

## **COVID19 - Chevra Kadisha of Maui**

Today we have come face to face with a new, frightening challenge. As COVID-19 exponentially spreads to all corners of our world and increasingly takes the lives of those we love, we find ourselves physically separated from friends, family, and community. Members of Chevrei Kadisha throughout the world are working to ensure the safety of their membership while continuing to honor the deceased through our ancient final life cycle rituals. As this is being written, funerals, shiva minyans, and daily services are being broadcast around the world via video sharing platforms. Should, chas veshalom, a death occur in our community during this time, we have prepared a virtual Tahara ritual and are offering virtual Sh'mira.

Out of social responsibility to our Maui Jewish community and to our island at large we have decided to adopt the current recommendation of Kavod Ve Nichum which has stated: "Our panel of experts now strongly recommends that during these periods of widespread transmission of COVID-19, and especially when communities are told to limit personal exposure, Chevra Kadisha groups should not do any form of taharot." [For more info see <https://www.jewish-funerals.org/coronavirus-and-jewish-death-practices/>]

### **By Way of Explanation**

In Judaism, the value of human life is supreme. We believe that it is our obligation as Jews to protect our health and the health of others. Devarim 4:9 teaches "Take utmost care and watch your nefesh scrupulously." This verse is used as a proof text for the concept of pikuach nefesh, the principle in Halakha/Jewish law that the preservation of human life is paramount. COVID19 is extremely infectious and spreading rapidly. It is therefore incumbent upon us to follow the guidelines set down by our professional health and scientific societies and government agencies as to not, chas veshalom, directly or indirectly contribute to the spread of the virus.

Like a Sukkah covering the People of Israel in uncertain times, the Maui Chevra Kadisha is here, as always, to serve families and friends who mourn their loved ones.

In blessing and hope for courage and strength,  
The Maui Chevra Kadisha