

Dear Temple Israel of Catskill Family,

I am reaching out to make sure you know that you are all in my thoughts and prayers. I want to reassure you that our Safety Committee, President, Board of Directors and I are all committed to keeping our temple a healthy one and taking every precaution necessary to meet that goal. With that in mind, what follows is our current decision to temporarily suspend all temple services, L'HADLIK Hebrew School and activities. We are monitoring the national, state and local recommendations and reports which are constantly changing with developing news about the corona virus, and we will adjust our policies and recommendations accordingly. Please read the accompanying message from our Security Committee and know we will update you weekly.

I want to make sure we find ways to stay connected. I want everyone to feel the support of our community and to offer ways to lessen the feeling of isolation even when we may be self quarantined. As always, I welcome phone calls from you for any reason. After this Shabbat, we will be setting up video conferencing so that you can go on line and attend a Shabbat service, class or celebration with me from the comfort of your home. This is an unusual time that calls for new ways for us to connect. Details will follow next week. As long as you are healthy, if you would like to meet in person, I will be seeing people in my temple office. Or perhaps you don't want to be indoors? We can walk and talk on the Hudson Sky Walk which begins right outside our temple door.

We have needed to be able to live stream our services for those who are home bound for some time. Now with the temporary closure of the temple, it would be the greatest gift to get streaming set up so that all of us have that opportunity to connect in that way. If you can help with this in anyway, please be in touch with me.

We are probably all reading or listening to a lot of news right now. I implore all of us to find a balance, I know I struggle to find it for myself. Find out the information you need and fill your mind with other things as well. How many mitzvahs can we do from home? We can call neighbors and especially anyone we know that lives alone. If we are shopping for ourselves, can we pick up and drop off something for a neighbor? How about cooking healthy meals? How about cleaning out our closets and garage we have been meaning to do for ages and making give away piles of items we don't really need. What about reading the books we have been meaning to read? And what about reading the weekly Torah portion? There are online classes or you can make your own study group and set up daily or weekly chats. What skills can you share? Do you know Hebrew? Can you share some teaching about Passover? Are you able to spend phone time with a friend's child or grand child and share what you know?

I challenge us all to make this a time of great self care.

I challenge us all to make this a time when we connect with someone at least once a day.

I challenge us all to do one new mitzvah today, and then again tomorrow and then again and again...

I challenge us all to make this a time of growth.

Some websites to check out

ReformJudaism.org

"How to Create a Meaningful Shabbat Experience at Home"

Chabad.org

"10 Tips for Shabbat while Social Distancing"

If you are spending time on Facebook, check out the many rabbis who are writing prayers for our trying times.

Please be assured that our temple community is here for you and that we need each other. I look forward to speaking with you and to seeing you as soon as possible. Please do not hesitate to tell me if you are in need in any way. I'm counting on you to keep me informed,

May this Shabbat bring you unexpected comfort.

May those suffering with illness have all the support they need and have a speedy refual shleymah.

May we look after one another. May we turn away from anxiety and panic and may God help us to find calm in this storm. May we all be kept safe. May we remember to give thanks for all that we have. May we pray for what we need. May we partner with God and take action to bring those prayers to life. May we remember that we are never alone. May the ONE bless us all with healthy bodies and peaceful hearts.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Zoe