

Niagara County Tribune/Sentinel

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The Tribune and The Sentinel are teaming up to cover Niagara County as the community continues to reflect on, respond to, and ultimately recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to print newspapers, these publications will be available in their entirety – for free – at www.wnypapers.com.

Faith community works to keep connected with congregations

Many offering online services as New York limits crowd size

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

When local restaurants, movie theaters, bowling alleys and concert halls were closed to the public, and social events were cancelled across the board due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people wondered how long it would be before boredom set in.

Then, when Gov. Andrew Cuomo directed 100% of the non-essential workforce to stay home, as well as senior citizens and those more susceptible to the coronavirus, people became concerned that depression would kick in.

Immediately, questions sprang to mind about employment: How long will I be off? Will my job still exist? Am I getting paid?

On top of that, the news cycle has been consumed with news of positive coronavirus cases, and questions as to when things – society as we knew it – will “return to normal.” This has fueled the fear many are experiencing.

Though elected leaders and nonprofit agencies are working around the clock to provide resources and educate the public on all of the above, many people still want to seek out their regular places of comfort, guidance and support for further reassurance: Churches, temples and mosques.

The problem is, those brick-and-mortar buildings are closed, too, as Cuomo curtailed public gatherings.

Recognizing that could compound negative feelings and further drive people into a frenzy, the local faith community is taking action.

Not wanting the sheep to be without a shepherd, religious organizations have turned to the internet and social media to keep connected with parishioners.

Rabbi Jonathan Freirich of Temple Beth Zion in Buffalo said, “We gathered virtually for Shabbat, via Livestream, Facebook



The sign outside St. Peter R.C. Church in Lewiston encourages parishioners to connect online.

Live, and Zoom, and while we all missed being together in a physical place, it was clear that people very much appreciated the many new ways of connecting. We definitely reached more people than we usually do on a normal Sabbath. We will continue to provide many different ways of connecting, all of which can be found on our website: www.tbz.org.”

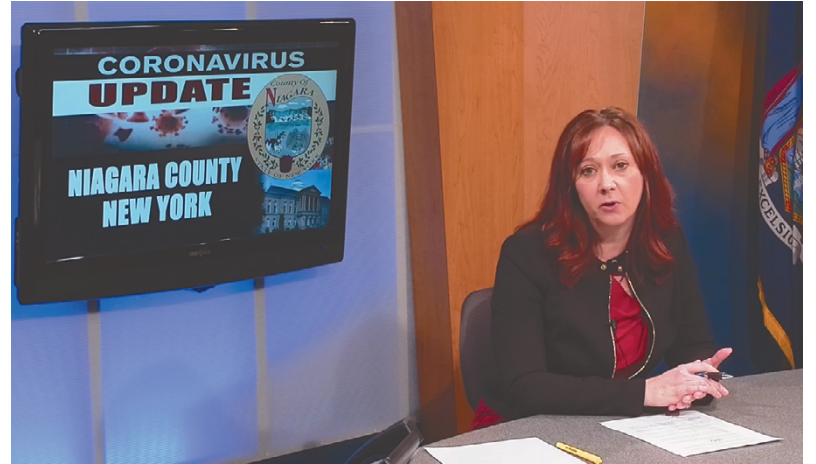
He added, “Jewish traditions teach that preserving life is the most fundamental principle. We are grateful to all those who place themselves at risk taking care of our community, whether as a medical professional, a grocery associate, or any of the oth-

er essential services that must be done by so many people. We urge everyone who can to stay at home and stay safe and healthy. Our connections via phone and the internet are not the same, but they will be enough for us as we make our way through this crisis, together in spirit, and physically separated to save as many lives as possible.”

The Rev. Monsignor David LiPuma, pastor and rector at Our Lady of Victory National Shrine & Basilica in Lackawanna, said, “I taped the fourth Sunday of Lent. We got – from our people that track it – we got over 2,500

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Niagara County to extend tax deadline 30 days



Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Rebecca Wydysh addresses the public from the LCTV studio in Lockport. Watch her daily briefings at lctv.net/.

At a closed press conference televised live on LCTV Wednesday, Niagara County 8th District Legislator Richard Andres said Niagara County intends to extend the April 1 county tax deadline by 30 days. A formal legislature vote is slated for Friday.

The chairman of the economic development committee said, “For those people that would be paying their county tax bills by the deadline April 1, what we’re looking to do at our Friday meeting – we’re going to have it pass; I’ve talked to a number of legislators; we’ve got the support

– to push that deadline of April 1. Allow for a 30-day moratorium, if you want to call it that, on penalties and interest. Because people that are going to pay those bills, maybe put that money towards the county taxes, won’t have the liquidity to make it through this crisis; won’t have money to pay for their other suppliers and so forth; and we don’t want to see a rash of foreclosures and people putting liens on their property.

“So, we’re going to push that tax deadline back for 30 days. Now, if at 30 days we’re still in this same

spot, or things have changed, we’re going to reevaluate. We’re going to reevaluate going forward. Everything at every level of government is looking at how can we help people; how can we assist our friends and families and businesses that we’ve come to know and love everywhere in our community. And when we get to that 30-day period, we’ll reevaluate and do what’s best by not only our taxpayers, but also our businesses and residents, as well.”

Andres explained, “This is clearly a difficult time for everyone, and our homeowners and small businesses are stretched – sometimes to the breaking point of this period of time. I hear all the time about people how they’re going to make payroll, or how they’re going to pay for the rent; various suppliers expect payment. And we have all kinds of issues like that throughout Niagara County.

“So, when we’re asked, as legislators, what can Niagara County do to help, certainly we’re leaving no stone unturned. We’re looking, at every level, what we can

SEE WYDYSH, on Page 2

“We looked at our policies, and we thought, ‘Maybe there’s a way that, in this situation, we could help?’”
Richard Andres

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