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Dear Friends,

I believe that it is a very important symbol to our Temple community that Temple Shir Shalom remain open for Shabbat prayer. Even for those who might never participate in an entire year, the presence and availability of Shabbat prayer can be extremely important, especially in dark times; and synagogues have remained open through far darker times than these. However, we certainly do have to bow to current reality, so please allow me to make the following provisos:

- 1) according to all the experts, the safest place for each of us to stay is home. Please do not do anything that you believe puts at risk your health or the health of others. Keeping Temple open on Shabbat is important--but it would be perfectly fine for me to sit there by myself for half an hour!
- 2) we will voluntarily suspend our Shabbat services if the Alachua County Board of Health requests that even small gatherings be canceled.
- 3) for those few who might chose to attend, our services will be very short for the duration of the crisis, no more than 30 minutes, beginning to end.
- 4) our Oneg Shabbat will be suspended for the time being. No food or drink at all will be served.
- 5) our Tuesday Torah study sessions will be suspended until further notice.

In addition to the above, I am actively at work with the Temple Board and Ritual Committee to create short video "Shabbat messages" for you, and to create some sort of alternative to our communal Passover Seder which will almost certainly have to be canceled. I hope in these ways we can continue to meet our most sacred obligations while compelling no one to compromise their own best interests.

One final note: many of our Temple members and friends are health care professionals, who are facing or are about to face an unprecedented challenge--on our behalf. We send them our love and our support.

Thank you,

Rabbi Michael Joseph