recently wrote to you to update you on the planning for the High Holy Days. Mindy Schreff has started reaching out to the Religious School families, and Carol Paster to the Preschool families, to let them know our plans for educating our children this fall. I would like to take a few minutes to update you on the big picture, and let you know where the Temple is on access to the building and to our programs.

The bottom line is that, except for the Preschool, the Temple building will remain closed for all scheduled activities for the foreseeable future.

As always, our priorities and decisions are guided by the Jewish and community values I outlined in June, primarily *Pikuach Nefesh*, *the saving of life*, and *Ush'martem Et Nafshotaichem*, you shall protect your health. You can review the details on the website, [here](#).

At the beginning of the pandemic, the Board of Trustees appointed a planning team, a subset of the staff and volunteer leadership, to guide and facilitate Temple operations during this unprecedented crisis. This team has met twice a week since March and has helped develop values-based guidelines for several areas of the community to facilitate maximum function and maximum safety. The safety of the staff, clergy, and community remain our first priority.

Life Cycle Events

As the first wave of the pandemic subsided, we looked closely at certain life cycle events to assess the best way to minimize the risks of an in-person clergy presence. Factoring in many safety protocols, we developed guidelines that permit the presence of clergy at funerals and weddings. Other life cycle events, primarily B'nai Mitzvah, remain entirely online. Traditional, in-person B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies require the clergy to be in close proximity to the B'nai Mitzvah child as well as numerous guests who take part in the service. Additionally, many ritual objects are shared throughout the service, which poses further risk. Our clergy have done a phenomenal job transitioning B'nai Mitzvah to online ceremonies, which makes the online experience the overwhelming best choice for the time being. The clergy will continue to create meaningful, safe online ceremonies with our B'nai Mitzvah and their families until it is possible for us to resume in-person ceremonies.

High Holy Days

As we prepare for the High Holy Days, the clergy have led us in an exploration of techniques and technologies to provide, not a replication of our normal service, but a worship experience that will be familiar, comforting, inspiring, and will bring the essence of our community into your homes. While we would prefer to be with you on Scotland Road, we look forward to worshipping with you as we have done so meaningfully throughout the pandemic.

Preschool

Carol Paster and her Preschool team have been working hard to create a program that keeps the core elements of our play-based curriculum while limiting risk. In this area, there is no adequate substitute for in-person programming and providing our families with an in-school experience. As a result we will, with care, be welcoming our youngest students back in September. The preschool is implementing strict protocols and staffing a dedicated position to monitor adherence to such protocols. These protocols exceed the state mandates to keep both the children and the staff healthy to the fullest extent possible.

With the Preschool in the building, it will be very difficult to allow safe access for congregants. Staff access is also strictly limited. Our first, second, and third priorities are to keep everyone healthy until we can see you again.

Religious School

The Religious School will begin the year entirely online. Mindy Schreff and her team of teachers are spending the summer developing new and innovative ways to deliver our curriculum through Zoom and Google Classroom. Classes are being organized now, including classes of one to three students for all Hebrew studies. Please register your children as soon as possible so that the best placements can be made. [Click here](#) for registration instructions.

Temple Finances

To ensure TSTI's long-term financial health as we manage through the current financially challenging times, we continue with our TSTI Strong Campaign - [Details here](#). Dues statements for the new program year have also gone out. Our financial goals prioritize keeping the community's most important asset, our outstanding, dedicated clergy and staff, intact so that when we return to in-person worship, instruction, and programming we can continue to be the warm, diverse, and inclusive congregation you joined. To do that, we need your support. Please pay your dues. That said, no one will ever be turned away because of finances; please reach out to Beth Blackman in the TSTI office bblackman@tstinj.org should you need to discuss dues assistance.

Along with the clergy and all of the volunteer leadership, I look forward to seeing you again in-person, healthy and together, as soon as we can safely gather.

Best wishes,

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