



July – August 2020

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Sukkat Shalom

Edinburgh Liberal
Jewish Community

**Scottish Charity
Number
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Diary

All services and discussions have been cancelled in physical form for the foreseeable future. Rabbi Mark Solomon will be conducting services remotely –

- Erev Shabbat (Friday 7pm)
- Shabbat (Saturday 11am)
- Also Havdalah: on Saturdays, currently 9:00pm for 9:15 (contd. overleaf)

every week. He will also conduct the regular discussion groups online: Philosophy (currently Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*), and Tea & Talmud, on Mondays and Thursdays at noon. You need to register for these – see link below for details. "Choosing Judaism" classes will be held every Sunday. The programme is [here](#).

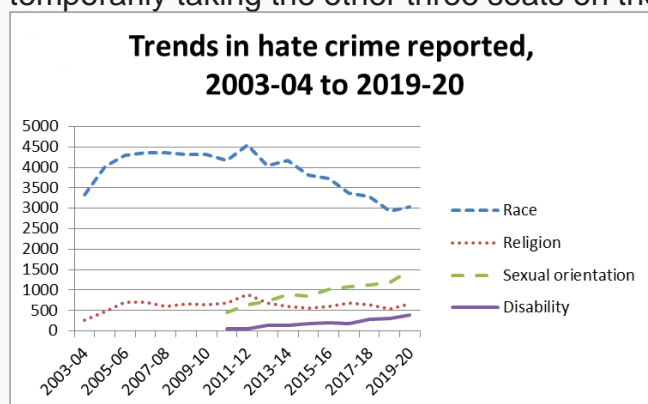
To get links to all of these please [see here](#). If you need a password, please reply to this email explaining how you heard about us.

Word from the Sofa

It is my turn to take the seat on the sofa that has the responsibility to write the Word from the Sofa for this newsletter. Writing in June 2020 I wanted to speak about the tragic killing of George Floyd on 25th May and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. I wanted to focus on what we should be doing now to try to stop racial injustice. How to do it in a short piece? Fortunately, three young women from Sukkat



Shalom have done just that in the next piece in this newsletter) and I feel as if they are temporarily taking the other three seats on the sofa. Scotland is not by any means free from racial injustice, discrimination and racist crimes.



The latest Scottish Government report on Hate Crime was DC, an amazing place that tells the history but also celebrates the contributions published in [June 2020](#). There has been some decline in racial hate crimes in the last decades, while crimes connected with disability and with sexual orientation have been increasing. But racially motivated hate crime

still accounts for by far the largest share of all such crime in Scotland. The article below discusses what we can do to combat racial injustices..

It only remains to me to add a few ideas of my own, mainly related to education. Two years ago I visited the [National Museum of African American Culture](#) in Washington of African Americans in many fields. Should we have such a museum in the UK or even in Scotland? In the last week there have been calls to establish a museum of slavery in the UK and the Scottish Parliament has passed an amendment that will commit the Scottish Government to establish a slavery museum to address our historic links to the slave trade. See the link to parliamentary business [here](#). Most of us will be aware of how Scotland benefitted from the slave trade in the 18th century through the profits made by trade in sugar and tobacco imported to Port Glasgow from plantations in the Caribbean. In the same period many

Highland landlords were slave-owning plantation owners in Guyana. Their legacy remains in the names of towns there such as Cromarty and Fortrose. The story of how the Highlands benefitted from these slave owners can be read [here](#).

We should encourage the establishment of a museum to tell these stories. But will it really do anything to get rid of the injustices pointed out by BLM and described below? I think not unless, as well as telling the history of Scots involvement with slavery, it incorporates a celebration of what Black people like our current *makar*, Jackie Kay have contributed to Scotland. Her poem echoes what Esther writes in the article below.

In My Country by Jackie Kay

walking by the waters,
down where an honest river
shakes hands with the sea,
a woman passed round me
in a slow, watchful circle,
as I were a superstition;
or the worse dregs of her imagination,
so when she finally spoke
her words spliced into bars
of an old wheel. A segment of air.
Where do you come from?
'Here,' I said, 'Here. These parts.'

I intend to write to my MSP with this suggestion, but this is a long-term goal. There is something we can do now that could help the BLM campaign. Two young people from Edinburgh have started a campaign to donate books to Scottish primary schools that will send each school a set of 12 books portraying diversity in their characters. They had become aware that many Scottish primary schools had few, if any, such resources. By starting to educate children about diversity from a young age, they hope that efforts for greater fairness and equality for all will be carried into the future.



You can support their initiative by donating at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-scottish-schools-teach-children-about-race> .

Gillian Raab

(on behalf of The Sofa: Sue Bard, Maurice Naftalin, Gillian Raab and Nick Silk)

Black Lives Matter

Content warning: Anti-Blackness, Police Violence

Excerpted from Shinwoo Kim, Esther Kungu and Jenny Oberholtzer

(For the full article, click [here](#))

- Black Lives Matter is a long-term movement that gained public attention recently due to sparking a world-wide movement for justice and equality for Black people in response to the police brutality against George Floyd.
- Discrimination, injustice against Black people and killings happen all over the world, including Scotland.
- Black people are especially vulnerable to Covid-19 infection for a variety of reasons that are not yet fully understood, but probably include systemic injustices that lead to Black people's poverty or making it more likely that Black people work in vulnerable occupations.
- Black Jews report having experienced racism within the Jewish Community as you can see in the links at the end of this article.
- As Jews we have an ethical responsibility to fight discrimination and injustice in all its forms. We are taught not to do unto our neighbour that which is hateful to us. If we wish to live in a just society, and live by Jewish principles, we are obligated to try to stand up for what is right.



'I now have a one-year old son, who is Kenyan, Jewish and Scottish so the idea of identity has never been more important' says **Esther Kungu**.

It's difficult for me to write entirely about my Black Jewish experience because I am still relatively new to Judaism. When I was asked to write this piece, one of the first thoughts that came to mind was the question of identity especially as recent events have reminded us all how much society still defines you by the colour of your skin.

When I was growing up I was always aware that I was an outsider. For most of my childhood, I lived in Scotland and I was frequently asked "why is your skin so dark?". Then we moved to Kenya for a few years and all of a sudden, I was the "mzungu" (white) kid. So the message is that you don't quite belong anywhere. As a result, I have always battled with my own identity. This was compounded by my late father's refusal to teach us his mother tongue or anything about my Kenyan culture.

Not knowing enough about my Kenyan background sometimes leaves me with a feeling of being lost because in Scotland, Black people stand out. I now have a one-year old son, who

is Kenyan, Jewish and Scottish so the idea of identity has never been more important.

I feel the importance of knowing one's own culture and history extends to society as a whole. Our history has been carefully edited, for example I only learned in the last couple of years the extent of Scotland's involvement in the slave trade. How can people even begin to tackle the issues of structural racism, inequality and prejudice when we don't even know how they began?

You can hear Esther's experience as a Black business-owner in Scotland in the [video here](#)

What can you do?

You can petition or protest about BLM. This site brings together links to information for people in the UK on how you can do this. [Link here](#).

You can donate to a set of 70+ funds supporting BLM in the USA [Link here](#).

You can follow the [Jewish Solidarity Action on Facebook](#). They are running a [campaign](#) to combat racism in solidarity with BLM.

Read about Black Jews' experiences

Four prominent Black Jews from the UK write about their experience of racism in the [Jewish News](#)

'I'm a Black and Jewish Woman. My Identity Matters.' Faith Gabbay-Kalson writes about her [experience in N America](#)

'I Helped Coin the Term 'Jews of Colour'. It's Time for a History Lesson.' [A positive view of increasing diversity in the Jewish Community in the USA](#)

'I'm a Black rabbi. I've never been in a Jewish space where I wasn't questioned' [read about her experiences here](#)

'Black Jews respond to the George Floyd protests in their own words' [Reports from the USA](#)

Finally

What we in the Black community need from Jews right now. A call for support that reminds us that Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marched with Martin Luther King read [here](#).

Our Community Care and Support

Coming out of lockdown may pose its own problems and anxieties, especially for those who will still have to exercise a lot of care about where they go and what they do. We are still here for each other so don't hesitate to ask for any help and support you may need, including simply the need to talk.



OUR EXISTING CONFIDENTIAL CONTACT SYSTEM: **phone or**

email contact@eljc.org and one of the small group of people who respond to calls and

emails will get back to you quickly.

RABBI MARK SOLOMON would like you to know that he's available on 07766 141315 and marksolomon@btinternet.com if you'd like to talk to him.

OUR WHATSAPP GROUP: allowing people to be in direct contact with each other very quickly where help is needed. If you're not already on it and would like to be, send Sue Lieberman your mobile number and ask to be part of the group. You can text her on 07939 014720.

Also, don't forget JAMI, the Jewish Mental Health support service. You can download their current Head Room Café community events programme here and If you'd like to join, email headroom@jamiuk.org .

Calling all children and young people

Glasgow Kayitz 2020, 6-17 July, is a free, virtual summer camp open to children and young people living anywhere in Scotland.

Children finishing P1-P7 can join fellow campers on Monday and Friday mornings for a short live session, and work with their family at home to complete challenges and tasks towards eight badges.

Campers can share their completed challenges on the Glasgow Kayitz 2020 private Facebook group.

Everyone will get a camp t-shirt and a weekly package with selected supplies to help complete the tasks. **Register now at bit.ly/kayitz20**

Teens finishing S1-S3 can join our Madatz Leadership Training programme, meeting online for fun, team building, and special sessions that will help us become good leaders. Madatz participants will also get the chance to help plan and lead the online sessions and activities for the camp. **Register now at bit.ly/kayitz20**

Teens finishing S4-S6 can join us as madrichim, or counsellors. In addition to helping plan and lead camp activities online, madrichim will also have their own activities. Interested teens should **contact Sydney at glasgow.youthworker@ujia.org**.

This programme is being organised by the Glasgow Israel Committee, JLGB, 5th Giffnock Guides and UJIA but you don't have to be a member of any of these organisations to participate.

Don't hesitate to contact Sydney Switzer, Scotland Youth Programmes Coordinator, with any questions at glasgow.youthworker@ujia.org or on 07716 914643



Tiphereth's Sale : plants delivered to your door.

Some of you will remember working in the gardens at Tiphereth Camphill Community in Colinton and will have gone to their annual summer fairs. This year, there's been no summer fair, but their wonderful plant sale – all grown at Tiphereth – has gone online.

They include Herbacious Perennials and herb plants in large 10L pots £6.00 5L pots £3.50 and herb plants

Get a list of plants and order by Thursday 9 July by emailing Katherine.ruprecht@tiphereth.org.uk

Tiphereth will deliver within Edinburgh as no visitors to the community are allowed at the moment.

Tiphereth Camphill is an intentional life-sharing community for people with learning disabilities. It's part of an international movement that originated at Camphill House near Aberdeen, founded in 1940 by mainly Jewish refugees from Austria. Tiphereth Camphill is one of ten Camphill Communities in Scotland

An excerpt of Psalm 104 reimagined for an Aberdeenshire village

The trees of the Lord drink their fill,
the cedars of Lebanon, His own planting,
where birds make their nests:
the stork has her home in the junipers.
The high mountains are for wild goats;
the crags are a refuge for rock badgers.

Cedars of Lebanon are pretty thin on the ground in Aberdeenshire, but there are plenty of Scots Pine, the remnants of the once glorious Caledonian pine woods. Most of the pines here are not exactly "His own planting" and have been planted for forestry. They are much straighter and more uniform in shape than the original wild Caledonian pines, which have twisted trunks and huge branches reaching out on all sides, perfect for Capercaillie to perch on. Both still smell wonderfully of hot pine on a sunny day, and red squirrels don't seem to mind the shape of the trunks.

As spring has given way to summer, the dawn chorus of Blackbirds and Song Thrushes has calmed down slightly as a lot of their energy now goes into feeding their young. The local male Blackbird still finds the time to declare his territory in the evenings, singing from the roof of a house opposite. Blackbirds can have three or four broods over the summer, so it's important that the male protects his territory, but he also has the responsibility for caring for the chicks for a few weeks once they have left the nest. In the meantime the female needs to prepare for laying the next clutch of eggs.



Despite living just half an hour from the Cairngorms National Park, the high mountains are visible only in the distance under lockdown rules. The nearest equivalent here are the roofs and chimneys of the village, but they certainly provide homes for plenty of creatures.

Jackdaws are the most noticeable feature of this rooftop habitat. Jaunty, gregarious and noisy, they are one of the least ominous of British crow species. Traditionally nesting in hollows in large trees or cliffs, they have adapted to the urban environment by nesting in chimneys (sometimes a dangerous pursuit!). There have been several pairs nesting in the chimneys outside my bedroom window although all have fledged now. Once the young leave the chimneys they will not return, but they can often be seen during the day on the playing field outside the school. With schools closed for lockdown instead of human children you can see young Jackdaws learning how to forage for invertebrates with their parents amongst the unmown grass.

House Martins, Swifts and House Sparrows also like to nest in the buildings around the village and their collective chattering screams and chirping contribute to a lovely summer atmosphere. However they are not popular with everyone, and one of the houses opposite has installed spikes under their eaves to stop the House Martins from building their ingenious cup-shaped nests with mud. Fortunately a pair of House Sparrows seems to be experimenting with using the spikes as a platform to build their own nest on, a small piece of proof that humans still do not have total control over nature.

The trees of the Lord drink their fill,
the Pines of Scotland, His own planting,
where squirrels make their nests:
the blackbird has her home in the leylandii
The high rooftops are for house martins;
the chimneys are a refuge for jackdaws.

Lizy Smith

Three months on in Holzgerlingen, Germany

23 March 2020. On this day, Germany officially enacted lockdown measures. By then, however, a lot of events had already been cancelled and many people had started working from home or had been furloughed. My company had already switched everyone to working from home about a week earlier. In fact, industrial companies, such as the one I work for, had at no point been required to close or send people home. Yet, many companies chose to do so nonetheless and with schools and nurseries closing, many people had no choice but to stay home.

Jutta and I, though, were not much affected by the lockdown measures other than me working from home which obviously gave rise to some changes to our daily routine. Restaurants and cultural institutions were closed. But Jutta and I don't usually eat out anyway and rarely actually go to any cultural institutions. The latter is a shame, I know, but somehow life keeps intervening. Be that as it may, because we were always allowed out for a walk or a hike, we didn't really feel much restricted. We had to forgo Limmud Mannheim which was due to take place on 10 May but got cancelled for safety reasons. We were more than recompensed for it, though, through the wonderful eLimmuds organised by Limmudniks from the UK and South Africa. Apart from that, Jutta and I have benefitted from the many amazing opportunities offered by Sukkat Shalom, Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue (NPLS) and Liberal Judaism. Had it not been for COVID-19, we would only have been able to attend the High Holiday services at Sukkat Shalom and we would have celebrated Pesach alone. Instead, we were able to participate in two seders, one at Sukkat Shalom and another one at NPLS, and are having so many opportunities to attend services that we 'have to' divide our time between Sukkat Shalom and NPLS.

With so much going on, we almost didn't notice that lockdown was ~~is~~ coming to an end here in Germany pretty fast: shops have been open again since early May and since late May restaurants have started to re-open. Travelling has been reasonably possible for a while now (it was never actually prohibited) and people can't seem to wait to take advantage of it: 11,000 package holidays to Majorca that were part of a scheme to test the Majorcan capabilities to keep tourists happy and safe at the same time sold out within 36 hours. Here in Holzgerlingen the open-air swimming pool has re-opened and people flock to our local play and sports ground as soon as the sun makes an appearance. From last week, we've been allowed to host private events with up to 99 participants. Not only that, we may now meet with an unlimited number of members of up to 20 families - visiting the immediate family was always possible, bar brothers or sisters. Only schools remain largely closed until the end of summer and I will continue to work mostly from home for the rest of 2020.

Marc Schulz

A Thief in the Night

I'm busy in the kitchen when the entry on the wall calendar catches my eye. I stand looking at the date, and the ones that we hoped would follow, tracing the entries with my finger. When suddenly I find myself, block of cheddar in hand, sobbing. Longing for those promised carefree moments that are now lost. Day trips, road trips, train journeys, visits with grandparents, time spent with friends. Not for the first time the enormity of the past months and weeks slams into me, taking my breath and emotions. The days have been long and tiring, the weeks short and shapeless. Another day, another cake. I still haven't made a sourdough and my yoga app remains unopened.

But joy, as ever, has been present in the wonder of your deep brown eyes. A gift to your father and me as we three have walked through this moment in history, this once in a lifetime happenstance. Early morning walks with your dog at the beach, and late night movies curled up in our bed, as we cancel alarms (along with plans) and languish in the freedom these restrictions have afforded us.

As you charge about the garden playing football and laughing I'm struck by the load I feel on my shoulders. What has this time taken from us, from you? In the beginning you asked each night if by morning coronavirus would be gone, but now there is an unspoken acceptance of it, and I wonder if you think it might be here to stay. My eyes brim with tears at this, as your perfect innocence takes everything in its stride.

My beloved grandfather would often remark "time passes like a thief in the night." Mostly in response to the childhood I was so rapidly cursing, the journals he bequeathed me tell how treasured those years were to him, more so than any other. And in these strange and curious days I mourn the moments that have been stolen from us. A wedding cancelled, a birth still uncelebrated, the passing of a family friend remote and lonely. But here with you I am thankful - for endless days of colouring and baking, windswept hours finding beach treasure and the daily adventure of reading a new story. We find our own ways to make learning part of your day, and of course find that you teach us far more than we do you.

There are still special moments to look forward to. Family reunions to plan and our summer picnic yet to be arranged. No doubt there the emotions will spill along with the champagne froth. Most days you tell me excitedly of the journey, a few hundred miles south, you so hope to take and the places you plan to see. In the coming weeks we will cheer, even if from afar, as your brother graduates from university, and we will shed tears both happy and sad as your sister leaves for her final year of study before finding her way back home.

We determine to find a new way to mark these milestones for fear of losing them forever. Symbols of life continuing, as so much and so many are lost. In the darkest moments we tearfully cling to each other and resolve that this too shall pass, and we try to push forward with plans, and hopes and dreams. It isn't easy, but we must carry on, to make our life happen in spite of the world seemingly grinding to a halt. More than once I pad around in the

small hours, my mind a whirring blur, sleep a stranger. I take a moment to check in on you and find myself curling under your blanket too. Surrounded by the darkness I lie still, listening to the softness of the breath I gave you calling out in the night. I am calmed by the rise and fall of your small, strong frame and we slumber together until morning.

A Thief in the Night has visited once more, but some moments are too precious even for him.

Carmen McPherson

Ancient Papyrus

There's an ancient papyrus predicting a virus
but it's buried under the sands
of a golf course in Scotland that nobody wanted
and that still doesn't have many fans.
One sign of infection is stealing elections
and those not yet rigged will be banned.

Ellen Galford

Ba'alei Tefillah course for lay leaders

Dan Hershon, author of the article below about the 16th century mystical poem Lecha Dodi, has signed up for Liberal Judaism's Ba'alei Tefillah course for lay leaders and this article is based on one of his assignments. The full paper is [here](#).

Dan started the course in March when the 16 candidates from 15 communities and five different countries gathered at the Montagu Centre in London for a day of learning. Lockdown followed and zoom came to the rescue. Dan was brought up in the United Synagogue tradition and in the past – but not for some time – has been a lay leader in both United Synagogue and Progressive Judaism services. Now he is particularly relishing the opportunity to deepen his knowledge and understanding of Liberal Judaism liturgy and music and looking forward to playing his part in the long Jewish tradition of lay leadership.

(If you'd like to find out more about becoming a service leader, email Alexandra on simonon@liberaljudaism.org).

Lecha Dodi – welcoming the ‘Shabbat Bride’.

Lecha Dodi is a Piyut (liturgical poem written in the 16th century in Safed, Galilee by Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz. In the latter half of the 16th century the Safed Rabbis formalised the Friday night *Kabbalat Shabbat* service into six Psalms representing the six days of the week and of Creation, namely Psalms 95-99 and 29, leading up to the Song of Shabbat (Psalm 92). The addition of *Lecha Dodi* provided the bridge which eases the transition between the everyday (*chol*) and the holiness (*kodesh*) of Shabbat

Lecha Dodi means "come my beloved" and through the refrain "likrat kallah" is the plea to a mysterious "beloved" to join together to "greet the [Shabbat] bride". The song's title is

drawn from the rabbinic interpretation of the [Song of Songs](#) in which the maiden is a metaphor for the [Jews](#) and the lover (*dod*) is a metaphor for God. The mystical idea of Shabbat being likened to a bride is connected to the Talmudic concept that in the beginning of Creation, every day of the week, except Shabbat, had a partner: the Talmud tells us that God promised Shabbat that the Jewish People would be its partner, and this establishes the idea that the Jewish People would greet Shabbat just as a groom goes to meet his bride.



The transformation of the normal world into the holy Shabbat mirrors the redemption of the *Shechinah* and the Jewish people from exile. The hymn looks forward to the time when even during the week we will experience the same holiness as we experience on the Shabbat. The role of the *Shechinah* here is perhaps the first time the female aspect had been given a central role in Jewish liturgy. However, *Lecha Dodi* is also rooted in its historic time. Many of its verses quote directly from Isaiah's prophecies of consolation in order to rouse the Jewish people from the misery and mourning of the post-Temple period to a new sense of rebirth and purpose.

The 19th century German Reform prayer-books reduced *Lecha Dodi* to three stanzas, amid concerns about the messianic aspects of Jewish liturgy that may also reflect the Reform dislike, in that time of Enlightenment, of mystical and kabbalistic Judaism. Although Israel Mattuck's original 1920 *Liberal Jewish Prayerbook* contains five verses of *Lecha Dodi*, the later *Liberal Service of the Heart* siddur reduced the hymn to four verses. In the current edition *Siddur Lev Chadash*, compiled by Rabbis John Rayner and Chaim Stern, *Lecha Dodi* appears only in the *Evening Service 1* and omits verses 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 (although the full nine stanzas appear in the *Additional Songs* section at the back of the Siddur). These omitted verses, while making strong reference to messianic redemption and the rebuilding of David's Jerusalem and the Temple, as well as to the desolate condition of Jerusalem and the

Jewish people in the poet's own time, also radiate hope and optimism in their call to shake off their grief and rouse themselves from lethargy and despair.

The *Lecha Dodi* in *Siddur Lev Chadash*, in its greatly shortened form of four verses 1, 2, 5, and 9 only, is re-interpreted in a characteristically modern translation of alternate rhyming couplets: verse 1 refers to the biblical commandments for observing the Sabbath day "Shamor v' Zachor" which feature in two different parts of the Torah, and the remaining three verses retain the joy of Alkabetz's Talmudic vision as: "we greet the special time that holds all Jewish hopes and aspirations, past, present and those yet to be dreamed, the Shabbat bride." The translations in Verses 2 and 5 do retain some faint echoes of the messianic zeal and redemption of the other omitted verses, such as "Hitor-reri, Hitor-reri - Arouse yourself, arouse yourself!" and: "Ki va-orech - Your light has come!" (verse 2) which possibly hints at the kabbalistic ideas of the inner light that infuses the arrival of Shabbat, and has become *pnei Shabbat* - the inner dimension of Shabbat.

The Western Ashkenazic tradition established certain melodies for *Lecha Dodi* for different special *Shabbatot*, seasons or festivals. The modern Liberal liturgy does not follow this practice and while more traditional melodies may have been used early in Liberal Jewish history, the difficulty, in particular, of singing those traditional tunes where the melody changes from earlier to later verses, has led on the whole to the use of simpler, more uniform melodies, though there are still older, more traditional variations used today in some synagogue services, such as some that incorporate Chassidic chanting. In most Orthodox synagogues nowadays, as in Progressive ones, *Lecha Dodi* is sung by everyone together, as opposed to the responsive chanting with the service leader of older times.

There is a complex tradition of bowing to the words "*bo'i challah, bo'i challah*" at the close of the song, according to different customs. When we sing them, we bow to greet the Shabbat Queen, as we would a bride at a wedding ceremony. When singing the last stanza of *Lecha Dodi*, the custom, when saying the words "*Boi V'shalom*" ("Enter In Peace") is to stand facing the entrance of the synagogue which is usually in the west, possibly based on the Kabbalist belief that the *Shechinah* that accompanies Shabbat is in the west, and turning to the door has connotations of the two gates in Solomon's Temple, one for bridegrooms and one for mourners.

Traditionally, as referred to in the current Reform Siddur *Seder Hatifillah*, the reciting of *Lecha Dodi* is followed by the Greeting of Mourners in which mourners who are sitting *shiva* remain outside the synagogue for Kabbalat Shabbat, entering when the congregation finishes *Lecha Dodi*. As they enter, the congregation calls out in unison: "Ha-makon y'-nacheim etchem b'toch sh'arha-aveilim - "May the Everpresent comfort you together with all those who mourn"

Dan Hershon

Voices and Visions of Liberal Judaism

‘Voices and Visions of Liberal Judaism’ is multi-media exhibition featuring the voices, visions, memories and mementos of Liberal Judaism through the 20th and 21st centuries. It is a major product of ‘Lily’s Legacy: The Radical History and Heritage of Liberal Judaism in Britain.’ This project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, has been working with LJ communities throughout the UK researching and documenting more than 115 years of Liberal Judaism through oral history, photography, film, publications and digital media. It looks at how the vision of the founders of Liberal Judaism, Lily Montagu, Claude Montefiore and Rabbi Dr Israel Mattuck shaped its past and continues to do so today.

At the end of April, by which time group interviews were being conducted by Zoom, a small group of longstanding Sukkat Shalom members and Rabbi Mark Solomon participated, talking about our community – its origins, how it used to be, and how it is now.

‘Voices and Visions of Liberal Judaism’ was launched at the recent virtual LJ Biennial, and you can now visit it here www.lilyslegacyproject.com. It’s an easily accessible, fascinating and well put together exhibition that follows wide ranging themes from ‘rituals and worship’ to ‘mixed faith and conversion’ to ‘gender equality’ and many more.

The original materials will be deposited in the London Metropolitan Archives as a historical resource documenting Liberal Judaism for future generations. The project is continuing, and if you’d like to take part, go to the Lily’s Legacy link to find out more.

Sue Bard

Reflections on small Jewish communities

The Small Jewish Communities Network (SJCN) was established in 2003/4 by Ed Horich, then of Southport Hebrew Congregation. Once a community of 5000 members, its numbers had sunk to the low hundreds and Ed felt that a network of small communities could support and inspire each other. ‘Small’ seems to be a matter of self-identification and size is only part of the story. Other significant factors are the demographic make up of the community – does it have a mostly ageing membership, or is it attracting and retaining young people? - and the reasons for its existence. Is it predominantly the remnant of a once thriving community that may need to be helped to decline gracefully, or one of the many new Jewish communities springing up in unexpected places for whom support at the fragile early stages can make all the difference?

In 2016, SJCN became a registered charity with trustees, volunteers and access to funding to initiate practical projects and provide practical help. Around 120 self-defined small communities in the UK including, since a few weeks ago, Sukkat Shalom, belong to SJCN. Members include both Orthodox and Progressive communities of various kinds as well as

organisations such as the Cambridge Jewish Residents Association that welcomes all Jews who live in or near Cambridge, irrespective of their Jewish religious affiliation. SJCN has links with many small European communities, most of them Jewish Cultural Centres rather than synagogues, and largely funded through the American Joint Distribution Committee. SJCN is one of those organisations that seems to be a perfect fit for the world of Zoom and since lockdown has been holding well-attended weekly meetings on a range of topics.

In June, one of these, from Mallorca/ Majorca, was about the small Jewish community there.

It was a fascinating story beginning with its British Ashkenazic origins in the 1960s through its development as a mixed Sephardic/Ashkenazic community that now includes local families of converso origin, two of whom have become community leaders. A Mallorcan Limmud in 2018 attracted 85 people and ran parallel streams in Catalan, Spanish and English. The community has a building but has had no Rabbi or Chazzan since 2005. Answering questions at the end of his talk, the presenter, Board Member Dani Rotstein



advised **‘Don’t invest in buildings, invest in people’**. Something that we might want to bear in mind. Reading the ‘Lily’s Legacy ‘ transcripts (see ‘Visions and Voices of Liberal Judaism’) I was struck by Rebekah Gronowski’s comment when, at the Beth Din some years ago, she happened to meet the late Rabbi Lionel Blue. Talking to him about Sukkat Shalom and its aspiration to have its own building, he said **‘Do you know something, a community is its people. It’s not the building.’** During this pandemic, this is something that has been borne out in spades.

Sue Bard

Sukkat Shalom Contacts

Community Phone – 0131 777 8024

This phone number sends voicemail to members of the Contact Team

To reach the Care Team, call the Community Phone or email care@eljc.org

Contact Team – contact@eljc.org

Etrog Team – newsletter@eljc.org

Co-chairs: Sue Bard, Maurice Naftalin. Gillian Raab and Nick Silk (chair@eljc.org)

Treasurer: and Membership: Stefano Giossi (membership@eljc.org)

Secretary: Gillian Raab (secretary@eljc.org)

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