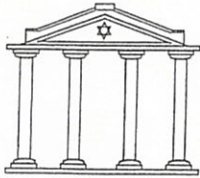


Temple Ohev Sholom



May 7, 2020

“Have no fear, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with the power of My righteousness.” – Isaiah 41:10

To Members and Staff of Temple Ohev Sholom:

First and foremost, we hope you and your loved ones are healthy and safe during the unprecedented crisis caused by COVID-19. We extend our sympathies to the members of our community who are ill or have suffered losses, and we want to express our immense gratitude to those on the front lines of the pandemic protecting and caring for all of us.

Although the temple board and staff have been forced to stay apart physically, we are working to keep our congregation as connected as possible. To that end, we want to provide complete transparency in this letter about everything we are doing to keep Temple Ohev Sholom functioning over the short- and long-terms.

Our response to this crisis is guided by two critical objectives: protect our entire temple family and engage our members.

To protect our temple family:

- From the end of February through early March, as the virus spread across the United States, we enhanced building cleaning and sanitization efforts and implemented precautionary measures for services and the religious school.
- On Thursday, March 12, before the declaration of a national emergency, we made the difficult decision to close the building and cancel all in-person activities. As of the date of this letter, our closure/cancellation is in effect through *at least* May 30.
- We immediately began to reduce and eliminate non-essential spending within a budget that was already lean. This approach will guide our budget for the next fiscal year, which we will present at the temple’s annual meeting to be held in some form this June. We also applied for and received federal stimulus funding to help replace lost revenues. However, those funds (currently, a small low-interest loan) are by no means a panacea. We know that there will be very tough financial decisions ahead.

And to keep our members engaged:

- When we suspended operations, we began emailing weekly status updates to all members and using the temple’s Facebook page to share daily news, information, and invitations to online events. Within two weeks, we moved further into the virtual world by posting messages, prayers, and services from the rabbi on both Facebook and YouTube. We have also partnered with the Union for Reform Judaism to offer free email newsletters on a variety of subjects and to accelerate an upgrade to our website that had already been in progress. We look forward to soon unveiling the new website, which will help keep us connected in many exciting ways.

- In mid-April, the board launched “Operation Congregation Connect,” reaching out personally to check in with every household listed in our membership directory. The rabbi had already been calling and writing particularly vulnerable members since the very beginning of this crisis. If we missed you, please accept our sincerest apologies for the oversight and let us know how you are doing and what you might need.
- At the end of April, in celebration of Israeli Independence Day, we re-opened our religious school for a day of special programs via the Zoom video platform. It was great to see our families and to give them an opportunity to see their teachers and each other. Once our religious school year officially ended, we decided to reschedule the dessert reception that had been planned for this month to honor the retirement of our beloved religious school principal, Lillian Rappaport. That event will now take place on Sunday, October 25, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. at the JCC.

We have tried our best to make fact- and value-based decisions in the best interests of our entire temple family. Going forward, we will continue to do so and to share those decisions with you. Although there is a lot we do not know about the future, we are grateful for the things we do know:

We know that Temple Ohev Sholom is even more urgently committed to maintaining and deepening our members’ connections to one another and to the traditions of Judaism that inspire, uplift, and heal.

We know and want to assure you that – *one way or another, in person or through technology* – we will be together for the High Holidays, start another year of religious school this fall, and continue to meet the important spiritual, educational, and social needs of our congregation.

And, perhaps most importantly, we know that the challenges we are all going through today will eventually be in the past and leave us stronger as a result.

In the meantime, we ask for your continued support and patience as we navigate these uncharted waters. We also welcome your questions, concerns, and suggestions. Stay healthy and safe, be kind to yourself, and see you soon.

Sincerely,



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