

Dear Friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center:

On Sunday, June 14, 2020, exactly three months after the outbreak of COVID 19, HJC opened its doors again for in-person services, both for our daily minyan and for the three Shabbat services. Since this was decided, we have kept track of attendance and as I write these lines, it has been 120 consecutive weeks of un-interrupted in-person services.

Since we re-opened the doors for services, it became evident that we couldn't go back to "things as normal." In addition to all the CDC measurements and precautions, the modification of the length of services, the reality of masks especially during the High Holy Days, we almost immediately added to the in-person services the option of virtual participation through Zoom, one we had used successfully during the first months of the pandemic to keep programs going and members connected among themselves.

For our 2020 High Holy Days, the Zoom option was replaced by a streaming service, with a fixed camera installed in the back of the sanctuary. Since then, exactly two years ago, we had kept the Zoom option for morning and evening minyan, and the streaming option for Shabbat.

By now, I believe, nobody gives too much thought to the fact that there is a camera in the back of the sanctuary, connected to a computer program, that week after week does its job, or that Zoom connects us day after day with our members, both for services and for classes and programs.

I guess that a daily, or weekly, or monthly email stating "streaming and Zoom working well," won't make the news, not even in our shul; the main reason being that when things work well, even if we don't wish to admit it, we take it for granted.

However, as someone who is in touch with countless rabbis all over the country (and the world), I should tell you that this is not the case everywhere. Many shuls hire technicians, and complex recording systems, and even then they have frequent glitches. I am truly amazed that at HJC, week after week, after a very small investment, things worked, and continue to work, and work well.

While many people are responsible for keeping our digital ways of communications working, including the office staff and some of the minyanaires who became experts in Zoom, I would like to give special kudos one more time to Jeffrey Rosenberg, who got us started and continues to get us going, without making big news, which in this case is excellent news.

And for those who don't know, Jeffrey is responsible for making sure the Torah scrolls are always rolled to the place they need to be, and for changing the Torah covers before and after the High Holy Days. Jeffrey is the one in charge of honors on Shabbat, holidays, and High Holy Days, and he keeps improving the system to make sure things run smoothly. And they do. Last, but not least, on my list, Jeffrey serves as a liaison with b'nai Mitzvah families to help coordinate honors. Jeffrey meets with the families, gets their Jewish names, consults with me and keeps me appraised. If you don't hear many complaints, or don't have too many reasons to complain (I am sure we can all find some reasons to complain), it is because someone is doing his or her job right.

While today I wanted to highlight Jeffrey's contributions to HJC, let's remember and be mindful that he is only one of many wonderful volunteers who contribute both time and skills to make our shul a better place. To all of them, thank you!

And next time you see things working well, just pause for a minute and remember that good news usually doesn't make news. We just shouldn't take these good things for granted.

