

THE ROAD TO RE - OPENING



CONGREGATION
BETH SHALOM

A Guide to Resuming Activities at CBS in the Wake of COVID-19

Part 1: In the Beginning

Our Goal



Our goal at CBS is to resume activities and operations in a manner that is safe, respectful and lawful. As we move toward re-opening, we will be guided by our Jewish values and the requirements of the community in which we live.

As a Jewish organization, we will be guided by the values of:¹

1. **Pikuah Nefesh** – “Safeguarding Life” is a bedrock principle of Jewish law, and supersedes most other obligations or mitzvot. To that end, we must ensure that any steps toward restoring in- person services and activities place preserving life first and foremost.
2. **Sakanat Nefeshot** – “Endangering Life” – Members, staff and clergy should not be in positions where they will be unduly endangering their own lives or the lives of their families due to pressure to restore activities. We must honor the needs of those who have individual circumstances requiring the need to reduce risk to themselves or to those with whom they live.
3. **She’at Hadehak** – “Extraordinary Moment” – Jewish life has always made adjustments in times of emergency and crisis. This crisis may last for well over a year, and we will need to continue to change our expectations and operations. We need to be flexible with regard to Jewish practice informed by our commitment to authentic modes of interpretation of our tradition.
4. **Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh Baze**h – “We Are Responsible for One Another” – It’s our job to look out for the mental and physical health and safety of one another. Those who have resources should give tzedakah to help others and to sustain our institutions. Our members are connected to others outside our community, and our policies and activities affect the broader rate of infection.
5. **Hesed** – “Profound Love and Kindness” – Decisions around our operations and the risks involved create uncertainty, grief, and anxiety. We must act with tremendous love and kindness toward the members of our families, communities, and the world at large.

We will also abide by governmental guidelines as we strive to balance public health concerns with the needs of our sacred community. This guide reflects local, state and federal guidelines, as well as input from professional Jewish organizations, community groups, local authorities, medical experts and others.

Framework



Our congregation has many moving parts:

- As a religious organization, we offer services, celebrations, education and social events.
- As a non-profit corporation, we impact the lives and livelihoods of our staff.
- As a property owner, we operate a large facility on a large plot of land.

As we consider re-opening our shul, we must look at each step through each of these lenses.

¹ This values section is adapted from Rabbi Jacob Blumenthal’s essay at <https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/jewish-values-regarding-physical-reopening-of-our-institutions/>.

Timeline



Because the pandemic is still unfolding and evolving, it is difficult to predict when services, education and programs will resume in person. We will continue to monitor the progress of the disease, along with governmental guidance and community practices to help us determine our next steps.

- At this time, our *office* is open for access by appointment only.
- *Shabbat morning services* continue to be available by Livestream.
- Both *Friday Evening* and *weekday minyan services* are conducted by Zoom.
- All *meetings and classes* continue to take place via Zoom.
- We will have news very soon about the coming year's plans for *Religious School*.

What About the High Holy Days?



Due to the restrictions that would be involved and the difficulties posed for our planning process, our rabbis and the Re-Entry Task Force have decided that we will not have live, in-person High Holy Day services this year. We will be examining alternatives that range from all-virtual to various forms of hybrid presentations that comply with Jewish law and customs.

The “New Normal”



We're still working on the precise details (which are themselves subject to change with little or no notice based on the progress of the disease); however, understanding that the virus is mostly passed through close contact, when we do resume Shabbat services, you can expect something like the following:

- Limits on Attendance – to provide for smooth entry procedures and allow for social distancing
- Enhanced screening of attendees – to prevent or reduce possible transmission
- Masks will be required
- Special entry/exit paths and seating requirements
- Limits on group activities
- Limited contact with ritual objects
- Controlled restroom access – to allow for cleaning between uses.

Communication of These Procedures



We will communicate these safety procedures to members in a number of ways, including email, hard-copy mail, social media, website, videos, signage in the building and other announcements.

Conclusion – Looking Forward



We look forward to a future of approaching a more normal prayer, learning, community-gathering, and work environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has created uncertain times and resulted in unprecedented changes. As communicated throughout this *Road to Re-Opening* guide, we are prioritizing the health of our community every step of the way as we consider re-opening our doors.

We will execute on our plan cautiously, following applicable federal, state and local guidance. We also understand that each member and employee has different needs and situations as our doors begin to reopen. The clergy and staff are always available to help. If you have any concerns about returning to the building, you can contact the Re-Entry Task Force.

Finally, we ask that everyone remain patient and understanding of the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic may require our Road to Re-Opening plans to change. Our members and staff will be given as much notice as possible in the event of an unforeseen setback or building closure.

Together, we will get through this situation with a stronger, more connected, and more healthy synagogue community. Let us continue to pray for peace, for strength, and most importantly for life.

Updates

We'll supplement this guide as we proceed on our Road to Re-Opening. If you have questions, comments or suggestions, don't hesitate to reach out to us at ReEntryTaskForce@cbsclearwater.org.

