

Dear Members of the Jewish Community of Missouri,

Our Jewish tradition values human life above virtually all else.

We are taught in the earliest chapters of the Torah, our core biblical text, that God created mankind in the image of the Divine (Genesis 1:27). Our rabbis teach us that to save one life is to save an entire world, and to destroy one life is to destroy an entire world. Indeed, every person has the potential to create a universe and the loss of any person is immeasurable.

The commandment to protect life extends beyond one's own life to an obligation to protect the lives of others. The Torah instructs: "Neither shall you stand by the blood of your neighbor" (Leviticus 19:16). When the life of any person is in danger, almost all other religious laws become inapplicable.

It is for these very reasons that at this time of pandemic, our community has recognized the need to forgo all of our in-person religious rituals in the hopes of protecting the lives of those around us. Prayer services have been suspended or moved into the virtual sphere, the intricate process of preparing bodies for burial has been severely diminished, and even the holiday of Passover, one of our most central community festivals, was relegated exclusively to the home.

As the pandemic continues, our Jewish teachings, laws, and traditions require us to stay home except in situations where leaving the home is essential to preserving life. Wherever else possible, one must do everything in one's power to do whatever else is needed from the safety and security of one's own home.

We, the undersigned Jewish religious leaders of Missouri, believe therefore that it is a deeply-held religious belief to remain home on days in which elections are held and that such a belief qualifies one under the Missouri law to vote in any regional, state, or federal elections via absentee ballot.

Signed,

Rabbi Jeffrey Abraham, *Congregation B'nai Amoona*

Rabbi Michael Alper, *Temple Israel*

Rabbi Doug Alpert, *Congregation Kol Ami-KC*

Rabbi Noah Arnow, *Kol Rinah*

Rabbi James Bennett, *Congregation Shaare Emeth*

Rabbi Barbara Block, *Springfield, MO*

Rabbi Daniel Bogard, *Central Reform Congregation*

Rabbi Karen Bogard, *Central Reform Congregation*

Rabbi Micah Buck-Yael

Rabbi Shulamit Cenko

Cantor-Rabbi Ron Eichaker, *United Hebrew Congregation*

Rabbi Amy Feder, *Temple Israel*

Cantor Josh Finkel

Rabbi Randy Fleisher, *Central Reform Congregation*

Rabbi Andrea Goldstein, *Congregation Shaare Emeth*

Rabbi James Stone Goodman, *Central Reform Congregation*

Rabbi Elizabeth Hersh, *Temple Emanuel*

Rabbi Brad Horwitz, *Jewish Community Center of St Louis*

Rabbi Howard Kaplansky, *United Hebrew Congregation*

Rabbi Jon Kleinman

Rabbi Lori Levine, *Congregation Shaare Emeth*

Rabbi Alan Londy

Rabbi Tracy Nathan, *Jewish Federation of St. Louis*

Maharat Rori Picker Neiss, *Jewish Community Relations Council*

Rabbi Carnie Shalom Rose, *Congregation B'nai Amoona*

Rabbi Brigitte Rosenberg

Rabbi Jonathan Rudnick, *Jewish Community Chaplain, KC*

Rabbi Jessica Shafrin

Rabbi Scott Shafrin, *Kol Rinah*

Rabbi Mark Shook, *Temple Israel*

Rabbi Moshe Shulman, *Young Israel of St. Louis*

Rabbi Garth Silberstein, *Bais Abraham Congregation*

Rabbi Scott Slarskey, *Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School*

Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman, *Congregation Shaare Emeth*

Rabbi Susan Talve, *Central Reform Congregation*

Cantor Seth Warner, *Congregation Shaare Emeth*

*\*Institutional affiliation is provided for identification purposes only\**

