

L'Chaim

In approving a carefully constructed and comprehensive protective policy for a return to in-person activities at Congregation Shir Ami, our underlying principle must be “choose life” even as we acknowledge that risk has not disappeared. The Board has been most influenced by our responsibility to keep our gatherings as safe as possible and to prevent our activities from contributing to the spread of COVID. Thankfully, the development of vaccinations that prevent severe illness and death, along with the use of masks, gives us the tools we need to get back together.

Through our long history, Jewish congregations have frequently dealt with controversial decisions over how to safely stay together under difficult and (all too often) dangerous circumstances. The COVID pandemic is another of those circumstances that puts a choice before us. It is clear that since vaccinations have become available, severe illness and mortality have overwhelmingly been confined to the unvaccinated and immune-compromised. Some of us are older or have health issues that put us more at risk; some are too young to receive the vaccine at this time. Since unvaccinated people are much more likely than vaccinated people to become ill and spread this plague, the Board has recognized the need to require the measures specified in the Phased Indoor Event Reopening Protocol. The choice should be an easy one—L'Chaim.

If there are some who choose not to obtain vaccination, we will hold out hope that they and their families will escape illness. We will look forward to a time when we can welcome them with open arms. There are some electronic means that may allow participation at a distance, and perhaps cases may decrease after a while, to the point where lack of vaccination is significantly less risky. Unfortunately, it is also possible that a different variant may present us with new problems. Our phased policy provides for markers to guide decisions as the situation changes.

We are a covenant people. Let us make a covenant with each other to do what needs to be done to keep each other safely together.