

Dear Friends,

We read, with much excitement, the CDC's latest guidelines which allows anyone who is fully vaccinated to participate in indoor and outdoor activities -- large or small -- without wearing a mask or physical distancing.

While we continue to encourage each of you to do what is comfortable and what you feel is necessary for your health and for the health of your family, we believe that this latest development will allow us to take the following next steps in our re-opening plan.

As of this Shabbat:

- **Masks will no longer be required to be worn in the building.** We certainly encourage those who continue to feel the need to wear a mask to do so and *strongly* recommend that those who are not vaccinated follow CDC guidelines and wear a mask for your protection.
- **Social distancing requirements will no longer be enforced**, which will allow for both open seating and for the resumption of ritual as it took place before the pandemic (honorees will be able to stand at the Torah table, lift and dress the Torah, etc.). We expect many available open seats in our sanctuaries over the coming months for those who like to maintain distance.
- Boxed lunches will be provided, as planned, this Shabbat and after Yizkor/2nd Day Yom Tov services on Tuesday. For this coming week, advanced sign-up will still be mandatory for in-person attendance, but COVID screening questionnaires and temperature checks will no longer be required. Tikkun Leil Shavuot on Sunday evening and 2nd Day Shavuot lunch on Tuesday afternoon will be moved inside in the event of rain. We will provide additional details about future Shabbat meals and service sign-ups in the coming days.

Despite these changes, we want to assure you that we will continue to offer Zoom as a way to participate in services and classes for the foreseeable future. We are currently working on a major upgrade of our camera technology in both sanctuaries so that we can offer a high quality livestream as part of our regular Shabbat and holiday experience going forward.

While we know that many in our community, particularly families with young children, are still months away from being fully protected from the virus, and that many others may still feel uneasy about in-person attendance at shul, we hope that this significant step towards "normal" in our community will raise all of our spirits after a very difficult week for the Jewish people. (To that end, please check our Facebook page for ways you can support Israel and Israelis during this difficult and dangerous time.)

In the Talmud, the sages teach that one who has not seen her friend's face in more than thirty days must recite, "Blessed you Adonai, who has kept us in life, who has preserved us, and enabled us to reach this day."

We have been waiting for this *shehechianu* moment for some fourteen months. We hope to hear this blessing recited many times over in the coming days and weeks as we reunite, face-to-face at last, as a Shearith family in our spiritual home.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach,

Shirley Davidoff
President

Rabbi Ari Sunshine
Senior Rabbi