



**March 12, 2020 • 17 Adar 5780**

Dear Members of Society Hill Synagogue,

These are truly trying times. The rapid spread of COVID-19 has stunned us all. Never before have we sent the following message, but, in order to ensure the health and safety of our community and of the community at large, we feel that it is incumbent upon us to do so.

As of today, we are putting a temporary halt to all in-person programming at SHS, until further notice.

This includes regular Shabbat services, Tuesday morning minyan, adult education classes, Hebrew School, Sunday School, Playschool – all of it. Nothing is more important than the health of the community.

That said, it is moments like this where we are most in need of each other's support and guidance. This pandemic provides us with an opportunity to reach out to each other, not less but more, through a variety of means. In the days to come, our clergy, staff, and leadership will work to construct additional ways by which we stay in touch with one another – including emailed Divrei Torah (pieces of Jewish teaching and wisdom), links to sacred music, online platforms like Zoom that allow us to conduct adult education and remote learning for Hebrew School and Sunday School classes in real time, and virtual prayer services.

We want to construct a calling tree to ensure we are in touch with one another, wishing each other "Shabbat Shalom" and checking in on each other's well-being. We want to take special care to ensure we are checking in on seniors and those in our community at high risk for serious infection.

We aim to come out the other side of this pandemic strengthened and more connected – more in tune with one another’s needs and one another’s humanity, and more aware of the sacredness of community and our home here at SHS.

This week is Shabbat Parah, the Sabbath where the special maftir (concluding Torah reading) we read, comprised of Numbers 19:1-22, lays out in painstaking detail the precautions our ancestors went to in order to ensure their tabernacle was safe and secure so that it could play host to the Divine Presence. We recognize the divinity manifest in all of us, young and old. We are fragile, and each of our lives are blessings. We cherish them with the utmost sanctity.

Therefore, we, like our ancestors, commit to taking precautions in order to ensure our health and safety. We send love and blessings to all, and we look forward to remaining connected in the days and weeks to come.

Shabbat Shalom,

Synagogue President Jeremey Newberg and the SHS Board of Directors

Avi Winokur  
*Senior Rabbi*

Nathan Kamesar  
*Associate Rabbi*

Jessi Roemer  
*Hazzan*

Betty van de Rijn  
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