

Kehilla's Re-Opening And COVID-19 Protocols

Updated Jul 21, 2021

Dear Kehilla Community,

Shehechianu! We're so grateful to have arrived at this moment, when we can begin to return to our communal home, and pray, sing, mourn, celebrate and learn together! It's been almost a year and a half, and we've all been through so much. The pandemic isn't fully behind us yet, but with high and rising vaccination rates and low infection rates in the Bay Area, we're ready to begin opening back up. This email includes a lot of information about how Kehilla is going about reopening, and the principles and processes that are guiding us. We hope you'll find what you need here, and we welcome your questions and feedback.

This reopening doesn't affect our plans for our main High Holy Days services, which will still happen on Zoom (see below for other holiday events that will be in-person). We had to make that call several months ago because of uncertainty about the reopening timeline in California and the scale and complexity of Kehilla's High Holy Days.

Our plan is to move back into in-person gatherings and services, while maintaining the increased accessibility that Zoom has allowed us, as much as possible. We're doing the necessary technology updates now to meet the re-opening schedule described below.

As always, we're guided by our public health advisors - Ori Tzvieli, Catherine Lyons, Karen Cohn and others - to make choices that balance the need for minimizing COVID risk with the need for being together in community, and the need to make everything we do maximally accessible. We now have a **Health and Safety Task Force**, made up of staff and Kehilla members, who will be setting guidelines and revising them as needed when circumstances change (more on this below).

Congregational Survey

Last month, 180 of our congregants filled out a "Returning to Kehilla" survey (Kehilla currently has about 550 member households.) Here are some results from the survey:

- 99% of respondents are fully vaccinated
- 58% said they were somewhat comfortable returning to in-person programs, 19% were very comfortable and the rest were not very comfortable

- 90% were comfortable or very comfortable with outdoor programs
- In terms of returning to indoor activities, 25% were cautious about doing so, 30% were in the middle and 45% were ready or very ready to do so.
- 80% were fairly or very comfortable with indoor programs once a large majority of folks are vaccinated.
- Once we have in-person programs, 15% of people will continue to only attend virtually
- Once we have in-person programs, 90% of people will continue to attend both in-person and virtually

General COVID-19 Protocols

Feeling Unwell? - If you are sick with **any** type of symptoms, whether or not you believe they are related to COVID, please stay at home.

Vaccines - We strongly encourage all who are able to take the vaccine to do so, for the sake of the health of the community. We are not requiring vaccination to attend Kehilla events.

Masks - For the time being, **everyone must wear a mask at all public Kehilla programs, services and events, both indoor and outdoors.** The only exception is for those leading. When in individual or private meetings, if everyone is fully vaccinated and is in mutual agreement, you have the option to take off your masks. Though we understand that requiring masking for vaccinated people differs from current CDC guidelines, continuing to mask for the time being is the best way to protect our community members who remain vulnerable even with vaccination and to model masking for our younger members who are not yet eligible for vaccination. We will not be enforcing strict social distancing but do ask people to be thoughtful about keeping space from those not in their pods.

Consent for Hugs and Touching - Pandemic or not, people have different needs, health risks and preferences around touching, hugging and close contact. All the more so now. Please check in with each other and get consent before moving in for a hug or reaching for a hand.

Hand Hygiene - Please continue to wash your hands frequently. Washing hands for 20 seconds with soap and water remains one of our best defenses against viral and bacterial illnesses.

Ventilation and Air Filtration - When possible, we will be keeping doors and windows open and our goal is to have HEPA filters in most rooms.

In-Person Services, Programs and Meetings

We are beginning to open the building for in-person programs, services and meetings. If Kehilla committees or affinity groups want to hold meetings or events, please contact Dee Ward (dee@kehillasynagogue.org) to discuss the possibilities. We will approve gatherings on a case-by-case basis. Please be aware that our long-time lead Custodian, Josef Straub, retired at the beginning of the pandemic and was not replaced. Our custodian Fred Williamson continued to work part-time through the pandemic, and we are excited that Fred is now moving from part to full time. Even so, we have less custodial support than we did before closing for COVID (when we had Josef full-time and Fred part-time). We'll be scaling our opening to what we're able to cover with our current staffing.

Community Opening Events

We can't wait to pray and celebrate together again! We've scheduled our first in-person gatherings in the synagogue building:

- **Saturday, July 17, 8 pm** - Tisha B'Av observance in the Kehilla Courtyard (outdoors)
- **Saturday, July 31, 10 am** - Shabbat Morning Services (Sanctuary)
- **Friday, August 6, 7 pm** - Kabbalat Shabbat Services (Sanctuary)
- **Sunday, August 8, 10 am-3 pm** - A Journey of Opening: An open house and community ritual celebrating our return to the building (Indoors and Outdoors)
- **Wednesday, August 25, 7:45 am**- Morning Meditation 7:45 am (Fireside or Courtyard), continuing in person on Wednesdays, and online on Fridays
- **Saturday, August 28, 8 pm** - Selichot Services (Sanctuary)

There will be limits on the number of attendees for some of these events. Check the website and weekly email for more details closer to the event date.

Please consider dropping in during the August 8th Open House, and picking one or two other in-person events to come to. We're planning that there's no one date or moment for our re-opening, and everyone can be part of it without all of us being in the building at the same time. Specific information will be coming for all of the events.

Building Opening

We will be opening the Kehilla building on August 1, resuming our regular hours of Monday-Thursday from 9am-5pm, and Fridays, 9am-3pm. Many of our staff will begin splitting their time working in the building and continuing to work at home. We will have at least one administrative staff member in the building during regular hours, but if you need to see a particular staff member, please check in advance that they will be on site.

Everyone entering the building will be expected to adhere to the protocols listed above. In particular, **masks are required at all times** unless people are in an enclosed room where everyone is fully-vaccinated and mutually agree to remove their masks.

Rentals

We have begun to once again rent our spaces. We are requiring all renters to adhere to Kehilla's COVID protocols when they are in public spaces.

Food at Kehilla Events

The Kehilla Health and Safety Task Force is developing an ongoing policy on serving food and drinks at Kehilla services and events. In the meantime, we will not be having food or beverages indoors, with the exception of ritual items.

High Holy Days

In addition to our main High Holy Day services, which will be on Zoom, we'll have these times to gather in person:

- **Selichot Services**, Saturday Evening, August 28 (Sanctuary)
- **Rosh Hashana Family and Tot Services**, Tuesday, September 7 (Outdoors), location and time TBA
- **Tashlich at the West Berkeley Shellmound**, date & time to TBA
- **Sukkot in the Kehilla Courtyard Sukkah**, dates and times TBA
- **Simchat Torah @ Urban Adamah**, Tuesday Evening, September 28

Kehilla School

We are excited to be planning our return to in-person learning at Kehilla School. Once our students are eligible, we will be requiring vaccination for all students who can be safely vaccinated. Until that time, our classes will take place outdoors, in and near the Kehilla building. For more information on our 2021-22 school year, [please visit our website.](#)

Going Forward

Over the coming months, the Health and Safety Task Force will meet regularly to evaluate medical data and national, state and local guidelines and further develop Kehilla's protocols. We will share periodic updates with the Kehilla membership. If you have questions, concerns or needs, please be in contact with a Kehilla staff member. In particular contact:

Dee Ward (dee@kehillasynagogue.org) - Building issues/Scheduling in-person events

Rabbi Gray Myrseth (rabbigray@kehillasynagogue.org) - Kehilla School and BBM Program

Michael Saxe-Taller (michael@kehillasynagogue.org) - All other issues

We all rejoice for the return to some in-person gatherings. As we have since the beginning of the pandemic, we will be considered and thoughtful in our re-opening. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Kehilla's Health and Safety Task Force

Eli Solomon, Jonathan Cohen, Lynn Bravewomon, Michael Saxe-Taller, Rabbi Dev Noily, Rabbi Gray Myrseth, Rabbi SAM Luckey, Catherine Lyons (health adviser), Ori Tzvieli (health adviser)