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March 2020

Dear Tifereth Israel Community,

Like you, we have all been paying close attention to updates in the news about the spread of COVID-19/coronavirus. We have been regularly reviewing updates from local officials and will continue to closely monitor the situation. We are in daily contact with members of our synagogue and the Columbus Jewish community in an effort to make sure our information is as up to date as possible.

While there are as of yet no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ohio, we are taking proactive steps to prepare and educate our staff and congregation for the possibility of the virus arriving in our area. Many of these measures are helpful for dealing with the much more common colds and flues that circulate every year. The better we are at enacting these measures now, the better prepared we will be in the event that the situation changes.

Below is some advice from health professionals about how we can keep our community safe and healthy.

- If you or your children are not feeling well or showing any signs of illness (fever, cold, or cough), please stay home. Many of our services and adult education classes will continue to be live streamed on our website or on our Facebook page. Even though you might miss praying or learning with our community, you will be fulfilling the mitzvah of pikuach nefesh, saving lives. Please use your best judgement in these situations.
- Washing your hands with soap and water and properly covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze are still the most effective ways to limit the spread of disease. If the opportunity to wash your hands is not available, hand sanitizer stations have been set up in various locations around the synagogue.
- Limit physical greetings like hugs, handshakes, or kisses. Yes, even while the Torah is being processed through the congregation! Smiling, waving, or bumping elbows are lovely substitutes as we continue to adjust our practices and work to keep our members safe. In an effort to be abundantly cautious, many congregations, including ours, are encouraging people to take a break from touching and kissing the Torah. Instead, we suggest waving to the Torah. We know this is awkward but firmly believe that Judaism requires the protection of the health of those in our community.
- When joining us for any occasion that involves food - which is a frequent occurrence at our synagogue - please use the serving utensils provided and avoid taking any unpackaged food products directly with your hands.
- Avoid touching your face, especially rubbing your eyes, mouth, or nose.
- Finally, if you have not yet gotten a flu shot, it is not too late.

We are grateful to Facilities Director Juan Pineda and his entire staff for redoubling their efforts to enhance our cleaning and sanitizing procedures. Frequently touched surfaces throughout the building, including religious school classrooms, are receiving intensified attention.

Even as we begin to pay more attention to these positive hygiene habits, our congregation remains committed to continuing to learn, pray, and act together, as we always have. If the situation changes in Ohio, we will adapt our policies and be in touch as soon as we can.

Thank you for all you do to help make our community a sacred, safe, and healthy space.

Rabbi Hillel Skolnik
Rabbi Alex Braver
Cantor Jack Chomsky
Executive Director Steve Friedman
Ronald Solove, President