



October 8 PM – JРАН Email

Dear JРАН Community:

Today, we will go over an uptick in daily new cases for our area, what other faith leaders are doing for worship, news about a COVID19 vaccine, the next phase of Open Texas, why bars will not be opening next week in Harris County, an update on Hurricane Delta, voting security, and a mazel to the ADL.

COVID19

Harris County Public Health's most recent [COVID-19 Data Landscape](#) is reporting a slight uptick in daily new cases. For weeks, we have been seeing a steady decline in this category which indicates that people are relaxing on social distancing and mask wearing. This is in line with what the [Texas Medical Center \(TMC\) Dashboard](#) is reporting as well. TMC is also reporting an increase in the effective reproductive rate, another indication that the virus is beginning to spread more in our community.

Interfaith Ministries and the Greater Houston Partnership surveyed area faith leaders about whether they are meeting in person or continuing virtual worship. About [two-thirds of all respondents reported that they are using virtual](#) as their main source of congregating. However, the majority of those were planning on returning to in-person worship by the end of October. Houston is in a unique position that we have the wonderful leadership of Martin Cominsky, president and CEO of Interfaith Ministries, and Bob Harvey, president and CEO of the Greater Houston Partnership, who provide high level updates to faith leaders every week. We have seen the power of these calls in shaping how our faith community responds to COVID19, hurricanes, and other threats to our area. We are truly blessed to have their leadership.

There has been a lot of talk about when we will see a COVID19 vaccine. Currently, there are [over 200 experimental vaccines](#) out there. Ten of these vaccines are in Phase 3 trials, with results likely in late November or early December. In the United States, we have [Operation Warp Speed](#), led by several governmental agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Department of Defense (DOD). Recently, the [FDA released its vaccine guidance](#) in an effort to instill confidence in the vaccine development process.

Governor Greg Abbott has moved into the [next phase of Open Texas](#) by lifting occupancy limits for a huge list of businesses, including:

- Religious organizations
- Schools, both private and public
- Child-care services

Facilities like nail and hair salons must maintain six feet of distance between workstations. All establishments must follow and enforce state and local health guidelines.

The big news from the Governor's order is that bars may open under the Order, but at the County Judge's approval. Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo has made it clear that we are not out of the woods with COVID19 and bars will not be allowed to operate in the county until it is safe to do so.

Hurricane Season 2020

Hurricane Delta is nearing the Louisiana gulf coast as a [Category 2 major hurricane](#). Areas of eastern Louisiana that were hard hit by Category 4 Hurricane Laura will likely see a repeat hit from Delta. Many homes in Delta's path are [still covered in blue tarps](#) from a few weeks ago.

Governor Abbott and the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) have begun staging supplies along the southeast Texas coast.

The [Houston area is likely to see a few showers](#) but otherwise not be too affected by Hurricane Delta.

Security

Harris County Clerk Chris Hollins gave a briefing to faith leaders today during the IM/GHP call. Early voting begins on October 13th. Drop off for mail-in ballots has already begun. So far Harris County has received nearly 6,500 mail-in ballots. You can [track your mail-in ballot online](#). Precautions are being taken to ensure a safe voting environment. All election sites will have a Harris County employee onsite to monitor for violations. Additionally, people may report suspicious or voter intimidation activities to the Voter Helpline at 713-755-6965. You may visit [HarrisVotes.com](#) for more information on the November election.

The Secure Community Network will be hosting "[A Security Briefing: Preparing for Election Season](#)" on October 15th at 1 pm CT. This is free and open to all Jewish communal leaders.

A big mazel tov is in order for the ADL's 20th anniversary of the "No Place for Hate" campus initiative. You can [watch Mayor Turner's congratulatory video](#) online.

In Other News...(ear buds in, volume up!)

This week, Houston lost a music legend in the passing of Johnny Nash. He began his music career in his church's choir in South Central Houston and shot to fame with his 1972 hit "[I Can See Clearly Now.](#)" That song came at a [pivotal time in American politics](#) that mirrors (somewhat) today's climate. The positivity and upbeat nature of his song is a great way to lead into this weekend. May his memory be a blessing.

Take care and I hope you have a bright (bright) sunshiny day,

Jackie

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