

## Memo

To: Congregation Beth Israel  
From: Lynn Cashell, President  
Rabbi Linda Potemken  
Rabbi Nathan Martin  
Dr. Dina Jacobs, Board Member  
Date: March 12, 2020

**Friends, we have been working hard to take the best possible actions in light of the current coronavirus situation.** The Executive Committee, in consultation with Dr. Dina Jacobs, a BOD member and a physician at the University of Pennsylvania, has made several decisions. We have done so in order to protect not only our community but the wider community as well by trying to help slow the rate of virus transmission. This is a time to think broadly, to do our best to take care of ourselves and others and to heed the advice of experts.

These actions are not taken lightly and are made with humility. We pray for the best possible outcomes. Our plan integrates advice on how to stay separate in order to be safe, but includes how we can come together to nourish ourselves spiritually and emotionally in a time of crisis.

**This policy will be in effect for the next 4 to 6 weeks, effective immediately, to be re-evaluated on a daily basis.** We may alter this plan if circumstances change. Many health agencies and other sources are recommending social distancing as a way to limit the spread of this virus. **This means limiting contact in groups so that the virus is not passed on to others who may be at higher risk.**

We believe the BI community has a responsibility to take care of the wider community and those who are more vulnerable. As practitioners of Tikkun Olam it is our duty to advocate for others and act responsibly with public health concerns in mind. We recognize that some in our community may feel this is too conservative an approach, but we wish to proceed with an abundance of caution. The more we limit the spread of the virus early on, the better equipped our health care system will be to care for those who may become more ill and require hospitalization. **This is our way of stepping up as a community to take care of the well-being of others.**

**To be clear, this should not be a cause for panic,** as these measures are being undertaken in a preventive fashion; **most who contract the virus will recover completely.** It is the vulnerable few whom we need to protect.

At the end of the day, the Beth Israel Community should be able to stand back and say with pride that we did our very best as a community to slow down the spread of this virus to protect others; the most pure form of Tikkun Olam. Public distancing is our strongest medical tool right now to slow the spread of this virus. If we all engage in this mitzvah together, we have the ability to do this.

We are asking for your very best efforts on this; please refer to the [CDC website](#) for the most up-to-date information. Please carefully wash and dry your hands and avoid touching your face. Please stay at home even if you have a mild cold. **Therefore, we are making the following schedule changes and policy recommendations:**

1. This weekend:
  - a) Tot Shabbat will be canceled
  - b) 7:30 Friday Shabbat Service with Rabbi Nathan will be held via Zoom
  - c) 9:45 a.m. Shabbat Service with Rabbi Nathan will be held via Zoom
  - d) The Torah of Now program on “schools and racism” will be rescheduled for a future date
2. **For now, we will not hold meetings or events in person with more than three people.**
3. **All events that can be moved to Zoom, will be moved to Zoom**, including all Shabbat Services, Hebrew School classes, adult education classes, committee and board meetings.
4. **Events that cannot be held by Zoom**, such as Tot Shabbat, rummage sale, movie night **will be postponed or rescheduled.**
5. The Board's March 18 meeting will be held via Zoom.
6. Hebrew School will not be held at BI on March 22 or March 29. We will explore online options and get back to you.
7. The Marple Newtown Community Band will not be able to rehearse each Monday evening for the next 4 weeks.

Additionally, we are working on alternate plans so our community can continue to support each other. Rabbi Linda and Rabbi Nathan will be offering additional learning online that will be helpful with regard to the current situation.

We are looking to schedule a community wide Zoom meeting to answer questions and to inaugurate this temporary congregational practice. We will do our best and strive to learn and grow through this crisis. In the meantime, should you have any pastoral needs please do not hesitate to reach out to your rabbis!