



Monday, July 6, 2020

Dear Beth El Family,

It is with eager anticipation that we write you to share our ambitious and exciting plans for the High Holidays of 2020/5781.

Even as our building has been closed to the public since March, our shul has been abuzz with activity every day. That includes the weekly meetings of our Covid-19 Task Force which affirmed a unanimous recommendation regarding the High Holidays.

Our services this year will be remote via an artfully-produced digital video format. Our aim in doing this is to provide the most meaningful, spiritual and satisfying High Holiday experience to the widest number of our congregants. We want all our members—all 2500 of us—to enjoy the same high-quality services that have been the hallmark of our congregation for nearly 100 years. That means you'll experience our uplifting High Holiday morning services from the safety and comfort of your own homes.

This year we will come together—all at the same time—as one congregation on both days of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur. Our services will follow the same timeline you're used to. We're fond of saying, "Shul begins when you get here." It'll be the same on the holidays. Our services will be creatively and thoughtfully produced so that you'll know the timing of the Morning Service, the Torah service, the Shofar service, the Sermon and Musaf. If you came at 10:30 last year during the Torah service, you'll be able to "walk in" the same time this year and know that we will be at about the same spot. (On Rosh Hashanah, we'll start at 8:30am and conclude around 1:30pm; On Yom Kippur, we'll start at 9:00am and go all day long until shofar blowing and Havdalah at 7:26pm.)

We know that our members come to shul to be with their friends and family. Some of us have already been sheltering in place with an extended group of others. So (only where it is safe to do so!) we encourage you to gather as families to participate in these online services together. Sing and schmooze just like you always do. We will provide you, our members, with both our regular High Holiday Machzor (prayer book) and a Yizkor Book. You'll borrow them and then return them. This will allow us all literally to be on the same page.

In advance of all this, you'll receive a special entry ticket that grants you access to the service. We'll be having all the services we've always had, including our Children's and Family Services. They will feature our clergy, our choir and our High Holiday favorite, Rabbi Eli Kahn. We're also thinking about ways we can come together outdoors, for smaller services where physical distancing can be maintained, and the risks are far less.

Many of us in our local Jewish community agreed on this approach. Please see the accompanying letter from the Tri-County Board of Jewish Clergy.

We'll be sharing more details as we get closer to our Beth El Family Reunion, and we'll schedule a follow up "town hall" to answer your questions. In the meantime, get ready for a most memorable and beautiful High Holidays with your Beth El family. You'll have the best seat in the house!

With Warm Wishes for Health and Happiness,

Rabbi Aaron Krupnick

Hazzan Alisa Pomerantz-Boro

Rabbi Andy Green

Karen H. Schlessel, President      Josh Laster, Executive Director

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