

Sukkat Shalom November 2011

Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community

Scottish Charity No SC035678

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Community Phone: 0131 777 8024 Email info@eljc.org Web www.eljc.org

Events and Services

Date Friday 4 November 2011

Event Kabbalat Shabbat Service
Venue Marchmont St Giles, 1a Kilgraston Road
Time 6.15pm

Date Friday 11 November 2011

Event Erev Shabbat Service
Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 7pm

Date Friday 18 November 2011

Event Kabbalat Shabbat Service
Venue Marchmont St Giles, 1a Kilgraston Road
Time 6.15pm

Date Sunday 20 November 2011

Event Mitzvah Day, for details see p.5
Also Talk at 6pm by Rabbi Nava Hefetz (see p 7)



Date Friday 25 November 2011

Event Erev Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Mark Solomon
This service has been advertised as part of Interfaith Week (<http://www.eifa.org.uk/ifw>), so we will welcome visitors from other faith traditions.

Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 7pm

ELJC support line

07904 813162



Use this number if you have an emergency and really need to speak to someone. It goes to one of our members. Otherwise please leave a message on the community phone and we will respond as soon as possible.

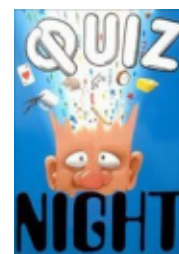
Date Saturday 26 November 2011

Event Shabbat morning service led by Rabbi Mark Solomon
Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 11am

Event Tea & Talmud

Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 3pm

**Event Inter-Community
Cyber Quiz,
for details see p.4
Venue Christchurch Centre
at Holy Corner
Time 7pm**



Date Sunday 27 November 2011

Event Choosing Judaism
Venue Usual location
Time 10:30am

Event Spinoza reading group

Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 4pm

For December events see the web site diary page

**Deadline for copy for December 2011
newsletter: 25 November 2011**

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Future Dates

Our regular schedule is as follows:

Our **Erev Shabbat service** will be on the **SECOND** Friday of each calendar month

and our **Shabbat morning service** on the Saturday after the **FOURTH** Friday.

These services take place in the **Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace.**

Jewish Calendar

Festivals begin on the evening before the day listed.

Chanukah	21-28.12.2011
Tu B'Shevat	8.2.2012
Purim	8.3.2012
Pesach	7-14.4.2012
Shavuot	27-28.5.2012
9 Av	29.7.2012
Rosh Hashanah 5773	17.9.2012
Yom Kippur	26.9.2012



Jewish News One (JN1) is launched!

The first ever global 24/7 Jewish TV station, Jewish News One (JN1), has been launched! JN1 invites you to be part of the JN1 revolution. Share your thoughts, stories and news by contacting them on info@eju.org or the JN1 news room directly: info@jn1.tv.

UK Jewish Film Festival:



1st-20th November 2011

Now in its 15th year, this year's programme includes films from 16 countries including Norway, Russia and Poland. It gives a fascinating insight into the history and cultures of these countries. To find out more about this exciting and dynamic film festival, please click <http://ukjewishfilm.org/>.

Nov/Dec LJ Today

is now available online at <http://liberaljudaism.org/written-word-resources/lj-today.html> including a the spotlight on the Dublin Jewish Progressive Congregation and catches up

with the LJY-Netzer crew as they look back on a busy 5771. Simon also speaks to Rabbi Harry Jacobi in the build up to the 50th anniversary of his ordination and LJ Chairman, Lucian J Hudson offers a vision for the future of Liberal Judaism and the alliances we should form. You can read all about this and so much more online or pick one up at a service.

EUPJ CONFERENCE

Programme Now Available!



AMSTERDAM: 15 -18 MARCH 2012

The programme for the EUPJ Conference is now available. To download it, please click [here](#). Registration will be available shortly at www.eupj.org. Not only can delegates participate in an exciting Conference program, they will also have the opportunity to see the stunning new Synagogue and community centre in Amsterdam, which is the venue for the Conference. There is a discount for early booking.

LJ Biennial Weekend 20-22 April 2012

The Liberal Judaism 2012 Biennial Weekend programme starts at 7pm on Friday April 20 and finishes at 4pm on Sunday April 22. It takes place at Tortworth Court, Bristol, a 4* hotel boasting a health club, pool and spa.

During the main sessions a supervised crèche will be provided for children under three, and a full, fun and educational programme for those between four and eight. LJY-Netzer activities will be run for children between eight and 16-years-old.

We have been able to freeze the 2010 early bird rate of £295 per person, for those who book before January 31. This price includes two nights' full board accommodation and all materials. The price for children under five sharing with their parents is £50, and £80 for those over five.

If you cannot make the whole weekend, why not join us on either Saturday or Sunday for £99? Lunch and dinner are included in this price, but not accommodation.

When booking your place there is an option to pay in instalments. Some financial assistance is available for those who would like to attend but are concerned about the cost.

For further information contact Yael on y.shotts@liberaljudaism.org or go to www.liberaljudaism.org/biennial.

Kol Nidre Appeal 2011/5772

This is the third year that it has been my job as chairman to tell you about the charities we will be supporting for our Kol Nidre Appeal. In 2009 you donated a total of almost £4000, and last year almost £5000, so let's see if we can keep this trend going. For a small community I think we can be proud of this record. I hope that you will all feel equally generous this year towards the charities that the Council has chosen, based on recommendations from members. This year we will divide our donations between four charities.

We always choose a charity for international relief and this is year Water Aid, an international non-governmental organisation, <http://www.wateraid.org>, whose mission is to transform lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in the world's poorest communities. They work with local communities and use a mixture of low cost technologies to deliver lasting solutions. Recent examples of their work is to re-establish water supplies and sanitation to those affected by the recent floods in India and Pakistan and the provision of safe water supplies and sanitation in countries in Africa, India and Nepal, saving the many lives of many people who could be affected by diarrhoeal diseases.

Closer to home our local non-Jewish charity this year will be the Scottish Refugee Council <http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk> which provides support and services for asylum seekers and others who have come to Scotland after fleeing from persecution elsewhere. They also aim to influence policy makers in both Scotland and the UK by bringing to the fore issues that matter to those seeking refuge in Scotland. This charity is a particularly appropriate choice for the Jewish community, given that so many of our forebears were themselves in just this position not too many years ago.

We always select an Israeli charity and this year we have again chosen Physicians for Human Rights, Israel (PHRI) <http://www.phr.org.il/>. Many of you were present at the Shabbat supper earlier this year when Miri Weingarten from PHRI talked to us. You can read her article in our June 2011 newsletter that is available on our web site. PHRI fights for the right to health of all people under Israeli control, both residents of Israel and Palestinians living in the territories. Today PHRI numbers more than 2,300 members and volunteers, a majority of whom are medical professionals, as well as a small staff of

human rights professionals. Miri described their work, including the Open Clinic in Jaffa providing free primary and secondary healthcare to refugees, migrants and undocumented people in Israel. She also described how Israeli and Palestinian medical professionals work side by side within Palestinian rural communities and run a mobile clinic that travels to the West Bank and Gaza to communities that are cut off from medical services.

Finally, we always chose a local Jewish Charity and this year it is the turn of Jewish Care, Scotland <http://www.jcarescot.org.uk/>. This organisation provides help and support to Jewish people across Scotland and they have an excellent team of social workers who can help in moments of crisis, as they have done for several Sukkat Shalom members and their families.

I hope you will agree that we have chosen worthwhile causes for us to support this year and that you will give as generously as you did last year, or not more so.

Please send your donations to our hon. treasurer Jonathan Broadie, 26 Charterhall Road, Edinburgh EH9 3HP with cheques payable to Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh (Kol Nidre Appeal 2011).

Gillian Raab

Chairman's word

Like most shul chairmen I am now breathing a sigh of relief that all the High Holyday services have passed with only a few mishaps. Of course I had no worries about our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. We are so lucky to have the services of our amazingly talented Rabbi Mark Solomon who was in his usual excellent form as a chazan and a preacher. So many of you have mentioned to me how much they enjoyed the services in lots of different ways, from the singing (Mark's of course, but I think even the congregation was doing a bit better this year), the sermons and the opportunities that the services provide for spiritual reflection.

I was slightly more anxious about our Sukkot and Simchat Torah services knowing that Nick Silk, who leads our religious affairs group, was not going to be with us. If you ever wonder how all the things we need for services (siddurim, kippot, Kiddush wine, cups, glasses, magazines, table cloths etc) always appear just where we need them as we wander between different venues – the answer is "Nick has seen to them". But we managed to get everything together with the possible exception of our Sukkah

which was considerably more insubstantial than the Torah requires. You can see here that it was hardly high enough for all but our smallest members, and worse, when the congregation tried to fit into it there was a serious case of Sukkah Collapse. But at least it was a beautiful day and everyone enjoyed the view and the refreshments provided. But next year we need to manage something a bit better – with Nick in charge we hope.

Mazal Tov also to our Chatan Torah (Phil Wadler) and Kallah Bereshit (Helen Ford) both of whom read their portions from the scroll under the watchful eye of their teacher Norman Crane. We are very lucky that so many more members are now able



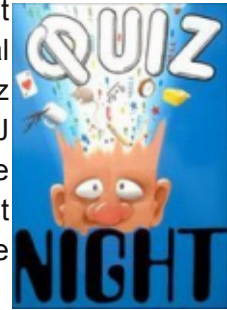
to lead services, but we are always pleased to have more volunteers. The short Kabbalat Shabbat services are an easy way in for the nervous beginner. If you would like to join the group of people who can offer to lead services, please be in touch and we can help with guidance and perhaps some teaching.

Our Rabbi's sermons always give us food for thought, even though everyone in the congregation may not agree with them. In particular his Rosh Hashanah sermon arguing, I thought persuasively, that Western leaders should not veto the Palestinian bid for recognition by the UN. This will not be in line with the views of all of our congregants. But on page 9 we have a letter from one member who agrees with him and disagrees with the statement of the WUPJ. If you have different views let us hear from you. We are always happy to receive items for the newsletter either as articles or letters to the editor on this topic or any other. You will see the copy deadline for the next one on page 1. At the same time let us remind ourselves of our commitment to building our community through mutual respect, regardless of our differences.

Gillian Raab

LJ Cyber Quiz Night

This will be a chance for Sukkat Shalom to take part in Liberal Judaism's country-wide Cyber Quiz and pit our wits against other LJ congregations. Communities will be linked electronically and an internet scoreboard will show us how we are doing during the evening.



Questions will all be general knowledge.

When? Saturday 26th November at 7pm

Where? Church Centre of Christchurch at Holy Corner. The Centre is a very pleasant modern space behind and to the right of the Church itself, 6a Morningside Road, EH10 4DD.

How Much? Admission of £10 (students £5), payable on the door, will include supper and a glass of wine or a soft drink on arrival. Further drinks will be available for a suggested donation.

How and when to sign up? Simply email info@eljc.org or leave a message on the community phone (0131 777 8024) with your name or the names of people in your group and stating whether you would all like to be in a team together.

Parking? There are only a few spaces to park in the church grounds, which should be left for people with mobility problems or for those delivering things for the quiz.

You must sign up in advance so we can prepare tables and score sheets. Last sign-up date is Monday 21st November, but sooner is better.

Occupy Wall Street (OWS)

Yom Kippur Service

Everyone has heard about "Occupy Wall Street", and you may even have read about supposed antisemitic slogans in the demonstration. But there hasn't been a great deal of publicity for a much more significant event - the Kol Nidre service at OWS. A friend wrote to me that there were a thousand people there. There were similar services in other US cities. You can read about it in a moving essay at <http://tinyurl.com/3bz2kp8>, which includes an AI Chet for OWS, and maybe for the rest of us too. And you can see a short video that includes the use of now-famous "human microphone", which the protesters use to circumvent the ban on electronic amplification, at <http://tinyurl.com/3nc3bw3>.

Maurice Naftalin

Community Matters

Mazal Tov

to Kate and Nick Silk on celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary and to Charles Raab on being elected to the Academy of Social Sciences.

We are also very pleased to hear that Nancy Warren and David Nelson have a new granddaughter, Willa Darwin Thiel, born on 23 October in the USA .

We are delighted that Rebekah Gronowski's grand-daughter, Charlotte Moon, is to be married to Daniel Morrissey on 5th November 2011 - we wish them both a long and happy life together.



Refuah Shelemah

We wish a speedy return to health to Gary Dickson who is now recovering after minor surgery. We missed Gary over the Yom Tovim, the first time since his Bar Mitzvah when he had not felt able to fast on Yom Kippur.

Mitzvah Day

20 November is Mitzvah Day, a national day to encourage Jewish people to volunteer to help in their communities. For the last two Novembers, Sukkat Shalom has participated by volunteering to help maintain Holyrood Park. We enjoyed it so much that we also volunteered for what we deemed a "Bonus Mitzvah Day" last May.



We work with a park ranger, pulling up gorse, picking up litter, or doing what is needed. It's a fine day out and we all have fun - it turns out that few activities are as rewarding as chopping down gorse bushes! The park rangers supply guidance and equipment; after our last Mitzvah day, they also provided us with a certificate of appreciation.

We will meet at the Holyrood Park Education Centre at 10am, and finish around 3:30pm, with a break for a packed lunch. Times are flexible, if you can't quite make it for 10am, or if you are only available for morning or afternoon. Please e-mail me if you're interested, and I'll supply additional details. Philip Wadler, wadler@inf.ed.ac.uk

Please bring cakes

Our Erev Shabbat service on 25th November is being advertised in the Interfaith Week brochure under the heading "Meet your Jewish Neighbours" - see <http://www.eifa.org.uk/ifw>. We have also advertised "kiddush - bread, wine and cakes, and a chance to chat with community members after the service" - so contributions of cakes to the Kiddush would be very welcome.

facebook

Join our Facebook group

We have had a Facebook group "Sukkat Shalom" for a couple of years, but it has been inactive recently. It is a good way to publicise our events between group members. Do join us or [visit the group](#) if you are already a group member and add comments photos etc. Click here to link to [the group](#). It will only work if you are already a facebook member. If you have suggestions for the group please email me at rebekah.gronowski@gmail.com and mark the Subject: Facebook Group. Thank you.

Rebekah Gronowski

Working Together: Equality Network Conference

On Saturday 1 October, I attended the Equality Network conference, Working Together, on behalf of ELJC. One of the key themes of the conference was to look at equal marriage, in light of the current Scottish Government consultation on the subject. As you might know, ELJC has already been quite

vocal on this issue, with Mark Solomon assisting in the launch of the Equal Marriage Scotland campaign in September, appearing alongside other religious leaders including Bishop Richard Holloway and Rev Maud Robinson. I was therefore very pleased to be able to represent the community at the conference, and take part in the discussions on the subject, as well as other issues of equality relating to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered communities.

Early on in the day, discussion groups around different themes were formed, who then proposed questions to the panel, consisting of Lesley Irving, of the Scottish Government Equality Network; Simon Stockwell, of the Scottish Government Family and Property Law Unit; Barry Darling of the Association of Chief Police Officers of Scotland (ACPOS) LGBT reference group; and Deidre Evans, from NHS National Services Scotland. This panel debate allowed us to engage in directly with those involved in making the decisions in areas of equality. One of the key issues was that there are significant differences in pension benefits paid to a surviving spouse compared to those paid to a surviving civil partner. This resulted from a concession made to the financial sector when the Civil Partnership legislation was going through the UK Parliament. Another key point was that as current law stands, individuals who are already married (within a heterosexual partnership), but who are transgendered and change to the opposite sex, are required to divorce their partner first, to avoid then being within a same-sex marriage.

I also attended a small workshop facilitated by Tim Hopkins discussing the Scottish Government Equal Marriage consultation with Simon Stockwell, who responded knowledgeably to discussions, and seemed to really appreciate the input and issues raised by participants on the issue. I think it is really invaluable that the people involved in this decision making process spend time with the individuals who will then be affected by the outcome of the consultation - the more this happens, the more likely it is to have our voices heard, and have our personal experiences taken into account.

The Scottish Government consultation on equal marriage and the rights and requirements of religious bodies and celebrants to register same sex civil partnerships and same sex marriage, is available for anyone to read, and respond to, online at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/09/05153328/0. The response form is pretty comprehensive, and allows for individual comments on all counts. Please do take some time to read the paper, and respond, to have your voice heard too. It's a really important opportunity to influence the future of the law in this area, and to exercise our rights and freedoms to have our say! The consultation is open for responses until 9th December 2011. If you would like any more info on the conference, please feel free to get in touch with me.

Lauren Fox

Movember

It is almost Movember, the month formerly known as November, now dedicated to growing moustaches and raising awareness and funds for men's health; specifically prostate and testicular cancer. I'm donating my top lip to the cause for 30 days in an effort to help change the face of men's health. My Mo will spark conversations, and no doubt generate some laughs; all in the name of raising vital awareness and funds for cancer's affecting men.

Why am I concerned about men's health?

- *1 in 9 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime
- *This year 37,000 new cases of the disease will be diagnosed
- *1 in 2 men will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime
- *26% of men are less likely to go the doctor compared to women



I invite you to join me by registering to grow or by donating to my support of the Mo
<http://mobro.co/Aryeh>

If you want to go old school you can write a cheque payable to "Movember", reference my name and Registration Number 1733240 and send it to: Movember Europe, PO Box 68600, London, EC1P 1EF

Saul Aryeh Kohn

Events and announcements

Rabbi Nava Hefetz of Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR)

will address the Edinburgh Three Faiths Forum

Sunday 20th November 6pm, Blackhall Mosque, 1 House O'Hill Road, EH4 2AJ

Directions: The Mosque is close to the junction where Queensferry Road meets Telford Road at the Kwikfit Garage. Buses 24,32, 31 and 42 and buses to and from Fife stop nearby.

Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR) was established with the purpose of giving voice to the Zionist ideal and the Jewish religious tradition of human rights. Rabbi Hefetz is their Education director and she has worked for them for many years. Since its inception in 1988, RHR has championed the cause of the poor in Israel, supported the rights of Israel's minorities and Palestinians, worked to stop the abuse of foreign workers, endeavoured to guarantee the upkeep of Israel's public health care system, promoted the equal status of women, helped Ethiopian Jews, battled trafficking in women, and more. The Rabbis in RHR come from many religious traditions and the organisation is supported by many different religious bodies, including Liberal Judaism in the UK.

Edinburgh Jewish Community Centre Film Evening

"The Debt", Sunday 6th November 2011 Community Centre, 4 Salisbury Road 7.00pm

The original (Israeli) version of the film currently on release featuring Helen Mirren. The film is about three Mossad agents who capture a Nazi war criminal. However the mission does not go according to plan and they have to deal with the consequences some thirty years later. Hebrew with English subtitles (View rating 15).

Recommended minimum donation £12 adults, students/children £8 (Light buffet supper included (prior to film screening). If you or anyone you know needs a lift contact Steven Hyams on 445 3740 to arrange. To book a place please send a note of the number of tickets you require along with a cheque to cover the cost made out to "Jewish Community Centre" to Melissa Gilroy, Synagogue Chambers, 4 Salisbury Road, Edinburgh, EH16 6AB by 1st November 2011.

Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society

All meetings start at 8.00pm with tea served at the end of the meeting. The venue is the Marian Oppenheim Hall, Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, 4 Salisbury Road.

November 13th

Dr Maria Diemling: "Nursing babies: Christian wet-nurses and Jewish families. A case study in Jewish-Christian relations in the Early Modern Period".

This talk will discuss the practice of wet-nursing in the context of Jewish-Christian relations. Until the development of formula for infant feeding in the 19th century, wet-nurses were the only safe alternative to maternal breastfeeding. Generally speaking, more Jewish women needed wet-nurses than there were Jewish women who could provide this service and therefore Jews had to look outside their communities for women who could fill this need. This raises interesting questions such as the nature of relations between employers and servants across religious and cultural boundaries, concerns about food, discussions about the moral qualities of mothers and wet-nurses and fear of pollution. It also allows us some insight into the roles women played in establishing links with other women outside their specific culture and adds to our understanding of the complexity of Jewish-Christian relations.

November 27th

George Wilkes: "Wars of Liberation, Wars of Religion: a Jewish Guide that some have called Great".

A reading of Franz Rosenzweig's Star of Redemption, one of the most influential Jewish works of theology of the twentieth century, with an eye to our own time. Conceived on the front line of the First World War, the book scorns the arguments both of pacifists and of their opponents. Who are the fanatics today? What does it mean to engage with the grim reality of war? Rosenzweig has some interesting answers – but his work also provokes the question: should we pay especial heed to any writer who invokes a Jewish approach to war and peace?

European Union for Progressive Judaism Newsletter

The November 2011 issue of the EUPJ newsletter is now available and you can now open it by clicking on http://www.eupj.org/newsletters/doc_download/43-eupj-newsletter-october-2011.html. This month it includes a profile of the Zurich Progressive Community, Or Chadash. You can read about High Holy Days in Dublin, Jewish music and humour festivals in Lyon, Limmud in Cambridge, Warwick and Stockholm, Warsaw's lay cantor training program and film festival, events at Abraham Geiger College, a vision for Milan plus pictures and many short articles about our Progressive communities throughout Europe. This October issue reports on events in Austria, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the WUPJ and even Washington, D.C.



Interfaith

The future of the Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group (EWIG) is in your hands! <http://www.edinwig.org.uk>

"Wednesday 16th November - This meeting at 7 pm, will discuss the future of EWIG, so we encourage [those] who have a view on this to join us."

If any of you (ladies only I'm afraid) are interested in our group's survival and/or becoming a member of it, please come to our meeting on 16th November - the venue is to be decided because Nicolson Square Church is being refurbished.



Soil, Soul and Society workshop" with Satish Kumar of the Schumacher Institute Saturday 10th December, 10.30am - 5.30pm, Sanctuary, Augustine United Church, 41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL

As the trinity of égalité, liberté and fraternité, we need a new trinity for the age of ecology which has wholeness, integrity and cohesion. Satish proposes the trinity of soil, soul and society. Cost: £50. For a Registration Form:

<http://www.eicsp.org/downloads-org/category/197-satish-kumar-visit-registration-form>

Contact: Neill Walker, mesp2008@hotmail.co.uk, 0131 331 4469.

Forum: "Towards a Vision of Sustainability, Spirituality and Justice" Saturday 10th December, Registration at 6.30 pm for 7 pm start, Sanctuary, Augustine United Church, 41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL

Chair: The Rt Rev Brian Smith

Panellists: Sister Candasiri of the Amaravati Buddhist Monastery; Kathy Galloway, Head of Christian Aid Scotland, former leader of the Iona Community, writer, theologian, campaigner; Alastair McIntosh, campaigning academic, speaker, writer, poet and broadcaster.

The future well being of humanity and the earth is dependent on a new world view in which the care of the planet, nourishment of the soul and the nurturing of the human community are integrated and seen as a continuum. Our reverence for the earth, our care of the soul and a just order in society represent a vision of sustainability, spirituality and justice.

Cost: £10/£8 (Concessions).

Contact: Tickets Scotland Ltd, 127 Rose Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3DT. 0131 220 3234. 9am-6pm (8pm Thursday), 11am-6pm Sundays, <http://www.tickets-scotland.com>

Direct Approach and Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council (ELREC)

<http://www.elrec.org.uk/aboutus.htm> and <https://www.facebook.com/ELRECUK>

A Safer Communities Network for BME Women and Women of Faith

For some time Rebekah Gronowski has been attending meetings of the above organisation. The group has engaged with many issues which are of importance to women of Faith and of Ethnic and Minority Communities. Seminars and Conference days have been organised on different topics, including (for

example) the issue of FGM, BME women and the Feminist Movement and, future events planned include a Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) and a second Conference day on FGM as a follow up to the one held this year.

If you are interested in becoming a Member, please contact rebekah.gronowski@gmail.com (meetings take place approximately every two months).

White Ribbon Campaign

"Volunteers are sought from different faiths to form a men's Inter-Faith Group to promote the White Ribbon (men campaigning to end violence against women). If you know of people who might be interested please contact David Bradwell at the address below."

Associate Secretary, Church and Society Council, The Church of Scotland, 121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN, 0131 240 3006, Charity Number SC011353

Letter to the Editor

Not in my Name

by Catherine Lyons

I felt kicked in the guts when I read the statement from the World Union of Progressive Judaism in the last newsletter.

If two Jews have three opinions, how many opinions do 1.8 million Progressive Jews hold? The World Union of Progressive Judaism presumes to speak for all of us in a single, unmodulated voice, devoid of ethical responsibility, or indeed any reflection at all. Its recent pronouncements are indistinguishable from those of Netanyahu, and pervert the meaning of Tikkun Olam (which of course WUPJ claims to value but actually reduces to Tikkun of the State of Israel).

In Mahmoud Abbas's UN bid for Palestinian statehood and the recent prisoner exchange, there were real opportunities for mutual respect and genuine Tikkun, dare we even say *progressive* Judaism? But the WUPJ has joined the chorus of Israel-worshipping idolators.*see FOOTNOTE

The WUPJ opposes the Palestinian bid on two grounds.

1. [The Palestinian Entity] ... must recognize the Jewish character of the State of Israel and express its desire to live in peace, harmony and cooperation with Israel.
2. The proposed vote raises concern that another round of violent action might ensue.

The first objection has been thoroughly discredited by the analysis of Brian Klug, in his recent book, *Being Jewish and Doing Justice*. The so called existential threat is a modern contrivance. Like Netanyahu, Likud leader and prime minister, Menachem Begin, addressed the newly-elected Knesset in June 1977 as follows:

'I wish to declare that the Government of Israel will not ask any nation, be it near or far, mighty or small, to recognize our right to exist.'

In 1981, former Labour foreign minister Abba Eban wrote

'Nobody does Israel any service by proclaiming its "right to exist". It is disturbing to find so many people well-disposed to Israel giving currency to this contemptuous formulation.'

Klug observes that the contemptuous formulation has become an indispensable condition that distorts debate. Debate cannot be about universal rights if its precondition is Israeli privilege.

WUPJ's second objection is even more contemptible. It implies a frame of reference in which Israel is victim and Palestine is an aggressor that must be held in check: better not to give false promise in case Palestinians turn violent when hopes are dashed. This is how you treat dangerous animals, not people. It turns my stomach to be told this view is supposed to represent my own.

And of course hopes will be dashed, in the current political climate in Israel, and as settlement building continues in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the West Bank. Even though Hamas, no less, has unequivocally accepted the 1967 borders, Israel continues to treat borders, like statehood, as one more tactical tool that is morally empty.

The most nauseating part of the WUPJ's statement is what is denied by its omission. 'Another

round of violent action' denies the Israeli violence in which Palestinian life is immersed, violence that WUPJ cannot credibly deny its support for. Israel is in the process of releasing around 1000 Palestinian prisoners. That still leaves another 6000 in Israeli jails. Among them there are 164 children. None of them have been released. I encourage you to read Richard Burden MP's recent article http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/richard-burden/gilad-shalit-prisoner-exchange_b_1027398.html about them.

There are 164 Palestinian children currently held by Israel - most of them accused of crimes such as throwing stones. Not one of them has yet been released by Israel as part of the Shalit deal. Discrimination against children is routine in the Israeli legal system. Israeli children accused of offences are tried by Israel in civilian juvenile courts. Palestinian children are tried by Israel in military courts. I have seen for myself some of what that institutional difference means. The sight of thirteen or fourteen year old Palestinian children shuffling into a military courtroom in leg irons is a sight I will never forget.

B'Tselem (Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories) published a substantial report this summer entitled "No Minor Matter" http://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/201107_no_minor_matter documenting the 835 arrests of Palestinian children 2005-2010; some of whom were kidnapped from their families in the middle of the night.

What did the WUPJ have to say about the Shalit deal? In its pronouncement on the prisoner exchange, it clearly regrets that any Palestinians at all have returned home: Israel has paid an enormous price, it says, and our thoughts must go out to those who have misgivings. (A particular shame then that children are still in prison and could not have been substituted for those that appear more threatening. It's also disgraceful that Marwan Barghouti, who could bring Palestinian unity, and called by Uri Avnery the Palestinian Mandela, has not been released.)

I am pleased to say that Liberal Judaism has the grace not to promote WUPJ's position and has welcomed the release of Palestinian prisoners.

FOOTNOTE

**Lest readers be taken aback by my assertion of idolatry, I refer you to Rabbi Michael Lerner's article from Tikkun in 2009, 'Israel as Idolatry' <http://www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily/2009/09/21/israel-as-idolatry/>*

Today, in word and deed, most of the synagogues in the world proclaim "The state of Israel is the ultimate holy God, O Israel." Israel is the new idolatry.

And to our own Rabbi Aaron Goldstein, no less, in The Jewish Chronicle, who asks in a nevertheless fiercely Zionist piece 'Is Israel our Golden Calf?' <http://www.thejc.com/blogs/rabbi-aaron-goldstein/is-israel-our-golden-calf>. We need not worship Israel as a mythical State that can do no wrong.

But my point is not simply that WUPJ representatives are trampling over Jewish values as they bow down before the State, but that Israel-idolatry also means according to the State attributes we properly reserve for God: the power over human destiny. If we believe that human rights are universal and unconditional, God-given, then the rights of Palestinians are not in the gift of the Israeli government.

Kosher chicken

Sainsbury's at Cameron Toll have restocked the kosher freezer with Yarden frozen chicken products. Items include: whole roasters, bags of drumsticks and of skinned breast fillets as well as breaded schnitzels, sesame chicken fingers and chicken nuggets.