

**The Shofar**

Newsletter of Kol Hadash  
Humanistic Congregation

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*If you would like to contribute materials to the Shofar, please contact Editor Mark Friedman (shofar@KolHadash.com). The Shofar is mailed to Kol Hadash members and is posted on our website (www.KolHadash.com) during the last week of each calendar month. You can always find our events calendar on our website as well.*

*Kol Hadash members also receive a weekly e-mail with details of upcoming events and other Kol Hadash news. If you are not receiving the weekly e-mail and would like to be added to the list, please contact us at info@KolHadash.com.*



**Shalom from Rabbi Chalom**

**What Is a Humanistic Congregation?**

*by Rabbi Adam Chalom  
(rabbichalom@KolHadash.com)*

Kol Hadash is a cause as well as a community.

Many of us support causes and institutions whose work does not benefit us directly. We may contribute to Amnesty International or Doctors Without Borders without imagining that

we will ever personally need their services. Why? Because we value the work that they do; we believe in what they represent; we want them to exist.

If Kol Hadash were only a provider of services, we would be like a drive-through restaurant that gets your business only when you have a craving and when you happen to be nearby. You have no lasting allegiance to such an institution. The next time you're hungry you may easily choose to drive somewhere else. If this were our congregation, visitors (and everyone would be a visitor—there would be no members) could pay per Shabbat celebration they attend, per adult education class (maybe less if they don't pay attention), per child in our school, even per choir song at the High Holidays. And we could do away with the hassle of nametags, directories, and the rest.

But Kol Hadash is *not* just a service provider; we are a cause. Our members *support* us. They support a full-service congregation with a school and year-round Shabbat and holiday celebrations and a multifaceted adult education program. Moreover, our members join Kol Hadash to support the existence of a strong voice and a warm community of Humanistic Judaism in the

Chicago metropolitan area. Even if some members only attend at High Holidays, or if they live out of state, or if they only come on Sunday mornings, they support us. They support our existence. Even if some of our members do not utilize all the services of our full-service congregation, it is enough to them to know that we exist, that we are providing a meaningful connection to Jewish identity and Humanistic thought in this area. They value the work we do; they believe in what we represent.

Of course, we are more than an idea. We are also a community. So we do spend the time and energy necessary to make sure that everyone, even visiting guests, has a nametag for the High Holidays. We do encourage personal connections between our members: to do business, to socialize, to laugh and celebrate, and sometimes even to mourn. And we do invite our guests to go beyond visiting and to make themselves at home as part of *our* Jewish home.

After all, if *they* want us to exist, and value the work that we do, and believe in what we represent, and would not just move on to the next place if we were gone, then maybe we are a cause they can support as well. Without them, without you, we would not be here, for High Holidays or for any other days of the year. We are a full community because we are a cause; we are a worthy cause because of our strong community.

I will take this opportunity to wish you all *L'Shana Tova*, a happy and healthy New Year to all.