

Dear Mekor Community,

We want to begin by saying that our hearts are with Israel as we daven for the safety of our family, friends, and the Israeli people, and an end to the unrest:

וְכַתְּבוּ סַרְבֵּתֵיהֶם לְאַתִּים וְחַנְיָתֵיהֶם לְמִזְמָרוֹת לֹא יִשְׂאוּ גֹי אֶל־גֹּי חֶרֶב וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּן עוֹד מִלְחָמָה

“[T]hey shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

We enjoyed celebrating Shavuot with all of you. We wish we could now be in a post-COVID world, returning to our vibrant and packed shul. Unfortunately, we are not there yet. We hope to be soon.

The COVID-19 policy we are about to share is aimed to protect as many people in our community as possible. We care deeply about the health and safety of all of you. We miss being with you in shul and seeing your families regularly. We miss hosting you at our Shabbat tables and spending time together at communal meals.

We are excited to open the shul more than it has been since March of last year, but also are trying to do so in a manner that recognizes the health and needs of our community members, including our youngest shulgoers. With these principles in mind, we offer the following policy, which is effective June 11, 2021:

1. All congregants (16 years of age or older) who come to in-person, indoor shul davening or events must be fully COVID-vaccinated.
2. For any adult who is not yet vaccinated due to medical concerns, including a recent COVID-diagnosis, and wants to attend indoor shul events, please consult with either Claire Raab (cmr882@aol.com) or Bruce Taubman (btaubman@comcast.net) to discuss your particular situation. Your information will remain confidential.
3. Children who are able to sit with their parents are welcome to come into the main sanctuary independent of their vaccination status.
4. Children who are unable to sit with their parents in shul during davening can spend time in the children's room but must be accompanied by a parent at all times. Children who come to shul and play in the children's room must wear masks. There will be no formal children's programming during davening. There will also be a cap set on the children's room (20 people total) to ensure that we can keep some semblance of distancing in that space. This means that we may need to turn people away from the children's room if we reach our cap.
5. Reservations will no longer be needed for Shabbat morning services; attendance caps will follow city requirements.
6. We will resume pre-COVID davening on Shabbat Morning and chagim, which means, for example, beginning shul at 9:15 am with pseukei d'zimrah, aaliyot at the bimah, and regular Kiddush.

7. We will continue to ask that everyone 2 or older comply with the building's mask wearing requirements when in public spaces. Inside of the shul, fully vaccinated people who are leading services, reading torah/haftarah, or offering a dvar torah need not wear a mask. While davening, fully vaccinated congregants may remove their masks. When walking around the shul and during Kiddush when not eating, we ask that all congregants keep their masks on.

8. Please continue to monitor your health conditions and do not come to shul if you are experiencing any COVID symptoms or have been in recent close contact with anyone who was subsequently diagnosed with COVID. After experiencing symptoms or COVID-exposure, please follow your doctor's advice and CDC guidelines before returning to shul.

9. Please contact the Rabbi or a member of the board immediately if you or your children are diagnosed with COVID after attending shul.

10. We will continue to comply with all state and local COVID-related regulations. We may need to place caps on our attendance to comply with these regulations. We apologize in advance if we need to turn people away from davening to comply with future restrictions.

This policy is subject to change. We intend to revisit this policy toward the end of June, after the new CDC guidelines have been in effect for about a month and about two weeks after Philadelphia lifts its mask mandate.

If anyone has had difficulty obtaining a vaccine, please let us know and we will do what we can to assist you. Our hope is that vaccination throughout the Philadelphia area continues to rise before variants set back our progress.

We want to end by extending our condolences to all who have lost loved ones because of COVID. So many of you have made numerous sacrifices to provide for your families and/or deliver essential services to our community. We are grateful to the healthcare professionals who continue to provide care and treatment. To anyone who is still recovering from COVID, we wish you a refuah sheleima.

We look forward to seeing you in shul,

The Mekor Board

Dr. Bruce Taubman

Dr. Claire Raab

Yoella Epstein

Ellen Geller

Harry Schley

Miriam Zemon

Rabbi Eliezer Hirsch