



# Beth El Congregation

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March 13, 2020

Dear Beth El Family and Friends,

With the situation relating to the Coronavirus (or COVID-19) evolving daily, it is understandably a source of concern now that the Northeast Ohio community has been impacted. We want to share some of the actions Beth El is taking to ensure the safety of our community, staff, and members.

We are closely following communications and recommendations from the Ohio Department of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control. The safety and health of our community and staff are our priority. As a result, **we are using an abundance of caution and have cancelled ALL services, programs and Hebrew school and Sunday School through March 31.** This approach is in keeping with a growing number of faith communities and other public venues, and is consistent with the advice from a broad range of experts and health officials.

Our dedicated clergy and staff team will continue to work to support the entire community through this process, whether in the office or remotely.

Over this period, the Executive Committee and Clergy will reassess the situation, adhering to the recommendations made by The State of Ohio, and hope to reopen. We will make that determination with the health of our community as our foremost priority.

We appreciate fully that this is difficult, even painful news for everyone in our community. Our building is more than bricks and mortar. It is a cherished gathering point for many seeking community, connection, and growth together in our sacred space. Please know that this decision was made with utmost care and concern for everyone at Beth El and beyond.

Our health is not only about our physical wellness, it is also about our emotional, spiritual, and mental wellbeing. We may be fearful for ourselves or loved ones, experiencing high levels of anxiety and stress, or dealing with other struggles. You are not alone. It is incredibly important that during this time we stay lovingly connected to one another and think about how we can support each other and our neighbors. Please, reach out to one another. Send text messages. Make phone calls. Get on a video conference. While many of us are decreasing our social contact, we need one another more right now, not less. As the Jewish Tradition teaches, כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה (Talmud Shevuot 39a) "People are responsible for each other."

We are committed to staying connected during this time using the digital resources at our disposal. Please stay tuned through email and our website [www.bethelakron.com](http://www.bethelakron.com) and on the Beth El Facebook page.

Blessings for health and safety,

Rabbi Elyssa Joy Austerklein  
216-438-1357

Jerry B. Nelson  
President

*A welcoming, egalitarian synagogue located at the front door of the Akron Jewish Community*

ELYSSA AUSTERKLEIN  
Rabbi

MATTHEW AUSTERKLEIN  
Hazzan

STEPHEN H. GRUNDFAST  
Rabbi Emeritus

STEPHEN STEIN  
Hazzan Emeritus

JENIFER JENEY  
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