

Dear Community Members:

We are writing to provide community guidelines regarding COVID-19 and the ongoing health situation in our community.

As Jews committed to serving Hashem and Torah observance we must first and foremost reaffirm our commitment to Him and His ways. In these troubling and uncertain times, it behooves us to find ways to strengthen our emunah and bitachon in Hashem and increase our Torah, tefillah, tzedakah and chessed in quality and quantity. A challenge as great as this one provides us with an equally large opportunity to grow in our personal and collective avodas Hashem. At a time where the emphasis is on social distancing let us unite by phone in an act of achdus and recite Tehillim together at 6:15 p.m. today. The call in number is (712) 770-5505. The access code is 248530. May the group recitation of Tehillim serve as a zchus for those who are ill and to ward off this pandemic.

It is clear that in Montgomery County the number of COVID-19 cases is growing. Every effort to slow the spread of this deadly disease is crucial. Failure to do so could lead, chas v'shalom, to a depletion of essential medical resources and loss of life. Yesterday Governor Tom Wolf required closures of universities, schools, community centers, gyms, entertainment centers, non-essential businesses and the like for the next two weeks in an attempt to mitigate the proliferation of COVID-19. This step has been taken elsewhere and has proven successful in potentially saving lives.

The value of social distancing is so great that we have, with expert medical input, made the very difficult decision to adopt the following policies in our community:

1. Shuls will be closed to the public for all activities, including minyanim and shiurim, effective this afternoon (March 13, 2020). There should be no house minyanim. All of the rabbis will be davening alone in their own homes. Please daven at home, individually.
2. Playdates and Shabbos guests should be kept to a minimum.
3. All community members are urged to work from home, if possible.
4. There should be no large public gatherings for simchas, or other reasons.
5. At the guidance of the CDC the mikvah will remain open. Any woman with symptoms of illness should consult her doctor and speak to a local rov to determine how to proceed.

We recognize that these measures are drastic and difficult. Nonetheless, we are confident that as a community we can work together and have a role in taking positive steps to stem the inroads this disease is making in our county. We are grateful to you for the sacrifices you are making to assure the success of this undertaking.

We intend to revisit these guidelines on a regular basis as this is an ever-evolving situation. We will keep you informed of any policy changes.

We pray that the Rofeh Ne'eman heal all those who are ill and that we be protected from any further harm.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Binyomin Davis,

Rabbi Reuven Goldstein,

Rabbi Avraham Shmidman,

Rabbi Avraham Steinberg,

Rabbi Yehoshua Yeaman