Dear Fellow Members of Temple Israel,

As the larger community’s response to the coronavirus has evolved, we at Temple Israel continue to take seriously the need to assure the safety of our members, to act proactively to help contain the virus, and yet to find ways that allow our members to fulfil their spiritual needs and mark life cycle events.

With this in mind, for the time being, Shabbat services and daily minyanim will continue. On Shabbat we will not hold the usual Torah processions and will be instructing people to follow our policies of using hand sanitizer and of using elbow bumps rather than kisses or hugs. As we have announced before, those who are showing any symptoms of illness or who are at risk should please stay home.

In light of the increased number of guests who will be with us to celebrate this Shabbat’s Bat Mitzvah, we are additionally asking those who are not directly connected to the Bat Mitzvah family to consider staying home and helping us reduce the size of our gathering. Youth services will not be taking place.

For those who do not attend Shabbat Services, we expect to have at least rudimentary streaming capability beginning this Shabbat. Specific instruction will be sent out prior to candle lighting this evening.

Even as, for the time being, we continue to hold worship services, out of an abundance of caution, many other congregational programs are being postponed or cancelled.

- Our congregational breakfast and annual meeting scheduled for this Sunday, March 15, is cancelled.

- Our Ida and Charles Gilvarg Religious school will close for a period of two weeks, beginning Sunday, March 15. We are working with our teachers so that appropriate projects will be emailed to families, allowing the children to continue with some Jewish learning during this period. We also plan to use platforms such as Zoom, Facetime, and Google Voice to support older students with Hebrew and tefillah.

- Following the lead of almost all synagogue and many corporate early learning centers, the Judy Gordon Early Learning Center will close for this coming week, March 16-20. We know what a hardship this is for our parents but, for the safety of the children and staff, we must follow so many other institutions. We are in the process of determining how to adjust parents’ ELC payments to take this closure into account. Understand that we are committed at this time to continuing to compensate our ELC and Religious School teachers. During the coming week we will be reevaluating when it is safe to reopen.
• All other ELC, Religious School, and Youth programming scheduled for the coming two weeks, both programs scheduled for in our building and those to which our children were to travel, are cancelled.

• The Synaplex Shabbat/Kabbalat Siddur program scheduled for March 21 is being postponed. We will instead hold regular Shabbat worship in our sanctuary, but no Kiddush lunch.

• The Religious School Shabbat dinner scheduled for April 3 is cancelled.

• Café Achshav, scheduled for April 26, is being postponed.

• We will make a decision regarding our 75th Annual Gala, scheduled for June 7, within the coming weeks.

• We are continually reevaluating the status of all programs and will update the membership as frequently as necessary.

Thank you to all of our members who, in myriad ways, are supporting each other and our community in this difficult period. Even as we are avoiding coming together physically, we continue to be together in spirit and in our shared commitment to each other. Please know how important it is to me and to our Temple staff to have heard from so many of you regarding your concerns and needs. Please continue to stay in touch with each other and with us.

Alan Avery-Peck
President
Temple Israel of Natick