

Dear AJ Community:

On January 31, 2020, the federal government declared COVID-19 to be a public health emergency and, in March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. At that time, the AJ building was closed in an effort to keep our community safe, and we developed a series of dynamic protocols to keep pace with the changing landscape of the pandemic.

In the years since, we have dealt with much hardship and change but, fortunately, the current situation is much brighter. As of May 11, 2023, the federal government has allowed the COVID-19 emergency declaration to expire. Accordingly, the CDC has retired the color-coded, community-based transmission levels, which had previously guided our AJ COVID-19 policy for masking.

We are therefore modifying our AJ COVID-19 policy, in keeping with our ongoing effort to respond appropriately to changing circumstances.

Vaccination and boosters

While all those eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters are *strongly encouraged* to do so, vaccination against COVID-19 is no longer a requirement to attend AJ services and events.

Masking

Wearing a mask remains at the discretion of the individual. We ask that such a decision made by an individual member be respected by all AJ members and staff.

COVID-19 infection, isolation, and testing

Although the COVID-19 state of emergency has ended, COVID-19 will remain endemic in the population for the indefinite future and, like influenza, may still result in periodic outbreaks and surges. At the current time, symptoms of COVID-19 often resemble those of other respiratory infections. However, per the CDC, COVID-19 remains potentially dangerous, especially to those over age 65 and with various concurrent health problems.

For this reason, AJ COVID-19 protocols require the following:

- Those with symptoms of upper respiratory infection (coughing, congestion, runny nose, sore throat) are asked to perform a home antigen test for COVID-19. If the test is positive, the COVID-19 isolation protocol is required before entering the building (see below)
- If the test is negative
 - We ask that you consider repeating the test in 24-48 hours for further confirmation
 - Out of consideration for your fellow congregants, we ask that you properly cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing, use hand sanitizer, and consider masking when present in the building

Known exposure to COVID-19; Isolation in the presence of COVID-19

- If you have a known close contact with someone who has or soon develops COVID-19, you do not need to stay home unless you develop symptoms, but please remain masked for 5 days while in the AJ building. Test yourself on day 5. If your test on day 5 is negative and you have not developed symptoms, you may remove your mask at AJ
- **If you test positive and/or become ill with COVID-19**
 - You may not come into the AJ building for 5 days following the day you develop symptoms or, in the absence of symptoms, the day you test positive.
 - You may come into the AJ building on day 6 following the day you develop symptoms and/or test positive, provided that you are feeling better and have been fever-free for 24 hours. If you continue to feel ill, you should continue to isolate and not return to AJ until you are feeling better, are fever-free, or test negative.

We sincerely thank you for your understanding and cooperation that you have shown throughout this long and difficult period. As always, we will continue to monitor the state of the pandemic and will respond accordingly should circumstances change.

Howard Levin

Skip Atkins

Judy Stutman Izes