



PO Box 288
Waterford, CT 06385
860-443-3005
www.tewaterford.org

Marc E. Ekstrand
Rabbi

Sherry Barnes
Cantorial Soloist

Aaron Rosenberg
Rabbi Emeritus

Jo-el Fernandez
President

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COVID-19/coronavirus message

Dear friends,

Temple Emanu-El leadership has been actively monitoring the uncertain and rapidly evolving nature of the current COVID-19/coronavirus threat across the country. The health and safety of our congregants and staff is our primary concern in this fluid situation. As you are aware from the near hourly updates regarding event cancellations, travel bans, and restrictions, decisions that would have seemed unthinkable a week ago now seem quite rational. Utilizing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) regarding social distancing, the Temple Emanu-El board has made some difficult decisions to help mitigate and slow the spread of COVID-19 and to protect our community.

During the afternoon of 3/11/20, Religious School administrators Jennifer Zettler and Armi Rowe, in conjunction with Rabbi Ekstrand, decided to close the Religious School through the spring break in April, at which time the situation will be reassessed. During the evening, the Temple board provided feedback on the most appropriate next steps for the congregation to take. Following the meeting and utilizing the feedback provided, the following actions will be taken to protect the health of our congregants:

- Live Shabbat services have been suspended at this time. Rabbi Ekstrand and several congregants are working diligently to get live-streaming equipment in place so that we can continue to participate in Shabbat worship from the safety of our own homes. It is hoped that this will be up and running in time for tomorrow's service. If not, live-streaming services will commence on 3/20/20. A week by week determination will be made by the Temple executive board and Rabbi Ekstrand as to when it is safe to resume live services.
- All Temple social activities through the month of March 2020 are being canceled. This includes events such as the Brotherhood Italian Night, committee meetings, Sunday bagels, etc. Our tenants who rent space from us also will not be able to meet at the Temple during the month of March. We encourage committees to continue their work by utilizing technology in order to hold virtual meetings. The executive board will determine when it is safe to resume activities at the Temple.

- The Temple Emanu-El Passover seder, scheduled for April 8 at Langley's, will also be canceled due to the anticipated size of the gathering, the inherent risk in serving food to a large crowd, and the impossibility of practicing social distancing in such a setting. We encourage our congregants to observe the holiday in small groups with their families and friends.
- The Temple Emanu-El business office will remain open, and Rabbi Ekstrand will continue to be available to congregants to meet their spiritual needs. He will provide a separate message to the congregation regarding this.

While the above is disappointing to all of us, it is now necessary to take further proactive steps to help keep our community safe. These measures will undoubtedly cause inconvenience and disruption, but the risks of not acting now far outweigh the challenges. The Temple Emanu-El board is grateful to all of you in advance for your patience and support as we work together to address this pandemic. At this time of unprecedented public health concern, we are truly all in this together as we navigate our way forward.

Sincerely,

Jo-el Fernandez, Temple Emanu-El President