



SHEMINI ATZERET & SIMCHAT TORAH INFO - Dor Tikvah Committee for Safe Congregational Services Update

Dear Dor Tikvah Community,

We are reaching out to provide you with a brief update from the Dor Tikvah Committee for Safe Congregational Services as we head into the final stretch of this very different holiday season and as we look forward to continuing weekly Shabbat services thereafter.

Our Committee continues to meet on a weekly basis to assess the trends in the number of new COVID cases in Charleston County. We remain in close communication with local medical professionals and we continue to track the number of new COVID cases as well as hospital capacities.

Local COVID Trends:

According to SC DHEC data, since mid-July, the number of new cases of the COVID virus have continued to decline in the Charleston area. We are now at our lowest numbers since a high point in mid-July. This is welcome news, but new cases are still occurring in our area, so please remain vigilant and continue to protect yourself and others while out in public. At this time, our medical advisors believe that we can continue to safely convene BOTH indoor and outdoor services with the proper protections in place.

Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and First Days of Sukkot Recap:

We were able to hold High Holy Day services both indoors and outdoors and deliver holiday packages to our local members. We were so glad to be able to accommodate the maximum number of people in each space during some of the services. Amidst all of the challenges, things went relatively smoothly and we are so grateful to all those who assisted in making that happen.

For the first days of Sukkot we held indoor services only due to the anticipated lower number of attendees. We were able to successfully hold morning services for each of the days, including socially distanced Hoshanot.

Temporary Discontinuance of Weekday Minyan:

In the last few weeks, we have not been able to get the numbers required to make minyan on our usual Monday and Wednesday evenings. This is due to a few factors including a number of our regulars who are not yet comfortable with returning to in-person services. We hope that as things continue to improve, we will be able to bring back and ultimately grow our weekday minyan offerings. **We continue to hold services for Friday evenings, Saturday mornings, and Saturday afternoons** - register to attend at this link - <https://www.dortikvah.org/event/Join-Minyan>.

Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah:

This coming weekend, and the holiday(s) it includes, adds yet another level of complexity to figuring out the balance of holding meaningful and engaging services with the safety and responsibility so important during these trying times. As you know, Simchat Torah is our most well attended service of the entire year, and it will look very different this year than it has in the past. Of course, **we will continue to practice the protocols we have set in place for our indoor services, including masks and social distancing, limited singing and shared surface contact, shortened services beginning with Nishmat, unidirectional flow of traffic, and required registration for all attendees.** Registration for Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah services can be found at this link - <https://www.dortikvah.org/event/Join-Minyan>.

What this means for **Shemini Atzeret** in particular is that we will not be reading **Megillat Kohelet** at services - we encourage everyone to read through the Megillah at home. We will be having a communal **Yizkor service** where we will again encourage everyone to remain in the service so as to avoid issues with social distancing - please note that Yizkor may be recited individually at home if you are not comfortable with attending services.

For **Simchat Torah**, there are a few other elements to navigate, most notably the Hakafot. We will be having Hakafot at Simchat Torah services, on both Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Due to the weather forecast at this time these services will be held completely indoors. The following are the **Hakafot protocols** for this year:

- There will be one man designated to hold each of the Torah scrolls for the entirety of each set of Hakafot, so as to avoid shared surface contact.

- Each Hakafah will involve one Torah and three additional men on one side of the Mechitzah and four women on the other, each socially distanced one from the other. These roles will rotate throughout the Hakafot so that everyone has the opportunity to participate.
- The Hakafot for the men will take place on the Bimah/Stage only, circling the Shulchan/Reading Table and the Amud/Chazzan's Podium. The Hakafot for the women will circle the outer section of pews on the women's side of the Mechitzah.
- For each Hakafah, we will do the introductory prayers and one or two rounds of one song. We request that all who choose to sing along do so with a normal singing voice and without robust, loud singing, as this will introduce more liquid particulates into our shared space.

Given our numbers, we hope to also allow for every interested and eligible man to receive an **Aliyah to the Torah on Simchat Torah** day. This will also be undertaken in a safe and socially distant way involving the one receiving the Aliyah standing at a distance from the Torah reader.

Other Opportunities:

As limited as our in person interactions are at the moment, there are a number of other ways in which we can still connect. **This afternoon** from 3:45-5:45, whether you pre-ordered sushi or not, join us for **Rock N' Roll Hakafot** in the Dor Tikvah parking lot. There will be a limited amount of additional sushi for sale and drive by Hakafot dancing and candy (of course).

The Rabbi will be back to holding pre and post Shabbat Zoom/Facebook Live get togethers after the holidays (**Zoom link here** Password: 085081), our regular weekday classes continue on virtual platforms, and our wonderful weekly Wednesday evening social program Together Apart will be back to virtual social gatherings for all to partake of after the holidays (**Zoom link here**).