

Frequently Asked Questions

Health and Safety

1. **Why are we re-entering the tabernacle for in-person worship while we are still in a pandemic?**

Response: We are re-entering the tabernacle because the Chief Rabbi has instructed us to do so. Various risk mitigation methods have also been developed that allow for the resumption of in-person worship. These methods include vaccinations, testing, masking, and physical distancing.

2. **Are there any special rules for visitors?**

Response: No. Visitors are subject to the same protocols as members and should be welcomed into our service.

3. **What are considered high-risk categories?**

Response: Please see the following information from the CDC: [People with Certain Medical Conditions | CDC](#)

4. **Will we take the temperatures of those entering the tabernacle?**

Response: We will not take the temperatures of members or visitors prior to entering the tabernacle. Please **do not** attend services if you have a fever or any other COVID-19 symptoms.

5. If you have received all vaccinations plus your booster(s), will your vaccine card listing your vaccines/booster be sufficient or will you need to continue to be tested?

Response: We will not require proof of vaccination/booster. However, vaccines/boosters are your best protection against COVID-19. Testing is also a good practice when in a group setting. We will require a negative COVID-19 test in certain situations, for example, if there is a confirmed positive case of an attendee of that particular service. Then we will require all attendees to have a negative test prior to re-entering the tabernacle. [Vaccines for COVID-19 | CDC](#)

6. Is it being suggested to members at high risk not to attend services right away?

Response: That is a decision to be made by the member after considering their personal circumstances and/or consulting their medical provider. A virtual service will be available as an option. The medical team can also be available to answer more specific questions if needed.

7. Is there any data regarding how long immunity lasts once vaccinated? For example, two COVID vaccines and one booster shot would be effective for how long.

Response: Our best protection is to be up to date with COVID-19 vaccination which means that you have had the primary series and a booster. After the primary series Immunity does wane which is why the booster is required for most people 5 months after completion of your primary series. The first booster shot is able to increase your immunity to the initial level present when the 2 primary doses were fully effective. It isn't unusual for primary vaccines to require boosters so that a series of shots produce the best protection. Children's vaccinations come as a series of shots routinely. We are learning that the first booster wanes too and this is important for those over 50 and those with certain conditions. The protection has waned sufficiently by 4 months such that the second booster is recommended for the groups mentioned above. Being up to date with the COVID-19 vaccine series is the best protection because both mild and more serious infections with the virus can have consequences, both short term, and long term.

8. How many vaccines should children 5-11 have?

Response: Two. Boosters are recommended for those aged 12 and over.

9. How reliable are the home testing kits?

Response: No test is 100% but we are attempting to decrease risk with testing so that a person is better able to know they are positive and take action including staying home to watch the service virtually. If someone has symptoms the home testing kits are likely to be very helpful. If you have a strong reason to believe that you have been exposed and you test negative, you may want to consider a PCR test and/or speak to your medical provider or your local Health Department.

10. Should I test Friday Night and Sabbath Day?

Response: In general, the test result is accurate at the point it is taken, not for a future date. However, it isn't practical to test every day and maybe cost-prohibitive. Therefore, testing Friday for the services on Friday and Saturday would be reasonable.

11. Do you recommend installing shields on the podiums to help prevent spread since preaching is a high-risk activity?

Response: You are correct that loud voices at a podium carry more risk of spreading COVID-19 as compared to soft voices. However, we now know that virus particles are mostly carried in the air by very fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles. These very fine droplets and aerosols travel similar to how smoke would travel. When it was thought that the virus was mostly carried in large droplets that settled out of the air and onto surfaces quickly, shields were popular. But, because the virus is actually found mostly in airborne very small droplets and aerosols, and these virus-laden droplets and aerosols linger in the air, they will travel above, below, and around the side of a plastic shield, as smoke would. Coughing and Sneezing do produce large droplets that can contain virus particles leading to transmission and should be avoided - a person coughing or sneezing should stay home and watch services virtually, wear a mask and cover their mouth/nose when they cough or sneeze.

12. How will you know who is safe? Can you be asymptomatic even though you tested negative?

Response: We will never be able to decrease the risk in the Tabernacle to 0. You can be asymptomatic and still have COVID-19 and you can test negative and still have COVID-19. The hope is that as mitigation measures are put in place the Tabernacle will be safer and a safer

worship environment will be created. It does depend on all of us investing in making it so though. Even though you can be up to date on COVID vaccination and still become infected, Vaccination is your best protection and it also protects those you care about. Likewise, developing a lifestyle where testing is considered a part of what we think about as we interact with people will help to mitigate our collective risk of transmitting the virus. Testing will help to keep us safe. It will also help us to get treatment if we need it.

13. What type of portable air purifier do you suggest for the tabernacle? Basic description if you can.

Response: This is the site that the EPA refers to - <http://ahamverifide.org/directory-of-air-cleaners>. You can browse a directory there. Please note that portable air cleaners are not sufficient by themselves but when of the right size, they can supplement air cleaning. The size of the room should be considered when making a purchase.

14. Will microphones be disinfected between speakers (e.g. Sabbath School Devotional, Preaching, Local Pastor Addresses/Announcements)?

Response: Each speaker could clean/wipe before and after.

Protocols

15. Will masks be mandatory?

Response: The mask policy will vary based on the COVID-19 conditions in the community. In communities with low COVID-19 conditions, masks will be optional. In communities where COVID-19 levels are medium, masks will be required. This policy will be posted at the tabernacle entrance and apply to members and visitors. You can identify the COVID-19 level in your community here: [COVID-19 Community Levels | CDC](#)

16. Will the tabernacle require any testing prior to entering the building?

Response: Testing will not be required prior to entry into the tabernacle. Singing is considered a high-risk activity and therefore members of the choir that intend to participate in the choir are encouraged to take a COVID-19 test prior to service.

17. Why is it that we can only have funerals in the tabernacle?

Response: During this transition period (May 7, 2022 - July 31, 2022), we are beginning with limited services (Beginning of the Sabbath, Sabbath Day, and funeral services) to monitor the impact on the congregation's health and safety. As time goes on, Chief Rabbi McNeil will have an opportunity to consider these protocols and the state of the pandemic to make any necessary adjustments during the 2022 Assembly.

18. Can members travel to other tabernacles for worship?

Response: Members should not travel as we re-enter in-person worship. As a congregation, we still need to carefully track our movements to support contact tracing if it becomes necessary.

19. Can we enjoy meals together in the tabernacle?

Response: Meals will not be permitted indoors during the transition period. Meals can be enjoyed outdoors. Please exercise good hygiene practices (ie. hand washing and use of clean utensils).

20. Is the congregation in addition to the choir going to be socially distanced (e.g., every other seat)?

Response: The seating will vary based on the COVID-19 level of the tabernacle. In a low community, the congregation seating will be open. In a medium community, the seating will be socially distanced from households. You can find the COVID-19 level of your community by clicking here: [COVID-19 Community Levels | CDC](#)

21. Will the vaccination status of attendees be checked prior to entry?

Response: The vaccination status of members and visitors will not be checked prior to entry. Members are encouraged to get vaccinated and boosted. COVID-19 vaccines have proven to be very effective in helping to stop the spread of COVID-19 as well as prevent serious illness and death.

22. For low CCL it says seating is open. In most tabernacles, the women often outnumber the men. Traditionally women sit on one side and men sit on the other. During this time is it permissible or is it being considered by the re-entry team to allow members to sit wherever they like in the congregation regardless of gender to allow for more social distancing?

Response: During this transition period, congregants are encouraged to sit where they are most comfortable while attending service as long as they comply with our standards of decency and order.

23. What kind of mask should I wear?

Response: Your best protection is to wear a properly fitting high-quality mask, like an N95 or a KN95, also called a respirator. High-quality masks protect you by filtering the air and preventing airborne virus particles, both large and small, from being inhaled. A properly fitting mask fits closely on your face. The tight fit on your face helps to ensure that the mask is blocking particles from entering and exiting your mouth and nose. This results in a drop in the risk of infection. A mask must cover your mouth and nose. It must fit under your chin and conform to your face without gaps at the sides, top, or bottom. It should have no valves. You want air to flow through the mask, not around it. While the high-quality masks are your best protection, the best mask is the one that you can wear correctly for the entire time required and still breathe without taking it off. If you cannot wear a high-quality mask for the entire time a mask is needed, consider a disposable surgical mask that you adjust to fit close to your face by adjusting the ear straps. See <https://youtu.be/GzTAZDsNBeQ>. A cloth mask consisting of several layers of tightly-woven fabric that fits close to your face without gaps is also better than no mask. High-quality masks have been made available at pharmacies across the country at no cost to you. Go to www.COVID.gov to find a pharmacy in your area with free masks.

Other

24. Will I continue to be able to attend service virtually?

Response: There will be a service streamed nationally and available for members that do not attend in-person worship services. Please contact your local pastor to inquire about the availability of streaming worship services in your local tabernacle.

25. Mask wearing causes a runny nose, coughing, and difficulty breathing - how will it be determined that someone demonstrating these symptoms is not infected?

Response: We will not be able to differentiate this in the tabernacle. Self-screening should capture these symptoms and the person experiencing them should participate in the service virtually.

26. Will there be a gradual re-entry into the tabernacle?

Response: No. Re-entry into the tabernacles will take place on May 7, 2022, and all who are able to attend are welcome. We are introducing a transition period from May 7-July 31 to allow us to settle into our return to in-person worship. During this period we will modify some of our usual activities to support a safe re-entry into in-person worship. Chief Rabbi McNeil will continue to monitor the pandemic and make adjustments as necessary.

27. Will we also have in-person services at the beginning of the Sabbath?

Response: Yes. We will have in-person services at the Beginning of the Sabbath during the transition period unless otherwise directed by your Local Pastor.

28. Will the schedule for services be modified?

Response: The worship service will proceed at the discretion of the local pastor. In the event the COVID-19 Community Level is at medium, the local pastor will abbreviate the worship service. You can find your COVID-19 Community Level by clicking here: [COVID-19 Community Levels | CDC](#)

29. Does ventilation help reduce the spread of COVID-19?

Response: Bringing fresh, outdoor air into an indoor space helps keep virus particles from accumulating inside. If it's safe to do so, open doors and windows as much as you can to bring in fresh, outdoor air. While it's better to open them wide, even having a window cracked open slightly can help. For more information about reducing the spread of COVID-19, click here: [Your Health | COVID-19 | CDC](#)

30. Isn't there a shelf life to the home tests?

Response: Yes, there is shelf life. The test should have an expiration date listed.

31. With regard to community service activities, there are instances where we open the Tabernacle to an organization, i.e. 12 step meetings; tenants can also be included in this category. What are the considerations for maintaining any COVID-19 protocols?

Response: The tabernacle is only available for worship services at this time. Community activities should not be conducted in the tabernacle.

32. Are visitors allowed to visit the tabernacle during this time?

Response: Yes

33. Is there a plan in place in the unfortunate instance of an outbreak tabernacle?

Response: Yes. An exposure-response plan has been provided to local pastors.

34. How to manage funeral attendance?

Response: Local pastors will be provided with protocols that govern the conduct of funerals in the tabernacle during the transition period.