

Community is easier said than done. It's one thing to say we are a community. It's another thing to be one. We have moments when we truly feel like family. Confirmation this past month was such a time. So was our remarkable "Trek Through Torah". And nothing can match the sense of "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" of the awesome days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Even if we end up exploring ourselves in different parts of the building, the feeling up being a part of something "larger than me" is unmistakable at the beginning of the year.

But there are also times when some of us feel isolated, not a part of the whole, just a passer-by, an outsider looking in. This is not a reflection of a community that doesn't care. It's merely a by-product of a congregation that has grown rapidly and increasingly is comprised of members for whom the synagogue is but a part of their very complex lives. For some of you, this is all you want. And that's okay. But for those who want more, for those looking to make stronger connections, it can often feel daunting.

Which brings me back to my original point: It's easier said than done. But it should be our highest priority. To this end, Ner Tamid will be initiating two new efforts to not merely help create a sense of community but to actually act in its service as well.

I have always believed that the *neshamah*, the soul of a synagogue is Shabbat. This is when we come together. This is where we draw our week of work to a close. This is the place where our daughters and sons mark their transitions into adulthood. This is the time when we explore ourselves together. But it doesn't just happen in the sanctuary. The Shabbat dinner table is just as much, maybe even more, a sacred space. With this in mind, this coming fall Ner Tamid will help to create and foster Shabbat *chavurot*, groups of individuals and families who can -- on a regular basis -- come together in each other's home to welcome Shabbat. We'll help you learn how to do the blessings, how to sing the songs. We'll give you teachings you can share with each other. We'll even help you form or join a *chavurah*. And in the in process you will find a community within a community. And this will bring us closer to each other.

But nothing can make us feel closer than when we actually care about each other, when we do *mitzvot* for each other. And so, building on the wonderful success of our long-standing *Chesed* Committee (which provides much needed food and love during our times of deepest sorrow), at the staff level we will be creating a Pastoral Care Team. Made up of myself, Cantor Meredith Greenberg, staff social worker Melissa Jacobs, Cantorial Assistant Ronni Pressman, Congregational Nurse Karen Frank and Rabbinic Intern Anne Laurent, we will make every effort to be as responsive as possible to the physical, emotional and, to be sure, spiritual needs of our community who struggle. And for those of you who wish to join us in this effort as part of our *Chesed* Committee, your hands and hearts will be more than welcome -- they will be blessed. In all of this I'm kind of hoping that we'll be able to do in deed what we do so beautifully in song when we sing "Mi Sheberakh".

For me these two initiatives both offer very exciting possibilities. But their potential depends entirely up all of us. That's what makes for community. And in the meantime,

you don't have to wait until the fall. Come and join us on a Shabbat. Especially this summer. Shabbat celebrations led by you, members of the community. Every Friday night at 6:30 p.m. and every Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m. This is where it begins. This is where the magic happens. Even if it's nothing more than introducing yourself to a face you recognize but have yet to discover the name that goes with it.

Martin Buber teaches us that the proverb "As face answers face in water, so the heart of man to man" means, just as one has to draw close to the surface of the water to see one's own reflection, so if we truly hope to know ourselves we must begin by drawing close to others. No interpretation necessary.