

Dear friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

What do they have in common: a 90-year-old Holocaust survivor born in Germany, a third-generation American accountant, a custodian born in Peru, a rabbi from Argentina, an office administrator born in Ecuador, and a Catholic security guard born in Poland?

What they have in common is that they all are part of the Hillcrest Jewish Center community.

We are all familiar with the categories of members/non-members/former members, Jews/non-Jews, employers/employees, paid people/volunteers, klay-kodesh/professional staff/custodians/security guards.

The above categories might be useful when we think about Hillcrest Jewish Center as a congregation. However, when we think about Hillcrest Jewish Center as a community, the above categories become irrelevant.

A congregant makes soup for custodians, a security guard bring chocolates and coffee for the staff, a custodian brings a small present to the rabbi, a staff member participates in a small group, paid employees call volunteers to check on them, and everyone feels cared for. These are real examples of community building blocks at Hillcrest Jewish Center.

While a synagogue is a building, and a congregation a legal association, a community is a living entity that transcends space and categories.

Of course, not every member of Hillcrest Jewish Center is interested in the community aspect of our shul, but I like to suggest that the promise of a sense of community, is the biggest asset we can offer to everyone who enters our doors, to join or to visit, to work, to volunteer, to learn, and to worship.

In a few months, it will be 20 years since my family and I came to Hillcrest Jewish Center. Throughout these years, many potential members asked me: "What will Hillcrest Jewish Center offer me if I join?" "We are shul-shopping," they continued.

What I told them is that **if** they do their part, they will become part of wonderful community of caring people, and when that moment comes, they will realize that belonging to such a community is something no money can buy.

Of course, community is something you build, something we build. If you feel the sense of community at Hillcrest Jewish Center, you know what I am talking about. If you are not there yet, come and see me, let's have a coffee, or a tea, and let's see where our conversation takes us. It is never too late.

With love and blessings,

Rabbi Manes Kogan