



July 24, 2020

Dear Friends,

In recent weeks, a Reopening Task Force of Temple Shir Shalom has been meeting regularly to discuss the timing and mechanics of reopening our Temple building for worship and other programs. The members of this Task Force are Marcia Storch, Adela Beckerman, Toby Hunter, David Pawliger, Marc Zumberg, Hank Storch, Ann Eisenstadt, Ross Van Boven, and Rabbi Joseph. Considering the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control, the Union for Reform Judaism, local health authorities, and the healthcare professionals in our congregation, the Task Force decided at its July 8 meeting that **we will hold our High Holiday observances entirely on a digital platform**. In addition, the Task Force also decided that **our Shabbat worship will remain entirely digital for the time being**. Finally, the Task Force decided that **our Religious School will open on an entirely digital basis, with in-person learning being added as circumstances permit**. The Religious School Committee will soon be in touch with details about our Fall 2020 plans and programs.

Please understand that none of these decisions were taken lightly, nor were they made in haste. It is apparent that the risks involved in gathering, praying communally, singing, and learning together are significant and not yet contained, even with careful physical distancing and the wearing of masks. While making this decision, we were aware that health and safety precautions must also satisfy our Jewish values.

Pikuah Nefesh (“safeguarding life”) supersedes nearly every other Jewish obligation. We have to consider not only the health risk to our Temple members and friends, but also to our rabbi, our staff and faculty members, and the volunteers who we always call upon to organize our programs: parking helpers, greeters, service readers, etc. During these challenging times, a careful and inclusive approach can strengthen the bonds of community and allow us to emerge stronger than ever.

By now, after almost four months of practice, most of us, including Rabbi Joseph, have become quite skillful using the Zoom platform. The Rabbi and Ritual Committee are already hard at work crafting engaging, participatory, inclusive, and meaningful services that will comfort and inspire us throughout the Holidays, just as they continue to do for each Shabbat. Our beloved Paul Richards is already at work recording much of the High Holiday liturgy for us. While we are looking at a vastly different kind of High Holiday experience, we expect it will be no less beautiful than it always is.

Please remember that Temple Shir Shalom is not just a “brick and mortar” organization. Our community and our outreach efforts extend much further than the four walls of our building as we strive to fulfill the traditional obligation that Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh Baze (“we are responsible for one another.”) We pray that Temple Shir Shalom will continue to be your spiritual home. Our true strength lies in our hearts, and no pandemic can take that strength away. Let’s do what we do best: rise up together in community and move forward from strength to strength.

L’Shalom,

Marcia Storch, President  
Toby Hunter, Ritual Chair  
Adela Beckerman, Past President  
David Pawliger  
Marc Zumberg

Henry Storch  
Ann Eisenstadt, Office Manager  
Ross Van Boven, Religious School Director  
Rabbi Michael Joseph