



KEHILLAT BETH ISRAEL

President's Update - COVID-19 - March 17, 2020/ 21 Adar 5780

Dear Friends,

Over the last few days the staff and board have been working diligently to keep everyone informed regarding congregational offerings. As we begin to settle into our "new normal," we are doing our best to continue to provide meaningful congregational services, even if they must be in a new way. In the end, we will continue to make the choices that assure everyone's health and safety, while still serving as your shul.

Last night, the board met to discuss next steps. While we committed to looking at 2 weeks at a time, we wanted to keep the congregation fully informed regarding what to expect from here. This morning, the Ontario government declared a State of Emergency, and we are confident that the decisions made at the Board, outlined below, are in line with the current provincial declaration. We will continue to monitor as the situation evolves.

Building Status

While we announced that the building would be closed through tonight, that closure will continue for the immediate future. We cannot foresee when the building will become available again for congregational services and programming, as it simply is not prudent to have groups gathering at the synagogue at this time. We are taking this time to perform a deep clean on the building and, in particular, on high-traffic areas.

The Office

For the time being, a rotation of staff is set in place to assure that mail is received and phone messages responded to. During both a morning and afternoon shift of 2-3 hours, someone will be present at the synagogue as we attempt to do our best to maintain the outstanding service you've come to expect from our congregation. It is still likely to take a little bit longer than usual to respond to requests and we ask for your patience as we do our best to pivot to this new reality. During this time of moving much of our operations to virtual platforms, the best way to get in touch with any member of the staff is to email them. A staff directory can be found [here](#). As a reminder, while staff may be present in the building at times, we still ask that you not "drop by" as we are attempting to limit everyone's exposure.

Prayer Services

As we will not be having groups gathering at the synagogue, that also means that we will not be holding prayer services at the building as well. By now, Cantor Green has recorded versions of Shacharit, Mincha, Maariv, and Kabbalat Shabbat using Facebook Live and they are available should anyone wish to join along with him by going to www.Facebook.com/KehillatBethIsrael. These videos are available at all times on that page.

Additionally, there are congregations currently live-streaming their services. As long as there is a minyan in that room, one may say Kaddish along with that community from your home. One can find a list of communities live-streaming [here](#).

We are also posting to the KBI Facebook Page "Meditative Minutes," which are a line or two from the liturgy sung by a member of the clergy. We believe that these words from our siddur can be meaningful to listen and sing along to. Finally, while we'll share below how one can pick up a siddur to use from the synagogue, one can also find a Hebrew only Conservative Siddur available through the App Store by searching for Masorti.

Transitioning to Virtual

We have also begun the process of transitioning our in person programs to virtual programs. Many of our offerings will be done utilizing Facebook and Facebook Live. One need not have a Facebook account to access those videos. One must simply go to www.Facebook.com/KehillatBethIsrael and you will find those videos. We will also begin utilizing Zoom Video Conferencing for classes as well. For each class, there will be a unique link that you can follow to join the class. If you aren't comfortable using the video conference technology, one can also call into those classes as well. One simply calls (647) 558-0588 and adds the meeting ID (which are the numbers at the end of posted URL). If you have any difficulty accessing these classes, please reach out to a member of our staff team. They'd all be happy to help.

Over the next week, we will begin offering a number of classes and programs online. We have Women's Torah Study this Wednesday at 7 pm on Zoom (<https://zoom.us/j/940108987>). There is a pre-Shabbat Singalong with Cantor Green on Facebook live on the KBI Facebook Page. And Thursday morning, Rabbi Kenter will begin two weekly Parashat Hashavua classes. At 11 am there will be a class for Elementary Students and at 11:30 there will be a class for adults. For both classes, you can connect via Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/237236906>.

We will continue to update everyone regarding our virtual services, programs, and classes, so please stay tuned for upcoming offerings.

Also, we are beginning to transition our materials from Facebook and Zoom to the shul website. We will let you know when that site is live and you are able to find all the videos there.

Passover and the Passover Seder

We are disappointed to announce that we will be canceling our Communal Passover Seders this year. While we can no longer host Seder, we will continue to work diligently to make sure the Seder needs of our congregants are met. Our community caterers are working on "to go" meals not only for large groups but for small and individual Seders as well.

A week or two before the Seder, our clergy will offer classes to assist with your Seders including learning with interfaith clergy about the themes of the Seder and teaching people unaccustomed to leading their own Seder the tools to be successful.

Additionally, we will be recording 5-10 minute Seder modules that can be used as inspiration for our Seders or can be shared during them. We will also be happy to loan out copies of our congregation's Haggadot for people who may require them.

Synagogue Pick Ups

We are sure there are congregants who would like to pick up supplies from the synagogue. Whether it be your Tallit and Tefillin or a Siddur/Haggadah to use at home, we want to make sure you have a chance to get what you need. If anyone needs to pick up one of those items, one may do so from 10 am-12 pm this Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. There will be someone in the office at those times to let you in and to "check out" the books. Please remember that the office is not open for ordinary synagogue business at those times, and staff will be maintaining an appropriate distance. If you are "high-risk" for COVID-19, we respectfully ask that you not come for pick up, but instead allow us to deliver the items to you. Should you benefit from a delivery, please contact the office.

Personal Needs

We are grateful that our community has established a centralized location for people to ask for and offer assistance during this challenging time. You can join that group by clicking [here](#). If a need does arise, however, please do not hesitate to reach out to our clergy and staff. They are eager to provide whatever support that they can. Please allow us to assist you should a need arise no matter how big or how small.

In Conclusion

We will be here for you and with you through whatever the coming weeks have in store. Thank you for your understanding as we transition new delivery methods for our services and thank you for your participation in our new virtual offerings. We will continue to keep you posted as events warrant and as new programs are added to our calendar.

All the best to each and every one of you.

Respectfully,

Judah Silverman, President

Rabbi Eytan Kenter, Senior Rabbi

Rena Garshowitz, Executive Director