

Marc Journal: Dear Kol Shalom

Dear Kol Shalom,

Why is the new Kol Shalom president writing a journal? And what is this journal anyway?

Certainly, every Kol Shalom member has plenty of things to read, and many, many emails and social media entries out there to consume our reading time. Why another?

I have done a lot of thinking, reading and talking with Kol Shalom congregants in preparation for serving as your president. Among the many things I learned are that we love this congregation, we want to see it go from strength to strength, and we value what Kol Shalom provides to us.

I learned that many of us sense that something is changing, we can't quite put our fingers on it. Our lives are busy, which means that attending synagogue services is a positive choice. Should I attend Friday evening Erev Shabbat services and start dinner a bit later? Should I attend Shabbat morning services or relax at home? Should I attend Sunday morning minyan or get an early start on errands or brunch? These time tradeoffs seem to be happening more and more for many of us.

If we make a choice to attend services, it means that we decided that there is something in it for us. Do I experience a sense of spirituality or calm? Do I value living our traditions? Do the words speak to me in a meaningful way? Do I enjoy being part of a community with warm, welcoming people who care about me? Do I feel good that I helped a mourner say kaddish in a minyan that I helped to make? These (and many other) reasons give me a reason to attend services: I get something out of it. I feel good. I enjoy the time spent. My other obligations can wait, this one is a good one that I want to do.

I learned that our busy lives mean similar positive choices for participating in other Kol Shalom programs and activities. Do I want to help stuff boxes at Manna once a month, or cook and serve meals at the Women's Shelter? Do I want to give blood or clean up a stream on Good Deeds Day? Do I want to take the time to drive our Syrian refugee family to a dental appointment? What do I get out of this?

I learned that we have competing priorities for our time, money, and attention. We are all Jews by choice. We have work, friends, family, cultural activities, exercise, travel, health goals, children, grandchildren, and many, many other priorities. So, when Kol Shalom offers an educational program like the Rabbi's Ethics class or the Visual Midrash series, can I really take the time to attend? What do I get out of this?

I learned that something is changing that prompts all of the above questions. Participating in synagogue life is not automatic. Participation may have been automatic to our parents' generation, or to us in an earlier stage of life. Participation may have been a priority in the early days of Kol Shalom, when we were struggling to start up a kehillah k'dosha, a sacred community. The sense of community, of being part of a kehillah k'dosha, electrified us. The sense of collective struggle inspired us. But, over time, many of us experienced competing priorities. Other things started becoming important. And maybe the services, programs, education, and community feeling of Kol Shalom didn't seem as compelling as they once were.

This was a lot to take in.

My hope and intention as your president is to be part of personal and community growth for each of us as Jews. Our survey showed that we love this congregation. So, I want to help continue developing Kol Shalom as a kehillah k'dosha, so that Kol Shalom continues to love us back, to merit our love, to inspire us to grow as Jews. I want to help Kol Shalom help each of us, all of us together as a community, to achieve personal spiritual growth, to be examples to our children and to each other, and to demonstrate to ourselves and the world what it means to be a kehillah k'dosha. I want Kol Shalom to shine brightly as a place where we practice acts of loving kindness and merciful justice.

So why a journal? Because achieving these goals means a lot of thinking and doing, and a lot of working together. The only way to achieve these goals is to talk through what we want to do, define our priorities, identify great opportunities, peg problems to be addressed, and reinforce our goals to each other. I'll try to communicate my thinking and reflect what I learn from each of you.

I'll be writing these brief journal entries and posting them [here](#) on the Kol Shalom website. We will send links to the journal in our weekly Shabbat Announcement Sheets or Tuesday Times, or our monthly bulletins. If you want to read the journal entry, click on the link. If this is one more thing to read that doesn't merit the time spent, don't click.

And most importantly, I want to be in dialogue with you. You can click [here](#) to send me a message, or you can email me at mplieber@ymail.com. I am thrilled to hear from you, to get to know you better, and to hear your suggestions on continuing Kol Shalom's growth and value to you.

Thank you for your help and for your part in our kehillah k'dosha, our sacred community!

