

Thursday, August 20, 2020 Reopening Update:

I am writing as Chair of the Reopening Committee with a second update on the work of the Committee.

As I have written previously, the Reopening Committee was appointed by the President in May to evaluate and clarify whether, and if so how, Temple Aliyah can reopen safely. We have deliberately chosen a cautious approach, guided by the Covid-19 protocols issued by the CDC, the Governor, and various other groups, and informed by the considerable professional expertise of those on our Committee. The plans set out below reflect our judgment as to what is best for the congregation based on the current situation in Needham and surrounding communities. If the situation changes, we will evaluate conditions and adjust plans accordingly.

In the near term, our primary means of community gathering will continue to be virtual, including over the High Holidays. Over the past month, however, the Reopening Committee has continued to supervise the preparation of our building for certain in-person uses and has developed or reviewed, commented on, and approved a number of proposals for use of our physical space and/or for Temple Aliyah groups to hold events outdoors or off-site.

Religious services. Over the past month, we have begun holding in-person outdoor minyanim on Monday and Wednesday evenings. These in-person services supplement our summer services over Zoom on Friday night, Shabbat morning and evening (Havdalah), Monday morning, and Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Unlike the Zoom services, the in-person services require on-line sign-up in advance, are limited in the number of people who can participate, and are held outdoors, weather permitting. All participants at an in-person service are required to wear masks, remain socially distant, and bring their own folding chair, kippah and siddur (although we have extra siddurim for those who need one).

Other events. Under protocols approved by our Committee, Sisterhood and youth groups have held events over the last couple weeks, gatherings outdoors at Temple Aliyah or off-site. Future in-person events have been approved to be held by Temple Tots, TACOS and TACOS2 (community service groups for students in grades 7-12), and Mercaz Aliyah.

The Building. The building's HVAC system has been evaluated and updated in terms of filters and protocols for recommended continuous air circulation even when heat or air conditioning is not necessary. We have installed hand-sanitizer dispensers in all the classrooms and more will be installed around the building. We have ordered and have on-hand supplies of hand sanitizer, masks, and other necessary PPE. We have ordered and will be installing shortly plexiglass dividers in the office, and have ordered a number of portable HEPA air filters for use in smaller spaces (e.g. classrooms, office space, etc.). Steve Boyd has begun as our new custodian. He has been doing a remarkable job cleaning. He and Executive Director Melissa Rudman are developing cleaning protocols depending on the authorized uses of the building.

Gan Aliyah. We are planning to reopen Gan Aliyah in September in compliance with the Governor's detailed guidance for operation of preschool programs. We have submitted our detailed reopening application to the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

(“EEC”) and expect to receive EEC’s provisional approval to reopen shortly. Our preschool program is almost fully enrolled.

Mercuz Aliyah. We have reviewed and approved protocols to reopen Mercuz Aliyah in the fall. As with the Needham public schools, we have considered various options and have decided to reopen Mercuz Aliyah using a flexible hybrid model. We have also reviewed and approved a protocol for an outdoor first-day-of-school event for Mercuz Aliyah parents and students on September 13, 2020. More details to follow.

Lifecycle Events. As things currently stand, we do not expect to be able to accommodate lifecycle events (b’nai mitzvot, weddings, etc.) involving more than ten people in the building. We will continue to provide updates directly to those planning lifecycle events as those events get closer.

Other Activities. Any group wishing to conduct in-person events in the building, outdoors at Temple Aliyah, or sponsored by Temple Aliyah and held elsewhere, should contact **Executive Director Melissa Rudman** or **me**. Ultimately, any approval will require a written proposal describing the activity and the planned safety precautions so that the Reopening Committee may review it to determine whether it complies with the range of applicable government-issued Covid-19 protocols and with Temple Aliyah’s reopening policies.

Enjoy the last weeks of summer.

Peter Krupp
Chair, Reopening Committee