

Steps Towards TBH Re-Opening—June 8, 2021

As vaccines are distributed and infection rates fall, we are establishing a plan for reopening TBH for in-person events. Your Ritual Committee, Board, and Staff have been discussing how to best move towards reopening in a way that is both in keeping with official guidance and fits with our community's needs and wants. We are committed to creating a uniform approach as a community, rather than a haphazard patchwork.

In making a decision, the Board is balancing three things: guidelines for faith communities issued by Governor Inslee's office, the sentiment of our community, and Jewish values.

JEWISH VALUES

The Jewish values that underpin discussions include:

- *Pikuach Nefesh*—"saving a life": since the beginning of the pandemic, the Jewish value of saving a life has been a priority for how TBH has approached our communal life during Covid. We have prevented the spread of the virus and protected those at risk by not meeting in person, for example. We can apply the same principle to thinking about when and how to safely come back together in person, and how to protect those who are unable to be vaccinated due to health reasons
- *Dina d'malchuta dina*—"the law of the land is the law": This principle of Jewish law recognizes that so long as Jewish communities live around the world, there are civil authorities that govern aspects of our Jewish communal life. In making plans about reopening, we are subject to decisions made by the Governor Inslee and the State of Washington Department of Health, and county and municipal health authorities. We recognize that we live in a state that has taken the virus seriously, and we accept that guidance.
- *L'dor v'dor*—"from generation to generation": we are a multi-generational community, and we honor all ages and stages of the Jewish journey. We want to be sure that every aspect of our communal life is accessible to everyone from our youngest to our oldest.
- *Keruv*—"drawing in": we strive to build inclusive community that eliminates the barriers to participation. Usually this refers to celebrating differences in Jewish identity, as well as creating a community that welcomes all regardless of background, gender, ability, etc. Under Covid, we can add health to this, as we want to create a community that supports the health of our membership and limits everyone's risk.
- *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh b'Zeh*—"everyone is responsible for each other": our obligations do not stop at ourselves, our Talmud teaches that we have obligations towards each other. Our choices impact each other.

REOPENING SURVEY RESULTS

As revealed by the community survey, most people are comfortable attending outdoor events (89%) and less comfortable with indoor events (58%). Most people feel that TBH should require vaccination for in-person attendance (19% for either indoor or outdoor events, 58% for just indoor), but only half believe we should ask for proof. For the High Holidays, if TBH required vaccination most people were in favor of

having everyone in the sanctuary. If we did not mandate vaccinations, then most people were in favor of livestreaming with both the rabbi and the other service participants in the sanctuary. Based on the 116 individuals that took the survey, our community vaccination levels are well above those for Thurston County.

It is important to note that the survey was begun prior to Governor Inslee's most recent guidance. Our understanding of risk, and uncertainties as to the future level of community vaccinations, will continue to evolve in the coming weeks and months.

VACCINATIONS

We have chosen, over the next few months as we transition to further reopening, to consider vaccination status as we plan certain events. This will clearly change as time goes on and vaccination rates rise. We understand that while the government cannot force anyone to get a vaccine, businesses and organizations can inquire about vaccination status and make decisions accordingly; it is not a violation of HIPAA or any other statute.

As we weigh vaccination rates, we also value including and protecting participants whose health makes them vulnerable to COVID, including those who are unable to get vaccinated for health reasons and those who are immunocompromised and may not be well protected by a vaccine. We ask that those attending TBH events be honest about their vaccination status and act accordingly.

PRELIMINARY REOPENING

We have created the following calendar for the coming months. Less a formal policy than a plan, this schedule represents a variety of opportunities and a balancing of needs. In addition, it represents an experiment, as we seek to engage with reopening in a meaningful way. As it is an experiment we welcome your feedback.

In short, we have decided to have outdoor events open to all and have indoor gatherings open only to vaccinated individuals. Outdoor events therefore require masking and distancing, indoor events will not. (Of course, anyone is welcome to wear a mask and observe distancing, even if not required.) According to current state guidelines for faith communities, participants in indoor TBH activities must be able to demonstrate proof of vaccination status, or negative COVID test within 72 hours.

This is the plan as of June 1 and will be in effect through the end of August. It is subject to change and we will continue to assess evolving State and CDC guidelines.

Summer Plan

Through the end of June, we will continue with all virtual events and services. During July and August, we will begin to offer a selection of in-person opportunities:

Outdoor Services: This summer, we plan on having four Erev Shabbat services outdoors in our new parking lot—on the first and third Fridays. For these services, there will be no cap on attendance. All attendees are required to be masked, and six feet of social distance must be maintained between groups. (Groups can be up to 15 people.) For these outdoor services, there will not be any distinction made between those who are vaccinated and those who are unvaccinated (adults and children)—all are welcome. These services will also be livestreamed

online. (Plans are currently being made to address safety concerns for having an outdoor event adjacent to our synagogue building.)

Shabbat Morning Study: Our monthly Talmud Study Saturday morning group will be held in a multi-access format, with both in person attendance in the TBH social hall and virtual attendance on Zoom. Those who attend in person must be vaccinated and will not be required to be masked or socially distance. Per state guidelines, those in attendance must be able to demonstrate proof of vaccination (or negative COVID test within 72 hours). Other Shabbat morning study groups—Torah and Mussar—will remain virtual.

Tot Shabbat: Tot Shabbat will be held in a park for July and August. Families will be masked and distanced from one another.

B'nai Mitzvah: Rabbi Seth is working with three families that will be celebrating b'nai mitzvah this summer. During these services, immediate family and friends will be in-person in the sanctuary, other people are invited to join by zoom.

Committees: Committees are permitted to meet in person in accordance with the above guidelines for indoor versus outdoor gatherings. For indoor meeting, everyone must be vaccinated, and masking and distancing is not required. Outdoor meetings are open to all, with masking and distancing required. Committees may choose to continue all virtual meetings as well. Committees must make arrangements with Kayla in advance if they wish to meet at the building, either indoors or outdoors.

Office and Building Access: Both Kayla and Rabbi Seth are working in the office. However, we will still not be having “open” office hours, and it is requested to make an appointment if you need to come in. At this time, we are limiting building access to those who are vaccinated. In addition, Rabbi Seth will begin to have in-person appointments with those who are vaccinated. This summer we will also have a series of work parties and volunteer opportunities to get the building in shape for reopening. Stay tuned!

All events: For all TBH events, whether indoors or outdoors, TBH will provide sanitizer and bathroom access. In addition, we will be following cleaning protocols, and all those who attend will be asked to sign in for purposes of contact tracing. Anyone who is showing symptoms of illness, especially symptoms of COVID, are asked to refrain from attending.

KITCHEN AND FOOD

Because food events require another layer of guidance and protocols, we will not be holding communal food events at this time.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Because of the difference in vaccination availability among different age groups, Catherine is working out separate plans for TBH youth programming.

FURTHER REOPENING GOALS

If the summer is our first stage of re-opening, then our second stage of re-opening is the fall High Holiday season and beyond. Our current goal is to have fully hybrid High Holiday offerings, with in-person and virtual options. We will be watching transmission rates, vaccination rates, and especially guidance from county and state authorities to decide when to allow large groups back into the building on a regular basis. We are aware that Governor Inslee has announced a June 30 date for projected reopening of the state. However, it is a primary concern that we do not re-open until we install measures to both protect the health of our members and allow for remote participation. These projects, which are currently underway, include:

- Procuring additional sanitizing stations to distribute around the building
- Improving our HVAC ventilation system
- Reconfiguring our existing sanctuary sound system to be compatible for livestreaming
- Positioning a mounted camera in the sanctuary for livestreaming.
- Installing A/V equipment in the social hall
- Configuring videoconferencing equipment for study groups and meetings