



# Jewish Federation OF GREATER HOUSTON

June 16 PM - JРАН Email

Dear JРАН Community:

Today, we will go over the Governor's press conference on the spike in COVID19 cases in Texas, personal responsibility in fighting the spread, how you can keep in touch with loved ones in nursing homes, Harris County's take on the spike in cases, the CDC's guidelines for large gatherings, faith leaders' decision to remain closed, the Jewish dilemma of supporting a movement calling for defunding of the police, and Interfaith Ministries' upcoming event on *Fighting for Justice, Equality and Respect*.

## **COVID19**

Governor Abbott held a press conference today to address the rising COVID19 numbers and the State's hospital capacity. The Governor reported that there [has been an increase in people testing positive](#), particularly after the Memorial Day holiday. The Governor was quick to point out that some of the high positive case counts can be attributed to three factors: back log of tests being released at once, hot spots like jails and nursing homes, and increase in large gatherings by people under the age of 30.

The Governor announced that the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC), the governing agency over liquor licenses, will be taking away licenses from restaurants or bars in violation of the Governor's orders. The first violation will be a 30-day suspension of the liquor license, the second violation will be a 60-day suspension.

During his call with the heads of all state-wide sports departments, the Governor is asking each institution to submit their own plans for how to safely hold events with in-person fans. The Governor's panel of experts will review and approve plans on a per venue basis, since venue size and layout varies.

Hospital bed capacity across the State seems to be in good order. Governor Abbott unveiled a 5-level medical surge plan in case there is a significant spike in hospitalizations. He stated that 10% of people infected with COVID19 need hospitalization, so there is currently no concern about the ability to treat people.

The Governor reiterated personal responsibility for wearing masks, washing hands, and maintaining social distancing. [Personal responsibility versus government mandates is debatable](#), though one thing is certain: we must all do our part in order to stop the spread.

Nursing homes are still one of the few locked down places in Texas. Although you are discouraged from visiting your relatives, doctors suggest you [write cards and letters to your loved ones](#) to continue to person touch.

Harris County Judge Linda Hidalgo has [expressed concern](#) as local numbers, both in positive tests and hospitalizations, continue to rise. According to [Harris County Public Health](#), there are 17,707 confirmed cases of COVID19 in our area and 10,313 active cases.

The CDC has posted [guidelines for large gatherings and events](#) on its website, although it is quick to point out that they are not endorsing such events.

Each week, I look forward to the faith-based call put on by Interfaith Ministries (IM) and the Greater Houston Partnership (GHP). The Mayor, County Judge, representatives from the Texas Medical Center, and others give updates so faith leaders can make informed decisions. Recently, IM and GHP released a survey asking congregations if they plan to open any time soon. The [majority replied that they will wait](#).

## **Security**

Recent events have added extra layers to the Jewish community's desire to create partnerships with local law enforcement. Calls to "defund the police" have put Jewish organizations, many of which rely on police presence for security, at odds with some of the Black Lives Matter's banners, many of which Jewish organizations support. [The ADL and SCN agree that there should be more transparency within local law enforcement](#), but our partnerships with the police are necessary to combat Anti-Semitism and credible threats to our community. It is an interesting conversation that requires further thought and discussion.

Interfaith Ministries will be hosting its summer *Dialogue Project: Vital Conversations with our Community*. The first will be Juneteenth, Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. CST called *Fighting for Justice, Equality and Respect*. This discussion will feature the "Three Amigos": Archbishop



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Joseph A. Fiorenza, Rabbi Samuel E. Karff, and Reverend William A. Lawson. It will be broadcast on IM's [YouTube page](#) and social media.

### **In Other News...(click on link for the full visual effect!)**

Like all of us, the sports industry took a hard hit with COVID19. Seasons were cancelled with little notice and players were locked out of their training facilities. Baseball was one sport that was forced to close mid-season due to the pandemic. Slowly, players are allowed back on the field, but fans have not been allowed into stadiums. Does that mean you have to play to empty bleachers? Not if you are playing ball in South Korea! One stadium decided to [fill their stands with plush toys](#) to cheer on the teams. It has created a "Where's Waldo" moment, where viewers can scan the stands for their favorite plush bear or Pokémon. Personally, I think Pikachu is an Astros fan.

Take care today and I hope you find time to write your grandmother a letter,

Jackie

**Jackie Fisherman** | Director of Government Affairs

Jewish Federation of Greater Houston

5603 S. Braeswood Blvd. | Houston, TX 77096

Main: 713.729.7000 ext 325

[jfisherman@houstonjewish.org](mailto:jfisherman@houstonjewish.org) | [www.houstonjewish.org](http://www.houstonjewish.org)