

May 22, 2020

Dear Shearith Israel Family,

*Ready, Set, Wait!* We were all briefly thrilled at the Governor's comment on Wednesday that houses of worship might be able to re-commence services of some limited type. Was he referring to New York City? He seemed to be, yet we were (and are) under an Executive Order to the contrary. As of this writing we have no revised Executive Order. Instead, we have been treated in the press and over the internet to a cacophony of confusing choruses weighing in on all sides of the issue, ranging from a mad and worryingly dangerous rush to the entrance to a "what, wait, what's going on?!" Here, at Shearith Israel, in our microscopic corner of the cosmos, there is no confusion. We are patiently pursuing the strategy described weeks ago: We will honor and be guided by (i) dictates and directives of the government; (ii) the advice of our particular medical advisers; and (iii) particulars about our Congregation that we will take into account, bearing in mind what our sister congregations are doing in the area. We have a well-functioning group of fifteen congregants and Shearith Israel employees actively trying to figure out how and when we will reopen. We have or are engaging all the relevant areas of expertise that need to be consulted. The group is neither in a rush nor delaying. It, like the rest of us, is keenly aware of the risks of premature re-opening or of re-opening in a way that creates risk to congregants. We are not arrogant nor haughty nor contrarian. But we will patiently find the best way to do this, and we will then let the Congregation know the when and how and what.

*Blessedly, in the meantime.* Eleven Shabbatot out of our synagogue; less than a week to Shabuot with no plan to be together. (Happy Yom Yerushalayim, zoom-buddies). But as if to demolish the depression that my reference in last week's update to ten weeks out of our synagogue might have engendered, Rabbi Soloveichik has begun his amazing, ten-lecture series, *Biblical Tours of the World's Greatest Sites: A Journey Through Jewish History*. Ok, it's not his usual, pun-infested, pithy title. But it is an absolute *tour de force*. If you are missing it, I think you are among the minority of Congregants and literally hundreds of others. We are all home-bound; yet the lectures allow us to travel to parts of the world we can only sigh that we will not see for a time. The erudition is arresting as well as uplifting. Please tune in. And that's not all that is going on. Rabbi Rohde's Thursday afternoon service and Reverend Edinger's daily, Friday, and post-Shabbat zoom-gatherings are so special. They are keeping us buoyed while we deeply mourn our lost congregants and others and while we wait, and wait, and wait. If the waiting gets too hard and it's not at a time of day when our Clergy's erudite learning or affecting song are available, call our Congregants who are alone or who are not alone. Just call – and feel great.

*Our Spring Fundraiser.* We continue to incur significant operating costs even while we are closed. Reopening is going to impose significantly more costs. The initial outpouring of support for our financial needs has been inspiring. In just a week over 100 Congregants and friends have stepped up. But that leaves at least 600 more who are enjoying the Rabbi's lectures and our

other programming. We will be calling many of those who call in, and Barbara Reiss and Bonnie Barest need volunteers to make calls. Since, as I said above, making calls is one of the great pick-me-ups of the day, please call or email Barbara or Bonnie to volunteer to make some calls. And please, if you have not yet pledged to support the campaign, or are moved to do so again, be as generous as your circumstances permit.

Thank you all. Bless us all. Shabbat shalom.

Louis M. Solomon

Parnas