

# Guidelines for Temple Sinai's Activities During the Pandemic

Annual Congregational Meeting, June 17, 2020

All of our decisions and guidelines are based upon our Jewish values as named in our mission statement: having an inclusive community, honoring traditions (including life cycle events), *chesed* - caring, creativity, and *tikkun olam* - repairing the world. We should add to that *pikuach nefesh* - preserving life, which overrides all the commandments.

With these values in mind, questions may include: When will it be safe to worship together as a community? What about life cycle events (baby namings, B'nai Mitzvah, weddings, funerals)? What about our school and adult education? What will happen on the High Holy Days?

First, we must understand that there is a spectrum of risk of infection, not "safe" vs. "unsafe."

LOWEST RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGHER RISK	HIGHEST RISK
			
<b>HOME ALONE OR WITH HOUSEMATES</b>	<b>OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>OUTDOOR GATHERINGS</b>	<b>INDOOR GATHERINGS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stay home as much as possible.</li><li>• Try to allow only people you live with into your home.</li><li>• Wash your hands.</li><li>• If you're sick, stay home and isolate from housemates.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wash your hands and don't touch your face.</li><li>• Stay at least 6 feet from people you don't live with.</li><li>• Wear a mask.</li><li>• Avoid shared surfaces, like swings or benches.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wash your hands and don't touch your face.</li><li>• Stay at least 6 feet from people you don't live with.</li><li>• Wear a mask.</li><li>• Don't share food, toys, and other items, and avoid shared surfaces.</li><li>• Participate in events like these infrequently.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wash your hands and don't touch your face.</li><li>• Stay at least 6 feet from people you don't live with.</li><li>• Wear a mask.</li><li>• Don't share food, toys, and other items, and avoid shared surfaces.</li><li>• Open windows for better ventilation.</li><li>• Try to avoid gathering indoors as much as possible.</li></ul>

Adapted from Julia Marcus, Harvard, and Eleanor Murray, Boston University

**Vox**

Considering this model of proactive risk mitigation and living the values of our synagogue community, **we believe it is not prudent to worship together as a community until the following conditions are met:**

- 1. Low levels of community transmission and widespread testing and the ability to do contact tracing OR**
- 2. Effective treatments for all patients that reduce the severity of the illness and its spread OR**
- 3. Widespread vaccination so that we develop herd immunity**

We must keep in mind Massachusetts' phased reopening is an economic reopening. The pandemic continues; there are fewer new cases of COVID-19 due to people responsibly and conscientiously physically distancing from others and the use of mitigation methods such as handwashing, face cloth masks, and limited gatherings. That said, there are hundreds of deaths due to COVID-19 every week in Massachusetts.

Under these guidelines and with continuing risks of infection, it is ill advised at this time and the near future to:

- sing in a group indoors,
- stand at the Torah together,
- share a meal, or
- gather for any length of time, especially with people who are at higher risk for serious illness, such as people 65 and older and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions.

**Group singing is a potential super-spreader activity.** Masks, other than N95 respirators, are ineffective in containing aerosols from singing. Breathing while wearing any mask while exerting yourself (e.g., singing) is difficult and may place the individual at risk. This includes not only choral singing but congregational singing. There are several well-documented incidents of spreading COVID-19, including fatal events, from singing at choir rehearsal or during religious services.

Under these conditions, we must find ways: "to inspire our members to integrate Jewish values and practice into their everyday lives, be inclusive and creative while also honoring tradition, celebrate our Jewish lives together, perform acts of *tikkun olam* – repairing the world – and seek to pass on Jewish identity *I'dor vador* – from generation to generation."

This is what we **can** do:

- We can gather together in small groups at the Temple, either at the outdoor chapel or indoors for meditation (not singing), while remaining physically distant at least 6' apart from non-household members, wearing masks when not 6' apart, and practicing good hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette. Individuals who are at higher risk for serious illness, such as people 65 and older and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions are advised to stay at home and consult with their primary care provider. Sick individuals need to remain at home and take care of themselves.

- The Rabbi and Cantor can lead baby namings in a backyard or over Zoom, officiate at funerals at a graveside with a Zoom shiva, conduct a small wedding in our outdoor chapel or in a backyard with the proper protocols as mentioned above in place. An open canopy is advisable in the event of inclement weather or against strong sunlight. Indoor weddings will have to follow the above-mentioned protocol.
- The Rabbi and Cantor can officiate at Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies via Zoom. We have already conducted two “Zoom Mitzvahs,” which were well-received. We also purchased a Torah that can be dropped off at someone’s home for such a ceremony.
- Our Temple family can continue to build and support our community with praying and studying together over Zoom. We can continue to hold committee meetings and participate in larger community events virtually.
- Our members are continuing to be actively engaged in social action and social justice.
- In our building, we continue to wear masks, wash hands, and clean and disinfect thoroughly.

#### Timelines:

We will follow these restrictions at least through August 23, 2020, the week before public school is scheduled to start, and possibly much longer. We will stay abreast of developments in the Commonwealth and Sharon and the advice provided by our governmental public health officials. We hope to have more information on the pandemic and from the Town and public schools, keeping in mind our safety benchmarks based upon our values must be met in order to open more widely for our Temple community.

The JCC Gilson Early Learning Center at Temple continues to be closed. Guidance from MA DPH for early childcare centers was just released this week. There are tight restrictions on the programming and operations of childcare centers at this time in the pandemic. We are staying in contact with the JCC administration to learn how they anticipate returning to service in the coming weeks and how the Temple can support their operations moving forward. Of high interest is the use of shared spaces such as the sanctuary, the reception areas, and certain outdoor spaces. We will keep the Board informed on their progress and plans.

**It is also important to realize that whatever Sharon Public Schools decide for the fall, Temple Sinai’s Religious School faces special challenges.** We will take the public schools’ decisions into consideration as we determine how best to continue educating our children. The graphic below provides information on the recommendations from the CDC on the reopening of public schools. We will take these recommendations into account as well as the requirements provided by the MA DPH and Sharon Health Department.

The pandemic continues, and there will be continuing serious illnesses and deaths from COVID-19. We remain steadfast, resilient and supportive of our Temple family and our community, following the advice of public health authorities and implementing practices to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community. If any Temple members need assistance in procuring groceries and medications, in dealing with the difficulties of child and parental care, or in struggling with the realities of the pandemic, our clergy, staff, and members are available for support.

Here we go  
New CDC guidelines for reopening schools

- Wear masks over the age of 2
- No sharing of any items or supplies, all belongings in individual cubbies or labeled containers; no sharing electronic devices, toys, games, learning aids
  - Desks 6 feet apart, all facing the same way
- Distance on school buses- one child per seat, skip rows
- Install sneeze guards and partitions wherever you cannot space 6ft apart
- One way routes in hallways; tape on sidewalks and walls to assure kids stay 6ft apart
  - No communal shared spaces - cafeterias, playgrounds
  - Physical barriers or screens between sinks in bathrooms
- Only pre-packaged boxes or bags of food instead of cafeteria food; kids eat in classrooms
  - No field trips, assemblies, or external organizations in the schools. Limit volunteers and visitors.
- Same children stay with same staff all day, no switching groups or teachers.
  - Stagger arrival and departure times for students to limit exposure to crowds of kids.
  - If possible, daily health and temperature checks.
- And several rules about cleaning and disinfecting throughout the day and hand washing frequently.