CURTAILING IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES AT KEREM SHALOM Thursday March 12, 2020

Hevre (Friends),

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kerem Shalom is curtailing all in-person group activities for the next few weeks, through March 31, 2020. This includes services, religious school, classes and groups. This decision was made after extensive discussions with staff and community members, including several with backgrounds in medicine, public health and public policy. Decisions about activities at Kerem Shalom beyond March will be reassessed in the coming weeks, considering the then-current situation.

We are taking this step because we want to protect our members and guests, and also because we want to help the larger community by helping “flatten the curve” with the hope that the COVID-19 pandemic doesn’t overwhelm our region’s healthcare systems.

Moving forward – It is our deep conviction that we need each other now more than ever and we are grateful that this moment affords us the technological capabilities to gather together electronically and virtually. The wisdom of our tradition can provide us with tremendous guidance as well as spiritual and emotional support and strength especially as we navigate these new and difficult moments.

We are researching ways to livestream prayer services and classes—details are still being investigated. We will send a message about this as soon as we can. Instructions will be included.

We know that to some these may seem like drastic steps. Please keep in mind that they are based on the best advice provided by experts in public health, and are also in accordance with our Jewish heritage, which teaches us that saving a life is the highest of all mitzvot, and that the possibility of doing so takes precedence over other important, even holy, priorities.

We want to emphasize that this does not mean that Jewish Tradition nor Kerem Shalom are “closed.” Rather, we are considering this an opportunity to develop new ways for being an inclusive and active community. To that end, we are exploring options for making use of remote meetings, livestreaming, or other technology for holding online services, groups, classes, school, and other activities. We remain committed to helping our members who need assistance, including those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please reach out to Rabbi Darby and other staff members via email and cell phone if you need assistance, emotional support, or if you’re able to help with anything from talking with people who are staying indoors to advising us on technology that will allow us to stay connected in these challenging times.

With blessings and prayers,

Elisabeth Sackton, Board President

Rabbi Darby Leigh