



## Newsletter of Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh

Scottish Charity Number SC 035678

**November – December 2017**

**Cheshvan Kislev Tevet 5778**

Let us know what you think of Etrog or send us your contributions by contacting the newsletter team at [newsletter@eljc.org](mailto:newsletter@eljc.org)

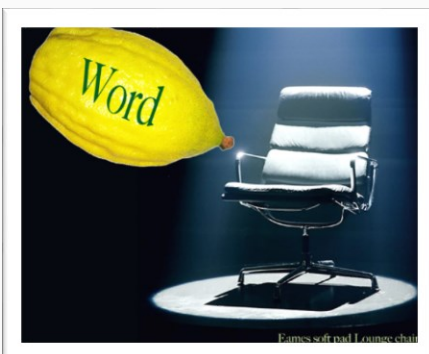
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## Diary

On your mobile: check the diary on our [web page](#) rather than here.

November 2017 / Cheshvan- Kislev 5778				
Fri 3	Cheshvan 15	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>
Fri 10	Cheshvan 21	7pm	Erev Shabbat service	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Fri 17	Cheshvan 29	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>
Fri 24	Kislev 7	7pm	Supper and Songs, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Sat 25	Kislev 7	11am 3 pm	Shabbat service Tea and Talmud both led by Rabbi Mark Solomon	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Sun 26	Kislev 8	4pm	Philosophy discussion group	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
December 2017 / Kislev – Tevet 5777				
Fri 1	Kislev 13	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>
Fri 8	Kislev 21	7pm	Erev Shabbat meditative service, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Sat 9	Kislev 22	3 pm	Tea and Talmud	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Sun 10	Kislev 23	4pm	Philosophy discussion group	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Tue 12	Kislev 25	<b>sunset</b>	<b>First night of Chanukah</b>	1st candle
Fri 15	Kislev 28	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>
Sat 16	Kislev 29	3 pm	<b>Chanukah celebration</b>	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>
Tue 19	Tevet 2	sunset	<b>Last night of Chanukah</b>	8th candle
Sat 23	Tevet 5	6pm	Shabbat morning service	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Fri 29	Tevet 11	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>

### Word from the chair– new venue and fashion faux pas.



For a change I'm going to start off this "word from the chair" by looking backwards rather than forward, and specifically at our recent High Holydays services. Weren't they inspirational? (I really want to say great but it doesn't quite sound appropriate to say that of Yom Kippur!) We were really privileged to have two special Rabbis leading our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. I think it's fair to say that the styles of Rabbi Andrew Goldstein and our own Rabbi Mark Solomon are different, but for me that definitely added to the whole experience that was our High Holyday services. Looking forward, I'm hoping that Rabbi Andrew will be able to lead our Yom Kippur services next year.

Also looking forward, I can confirm that we have now concluded our discussions with St Mark's Unitarian church and as of next (secular) year, we will be holding our regular erev

Shabbat and Shabbat services at St Mark's, and also the Tea & Talmud and Discussion Group sessions that we have when Rabbi Mark is with us. As I said last time, it is with sadness that we are leaving Columcille, but we already do have a good relationship with St Mark's and the significant savings we'll make in hiring the rooms will certainly help us.

There are a few other topics that have come up at our Council meetings that I thought it would be good to share. As is always the case, the more people that we can get involved in helping within our community the better. Gareth and Bob will be drawing up their 2018 rota for helping to get the room at St Mark's ready before our services and bringing a challah. We do have volunteers who help do this, but the more the merrier – can you help? Similarly we have a number of members who lead services when Rabbi Mark isn't with us, but again the more of us who do this, the better for us as a community. If you're not sure, a good way of starting would be leading one of our Kabbalat Shabbat services as these are less formal than some of our other services. Also, as you'll see elsewhere in Etrog, we're looking for a new Treasurer, or at least some help in that area. If you'd like to discuss any of these, please do speak to any of those mentioned above or myself.

A couple of other things from Council. Adrian Harris, the Chair of the Edinburgh Jewish Dialogue Group, came to speak to us in early October. He updated us on the progress the group is making; they have recently spoken to Edinburgh Council about possible options for the proposed Cultural Centre (for more information on this, see below). Lastly from Council, we agreed to put the draft version of the Minutes from the AGM onto the website (they are there now). While they can't be formally agreed until the next AGM, at least if we put them on now there's a chance that you might remember what was said and so be able to comment on them. By the time of the following AGM, most of us have forgotten what was said a year ago!

And finally, a tale about how it's important to dress properly for interfaith events. Last month I was asked to give a reading at an interfaith peace service. I confirmed the reading (a couple of passages from our siddur) and made sure I knew where I was going – the Hindu Mandir (temple) in Leith. The invitation had also said to dress respectfully; I thought a jacket and tie was appropriate. I arrived there in plenty of time so when I went in I was one of the first people there. There were though a couple of people there and I got chatting with them, and I soon realised that when we had to go through to the main hall, the custom is to take off your shoes, which I did. As you do (or as I did anyway), I had a look round to see what others were doing. Most people had their shoes off, and a few had their socks off too. As I continued to chat away, I happened to glance down, and as I was bringing my eyes back up, I knew something was wrong. I had another look down, a bit more carefully this time, and... no, my socks didn't have a hole in them – they just weren't matching. I really can't remember the last time I put odd socks on – in fact I can't ever remember having odd socks on – but this time I did. They were both dark and while one had dark

blue spots on the other had flecks in them, of a brighter greeny/blue. Maybe I'd get away with it, I thought – except that the sock with the brighter greeny/blue colour also had the same colour on the heel and toe. Not something that even I, in my wildest, unfashionable dress sense, could think I'd get away with. After quickly excusing myself, I went to see if I could remedy the situation, but just as quickly realised that putting my socks on inside out wasn't an option. A sock with a brightly coloured heel and toe is brightly coloured, whether the right way round or inside out. So, if you see any pictures of me at the interfaith service, and wonder why I'm in my bare feet, you now know why. And as I said at the start – the moral of the story is, always dress properly when attending an interfaith event.



### **Nick Silk**

**Invest in Peace Event** 7.00 pm Thur 16 November, Glasgow Southside  
The Parents Circle Families Forum promotes peace and reconciliation between Palestiinians and Israelis. Speakers include Jackson Carlaw MSP and bereaved parents Bassam Aramin and Robi Damelin. Jointly organised by St Cadoc's Catholic Church, Newlands Synagogue and Orchardhill Parish Church. FREE but booking essential via [PeaceGlasgow.eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.peaceglasgow.org.uk/eventbrite) The event address will be sent to registered attendees Phone number for further information 0207 543 5416

### **Kol Nidre Appeal – donate now**

Over Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we focus on Tikkun Olam, repairing the world: things we can do to make our world a better place for all humanity. We can't always do this directly ourselves but we can also support others who do so. To this end and to help our members and friends to fulfill the obligation of *tsadakah* we launch a Yom Kippur appeal every year. We raise funds for



charities recommended by our members including Jewish and non-Jewish Charities and those working in Scotland and elsewhere in the world. This year both non-local charities are in Israel. This is not usual for us, but members made good cases for them. Our chosen charities for 2017 are given.

**Marie Curie Centre, Fairmilehead** [.https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/hospice-care/hospices/edinburgh](https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/hospice-care/hospices/edinburgh) is a local hospice that provides end-of-life care to people suffering from terminal illness, and support for their families, Families are full of praise for the difference that Marie Curie's care made to them and to their loved one. Our own Sukkat Shalom member, Joy Northcott, died peacefully there in January this year

**Jewish Care Scotland** <http://www.jcarescot.org.uk> helps people in Jewish communities wherever they live in Scotland. It provides a professional social work and volunteer service, liaising with local authorities and agencies throughout Scotland to ensure that services are comprehensive and meet individual needs. Jewish Care helps people with a wide range of needs including families in crisis, individuals with mental health problems and older people suffering facing difficulties maintaining their independence at home.

**British Shalom-Salaam trust** <http://www.bsst.org.uk/> supports small-scale, grassroots or developing projects which help Jews, Palestinians and other communities living in Israel and Palestine build their own opportunities for a future of peace and cooperation. Recent examples of supported projects are

- A youth project at Al Amal/Hatikva, a small Arab/Jewish community in the Galilee, which runs joint Palestinian/Jewish initiatives including environmental improvement work and education.
- Combatants for Peace, an internationally-recognised Israeli-Palestinian peace movement which unites former soldiers and paramilitaries who work together to end violence via humanitarian aid, joint community projects and human rights campaigns.
- Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development, a Jerusalem-based group that promotes a common religious vision for sustainable development. Amongst other things, this project brings together Christian, Muslim and Jewish women and supports them to take leadership roles in response to the specific environmental challenges of the Jerusalem area

**Leo Baeck Education Centre, Haifa** <http://leobaeckhaifa.org/education/> was established in 1938 as a kindergarten for children fleeing pre-war Europe. The Centre is considered one of Israel's premier educational institutions, providing quality educational programmes for mainstream, gifted and special needs students of all racial, religious, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. It has over 400 staff and a student body of more than 2,500. It is the only institution in northern Israel that integrates students on the autism spectrum into its mainstream education system post-primary. Besides education, the Centre also provides social programmes in some of Haifa's poorest areas.

**Please donate now.** You can send a cheque made out to Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh to Phil Wadler, our Treasurer at [15 Lochrin Place, Edinburgh EH3 9QT](#) or you can pay directly into our bank account. To get bank details please text Phil on 07976 507 543 and he will text them back to you. Remember to tell Phil that your donation is for the Kol Nidre appeal.

**Learning opportunities**

This is the time of year when thoughts turn to learning something new. Try these new on-line, interactive courses from Leo Baeck College

- Judaism and the Sex Question: with Rabbi Dr René Pfertzel - 4 weeks Live ON-LINE 15 November- 6 December 2017

From sex in the Bible to sex in the Talmud, from questions about kosher sex to identity and gender, this course will explore what Judaism has to say about sex. We will use texts, case studies, and our discussion will be frank and open.

- Zohar: Mystical Midrash? Early Novel?: with Rabbi Larry Tabick - 4 weeks Live ON-LINE 6-27 November 2017

The Zohar is the central work of the Kabbalah, the Jewish esoteric and mystical tradition. It looks backward towards the ancient midrashim and forward towards the modern novel, and features a deep spirituality at its centre. We will explore Zoharic texts that exemplify each of these tendencies. Texts will be read in translation, but keep your bible handy.

If you have any questions, please contact Jarek: [Lehrhaus@lbc.ac.uk](mailto:Lehrhaus@lbc.ac.uk), 020 8349 5600. [www.lbc.ac.uk/lehrhaus](http://www.lbc.ac.uk/lehrhaus) for all information

## Date for your diary – 29 January 2018 – Burns Supper.

We are delighted to let you know that we will be holding a Burns Supper jointly with the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. This is the second such event the last one having been several years ago. Details are being finalised but they include Burns Songs performed by Rabbi Mark Solomon and the address to the Immortal Memory of Rabbie Burns by Dr David Purdie. If you would like to help with the planning please let us know. Further details will be available soon, but meanwhile save the date!

## The *Jewish Chronicle* would like to hear from you

Are you a (relatively) young person who is a member of, or strongly associated with, Sukkat Shalom who has either moved to Edinburgh, or who has grown up here and decided to stay? If so, Barry Toberman of the *Jewish Chronicle* would be interested in meeting with you to talk about your involvement in Jewish life, what brought you here and/or what commits you to staying. Barry, who's an Associate Editor, will be in Edinburgh on 16 and 17 November, writing a general feature on Edinburgh Jewish life. If you're interested in taking part, or at this point just want to find out more, Barry would very much like to hear from you. You can contact him on [btoberman@thejc.com](mailto:btoberman@thejc.com)

## High Holydays

### Rosh Hashanah

We welcomed Rabbi Andrew Goldstein and Sharon Goldstein back to Edinburgh for Rosh Hashanah as old friends after their Yom Kippur ministration last year and enjoyed the warm, reflective and uplifting services, the wealth of upcoming shofarot talent and the bountiful communal lunch.



In the afternoon, unprecedented numbers of us walked to St Bernard's Well on the Water of Leith for tashlich, following the injunction 'You will cast your sins upon the sea' (Micah 7:18-20). Tea and coffee afterwards in Charlie and Gillian's house, whose garden conveniently leads down to the river, was very welcome.

### Yom Kippur

Rabbi Mark Solomon returned to us for Yom Kippur and led us in services full of meaning, emotion and challenge and a study session devoted appropriately and thought-provokingly to a selection of the writings of Rabbi Lionel Blue, who died at the end of last year. Our break fast meal was held at Zucca, a convivial Italian restaurant that went out of their way to meet our requirements.

### Succoth



Rabbi Mark was also with us for Succoth, held at Christ Church, Morningside where many of us gathered to build our succah in their beautiful small, secluded garden. Thank you to Tiphereth Camphill Community who provided substantial quantities of greenery for the succah roof.

## Simchat Torah

We were delighted to have Rabbi Mark with us this year for Simchat Torah. Some of us found it hard work to keep up with him as we took our turns to whirl round the room with the torah scroll, fortified by our national drink (and I don't mean just kiddush wine).

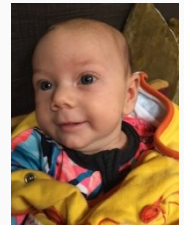
Yonathan and Melissa Eisenberg were our Chatan Torah and Kallah Bereshit. Mazal Tov to them both, but especially to Melissa, for their fluent reading of their portions. Daughter Sorcha, seen here with them, must have been impressed too.

Because we only have one scroll it has to be wound back to the beginning of Genesis after the Chatan Torah has finished the last portion in Deuteronomy. This time we unwound the scroll all the way and everyone helped to hold it up round the room. It went right round the hall, with a bit of overlap. I'm not sure we would have risked this without Rabbi Mark there to make sure it was all re-rolled successfully.



## Mazal Tov to Sue Bard's family

Congratulations to Sue Bard, Clara Usiskin and Darren Munday on the birth of Sue's grandchild and Clara and Darren's daughter, Storm Zelda Munday, born 3 September 2017, 12 Elul 5777



## Sukkat Shalom year of song 2017–18 sign up now

Our Year of Song (which is really a half-year of song from November 2017 – May 2018)) will give everyone who wants to sing the opportunity to enjoy and get to know the music which is such a beautiful and fundamental aspect of our services.

This project is free and open to all members and friends of Sukkat Shalom. People of all ages (including older children and teenagers) are welcome. You don't need to have had previous experience in a choir, or to be able to read music or Hebrew. You do need to have enthusiasm and to commit to coming to as many of the workshops and practices as you can. For further information contact Sue (see below)

*Please note that the first workshop is SUNDAY 5 NOVEMBER at Norman and Wendy Crane's home, Flat 1F2, 26 Southfield Place, Portobello, Edinburgh EH15 2DF. Buses 49 and 21 from town stop round the corner in Duddingston Place a few minutes walk away. Bus 26 from town*



*stops at the Town Hall, Portobello High Street where it crosses Brighton Place. This is a five minutes walk down Brighton Place which continues into Southfield Place. Please bring your own lunch.*

**Contact person is Sue Bard [susanbard3@gmail.com](mailto:susanbard3@gmail.com) 07811 409914; 0131 468 1151**

## Treasurer wanted

Phil Wadler, our Treasurer, is taking a six-month sabbatical at the end of 2017. While we reckon we can probably get by when Phil is away – Phil can do much of the work remotely and some of us can help with things like going to the bank - a much better solution, which Phil fully supports, would be that we start planning for someone to take over from Phil as Treasurer. Over the next few months, our new Treasurer-elect could work with Phil, who would be available to support remotely thereafter. There are also former Treasurers on Council who would be willing to help and support as required. As you'll see in Nick's 'word from the chair', we've already taken steps to reduce our ongoing costs, and having a new Treasurer to look at things with a fresh pair of eyes can only be a good thing.

If you're interested in this, please speak to Nick personally at a service or drop him an email at [chair@eljic.org](mailto:chair@eljic.org)

## Edinburgh Interfaith Association News

### Annual EIFA Peace Service

The annual EIFA Peace service at the Hindu Mandir was, as always, a moving and uplifting service. A good turnout of attendees was treated to a thoughtful selection of readings and prayers from Edinburgh's faith communities. Nick Silk represented the Jewish community and read John Rayner's reflection on peace from p 293 of our Siddur, followed by Y'hee Ratson (May it be Your will) from the same page - which he read first in Hebrew then in English.

### Interfaith Week 12 - 19 November

The theme of this year's Interfaith Week is 'Creativity and the Arts'. Since time immemorial, religion has served as an inspiration for the expression of beauty as can be seen in architecture, music and art. This year we have an opportunity to celebrate the diverse ways in which different religions and cultures express their identities through creative mediums.

### The Importance of Food in Scripture and Tradition: Breaking Barriers Scriptural Reasoning

**St Columba's by the Castle, 12 November, 3:00pm-5:00pm**

Breaking Barriers brings together Jews, Christians and Muslims in Edinburgh to learn more about each other's beliefs, practices and ideas through a process known as 'Scriptural Reasoning'. In this special meeting for Interfaith Week 2017, we will explore the way food is presented in our scripture and the role food plays in our lives and traditions. Refreshments will be provided and participants would be very welcome to bring some food along with them to share. If you have any questions, please contact: [tom.lea@ed.ac.uk](mailto:tom.lea@ed.ac.uk). For more information on this event and to book a space please follow this [link](#).

### **Creative Meditation**

**Edinburgh University Chaplaincy, Wednesday 15 November, 6:00pm-7:00pm**

We are pleased to be working with the Edinburgh University Chaplaincy to bring you this event of Creative Meditation. This includes a series of guided meditation, food meditation, calming crayoning and a labyrinth within a creative, nurturing and supportive space. There will also be a silent space to provide moments of reflection and realisation. A perfect opportunity to touch base with yourself amidst the busy schedule of daily life! No need to book – you can just turn up.

### **Islam in Documentary film**

**Grassmarket Community Project, Wednesday 15 November, 7:30pm-9:00pm**

We are very excited to bring you three documentaries with a focus on Islam but also with a broader message of Interfaith. We will be screening three short documentaries followed by a Q&A of film experts and representatives from the local community to discuss the themes in the film. Light refreshments will be served. This event is open to all, please register [here](#).

### **Our Story Launch (Celebrating the interconnected histories of Edinburgh's faith communities)**

**Scottish Parliament, Thursday 16 November, 6:00pm-7:30pm**

You are invited to an exciting evening at one of the most decorated and prestigious buildings in Edinburgh. We will be celebrating the interconnected histories of Edinburgh's faith communities and would like you to come together to be a part of this historic event. After an introduction from Kezia Dugdale MSP, we will hear a keynote lecture from Professor Bashabi Fraser entitled, "Scottish - South Asian Identity Within Poetry". The evening will end with refreshments and a chance to view an extract from the Our Story exhibition exploring Edinburgh's faith communities through oral histories. There are a limited number of tickets available so ***please do RSVP before 1 November*** if you are interested: [ourstoryedinburgh@gmail.com](mailto:ourstoryedinburgh@gmail.com) Please note that an invitation is needed to this event.

### **Celebrating the Bicentenary of the birth of Baha'u'llah**

**Edinburgh Baha'i Centre, Saturday 18 November, 3:00pm-5:00pm**

2017 is the Bicentenary of the Birth of Baha'u'llah, Founder of the Baha'i Faith. The programme will include stories of the life of Baha'u'llah, prayers, and music. Pat and Parvin Morrissey from Stirling will be telling the stories and singing. The event is suitable for all age-groups. After the presentation there will be the opportunity for further chat over light refreshments. For more information please follow this [link](#). Please RSVP to book a space: [events@edin-bahai.org.uk](mailto:events@edin-bahai.org.uk)

### **Spiritual Vibrations**

#### **St Columba's by the Castle, Saturday 18 November, 7:00pm-9:00pm**

We would like to welcome all to come together at this spiritually uplifting concert. Join us as we journey through music across many traditions and cultures from Indian classical music to gospel. There is no need to book for this event – you can just turn up.

### **Interfaith Week Quiz**

#### **Edinburgh Methodist Church, Sunday 19 November, 5:30pm-8:00pm**

The finale of the week will be our Interfaith Quiz and Meal on Sunday at the Edinburgh Methodist Church in Nicolson Square. This free event is open to all and we look forward to seeing many of you there. Please email [info@eifa.org.uk](mailto:info@eifa.org.uk) to book a space for yourself or a team. We hope to see many of our EIFA friends at these events and if you have any questions, please do get in touch either via facebook. or email: [info@eifa.org.uk](mailto:info@eifa.org.uk) You can also visit our new and improved website which is now live [www.eifa.org.uk/](http://www.eifa.org.uk/).

One other development I would like to re(highlight) is The **Listening Service** – a groundbreaking multi-faith chaplaincy service being jointly delivered by EIFA and Edinburgh Churches Together. The Listening Service provides 'listener-friends' for the Sheriff Court. These volunteers offer a non-judgemental ear to anyone present who may need it – court users, family members, staff etc. – many of whom can be under considerable stress as a result of the circumstances and frequently, their lack of familiarity with the situation and proceedings. Training will be offered and the commitment is just a minimal two mornings a month. If you would like to find out more, please email [courtchaplaincy@gmail.com](mailto:courtchaplaincy@gmail.com)

Finally, as I write this (mid October) I am reeling from the shock of having just been appointed co-Chair of EIFA – a very unplanned and unexpected development, I have to say. However I will certainly give it my best shot. This change creates a vacancy for a Jewish Rep on the EIFA Board. I hope that by the time you read this, plans for identifying and appointing a successor to represent the Jewish community will be underway. But if they have not, or you are just hearing about this for the first time, do drop me a note at [interfaith@eljic.org](mailto:interfaith@eljic.org)

**Stew Green (ex) EIFA Jewish Community Rep**

## High Holyday visitors

This year, we had many visitors over the High Holy Days – 110 (including 17 children and babies) – who were here for different reasons : studies; holidays; business trips; family connections. While some of our visitors were local, most were from other parts of the UK and from other countries, including the USA, France, Italy, Poland, Chile and Australia. Twenty-four of them were students – both undergraduates and postgraduates – at our various universities. They were a breath of fresh air and it was a privilege to have had them with us. Thank you to three of our visitors for writing something for Etrog.

### **Yakira Kellman**

As an American student doing my undergraduate degree in Edinburgh, facing the prospect of an entirely new Jewish community was daunting. My very first week here, I attended a Shabbat service and knew I'd found a place where I could feel comfortable. I returned for High Holydays services this year and found it extraordinarily gratifying to be part of such a large progressive Jewish community. I often feel as if I'm piecing together little bits and bobs of Jewish life in an attempt to reconstruct the massive community I'm used to in New York City, and finding a place with meaningful davening is an incredibly important aspect of that. I look forward to attending more services at Sukkat Shalom and spending my remaining three years in Edinburgh with a community that shares my passion for progressive, egalitarian services.



### **Chamarrita Farkas**

I am from Chile. I am a psychologist and I work as an academic in a Chilean university on themes related to early infancy. This semester I have a sabbatical period and I came to Edinburgh with my daughter to work with colleagues from the University of Edinburgh, where we will be until February.

For the last holidays, we spent Rosh Hashanah with our family in Grand Cayman, a small but growing Jewish community. For Yom Kippur I returned to Edinburgh and I went to the services of Sukkat Shalom. It was very interesting for me to meet the Jewish

community of Edinburgh, and to be able to follow the tradition and respect the festivities, being so far away from my home.



### **Francesca Kurlansky**

( heading up student division of LJY Netzer in Scotland. LYJ Netzer is Liberal Judaism's youth movement )

Over the High Holydays, I was lucky enough to be able to attend the Rosh Hashanah service

that was held by the congregation of Sukkat Shalom with a number of other students looking to engage with progressive Jewish life whilst at university. I grew up in London, attending South London Liberal Synagogue, teaching at the cheder there from the age of 16. In 2013-14 I took part in Shnat Netzer through LJY-Netzer, which I have been a part of for the past eight years. This gap-year experience helped me to develop a much deeper connection with my spirituality and my Liberal Judaism. Since then I have led on many LJY-Netzer events including the two week summer camp Machaneh Kadimah and the six day spring camp Machaneh Aviv. I have also recently spent my university year abroad in Australia where I took part in Netzer, leading on their summer camps and running weekly programmes for the young people.

I am currently in my fourth year at the University of Edinburgh studying Social Anthropology and am in the depths of writing my dissertation on Netzer Australia. The thing that has always been missing from my university experience, however, is a fulfilling engagement with my Judaism. After leading on Machanah Kadimah this summer, I was asked by the movement workers to head up the student division of LJY-Netzer in Scotland. What began as a mere four members has now grown to be a group of over 30 progressively-minded Jewish students who want to have meaningful Jewish experiences with other young people. I am currently co-heading this with Sarah, the representative from NOAM.

Aside from our regular Friday night dinners, and our upcoming Mitzvah day clothes swap (with proceeds going to help people suffering from homelessness in Edinburgh), Sarah and I have wanted to create meaningful connections with the wider progressive Jewish community in

Edinburgh. Our first experience of that was attending the Rosh Hashanah service at Sukkat Shalom which we enjoyed greatly, feeling very warmly welcomed and especially enjoying the ensemble of young shofar blowers! Moving forward, we are currently in conversation with the cheder and will be running a special Chanukah programme for the young people of the congregation on December 16th. We would like to express our gratitude for the hospitality and warmth with which we have been received and look forward to building a continued relationship with all members of the congregation. If anyone has any questions about LJY-Netzer, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at [francescakurlansky@googlemail.com](mailto:francescakurlansky@googlemail.com).



## Vision for a Jewish Cultural Centre

Last year I was one of many people who attended a meeting of the Jewish Dialogue where Clive Lawton presented his report. At the meeting, he introduced the idea of a Jewish Cultural Centre, an outward-looking place 'open to all Jews and non-Jews in and visiting Edinburgh, where they can enjoy and engage in activity and discovery of things Jewish. In addition, such a Centre would also provide a showcase and home for Jewish cultural activity in the city.' I was inspired by the fresh approach Clive was bringing us and I started to come along to Edinburgh Jewish Dialogue meetings. As my background is in architecture, I could see that, to follow the idea through, we needed an architectural brief, to identify just what spaces such a Centre is seeking to inhabit. My work is delivered through my partner Gordon Duffy's architecture practice, Studio DuB, and we completed the brief in July this year after consultations with interested parties. This presentation stems directly from the brief. As a concept design, we understand that it is a proposal not connected to a particular site or context and that any design would need to evolve and change according to site requirements. But I truly hope it is a proposal which responds to the needs of the widest community and gives us a chance to seek a canopy under which we can all meet.



This picture is taken from a video that illustrates and explains the vision. You can watch the whole video [here](#).

Rebecca Wober

## Yom Kippur at Beyt Tikkun gives food for thought

I have long been aware of a community called Beyt Tikkun, based in the San Francisco Bay Area. When I found myself near there at the end of last month, I took the opportunity of spending Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur with them. The experience was, at different times, challenging and engaging, and provoked me to think in new ways about some of our practices in Sukkat Shalom.

### Background

If you don't know about Beyt Tikkun, some background might help. It's a Jewish Renewal congregation, founded by its present Rabbi, Michael Lerner, in 1996. Jewish Renewal is the movement that infuses modern Judaism with Chasidic, Kabbalistic, and musical practices. A book that we studied most recently with Rabbi Mark in our monthly discussion group, reflects many of the ideas of Jewish Renewal.

Michael Lerner's journey has taken him from 1960s student activism through academic life to the foundation of Beyt Tikkun in the 1990s. He is also editor of the quarterly Tikkun magazine, which promotes the ideas of the Network of Spiritual Progressives, whose vision is a world 'based on kindness, care, generosity, compassion, empathy, peace, nonviolence, environmental sustainability and social, economic and environmental justice'. Their programme is much less bland than this might sound: they have very specific policies about social, economic, gender, and environmental justice.

### Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur at Beyt Tikkun

I found my time with them both interesting and challenging, in a variety of ways. I've been to Jewish Renewal services before, so I wasn't completely surprised by the Chasidic elements of instrumental music, dancing, and personal contact, but the contrast with the decorous and restrained atmosphere of our Rosh Hashanah service at St. Mark's was very striking. It made me reflect on the roots of our reserve—my own included, of course!

I wondered whether the difference might be partly due to the family origin of most Scottish Jews being in Lithuania, where the tradition is supposed to have been sternly intellectual; they looked down on the more emotional Poles as lacking in rigorous thought and relying on emotion. Or perhaps it's the tradition of Reform, which in earlier days reacted against the chaos and dysfunction of Orthodox services with an exaggerated austerity. Whatever the reason, the contrast is extreme, so my reaction was mixed: I couldn't help envying the Tikkun congregation the joy and spontaneity they could express in the services, even as I couldn't wholeheartedly join in.

The second challenging aspect was how directly personal the services were. We were directed at various points to discuss with one another what we could ourselves promise to do by way of repentance and renewal in the next year. The 'High Holiday Repentance Workbook 2017', written by the indefatigable Rabbi Lerner, demands of its reader answers

to very specific questions about nourishing ourselves in our work, our relationships, our spiritual wellbeing, our physical selves, and of course the energy we're giving to tikkun olam, healing and repairing the world. Rabbi Lerner insisted that we should use the 2½-hour afternoon break to make precise our commitments for the coming year. I don't think very many people actually did that – I didn't – but the fact that he could press us so hard on it struck me as a big difference with our community.

The service was personal in other ways, too. I was really moved by a very direct confession, given as a kind of talk, by a young man in the community, the current holder of the post of managing editor of Tikkun magazine. This direct personal witness went a long way, for me, towards breaking down the barriers of formality that we often hide behind on Yom Kippur.

The third big difference was how explicitly engaged the liturgy was. The *Al Cheyt* (confession) required us to repent not only for failings in our personal lives but for the inadequacy of our activism in defence of minorities, of the poor, and of the environment, and for our failure to challenge the materialism and callousness of the societies we live in.

### **Lessons for Sukkat Shalom?**

Of course I'm having no trouble imagining the reaction of most Sukkat Shalom members who have made it this far into my account. The whole thing sounds completely horrifying, right? It runs completely counter to our traditions of personal and communal reserve, restrained and decorous services, and minimal political engagement. Since it's unimaginable that we could be anything like this, are there any lessons at all in what Beyt Tikkun does?

For me, this is a hard question. Here in Edinburgh, our Liberal community has to welcome everyone Jewish and provide a safe place for them—for many or most of us, there's nowhere else to go. But does safe have to mean comfortable? I myself have often worked over the years to find consensus on difficult issues, so this is not a criticism from the outside, and I have no specific ideas about how or whether to change. I certainly don't want us to become another Beyt Tikkun! But I certainly would like us to take on some of the personal commitment, engagement, and spontaneity that I saw last month in Berkeley.

**Maurice Naftalin**



## Chair of World Union for Progressive Judaism visits us

We were delighted to welcome Carole Sterling and her husband Jay to Edinburgh on the 6th and 7th October at the beginning of Sukkot. Carole, who is Canadian, is the Chair of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), the international umbrella organisation for Reform, Liberal and Progressive Judaism. The WUPJ, founded in the 1920s, spans 40 countries and aims to promote Progressive Judaism in places where individuals and groups are seeking authentic, yet modern ways of expressing themselves as Jews.



Nick and Kate Silk hosted a wonderful Erev Shabbat meal for Carole and Jay, who also attended our Shabbat service the next morning at Christ Church Morningside. This service was conducted by Rabbi Mark Solomon, who'd adjusted his schedule to be able to be with us. We were pleased to share what was also Carole and Jay's 40th wedding anniversary and enjoyed the warmth and informality of their visit, as well as the chance to learn about and connect with the WUPJ.

## From our cheder

### Yom Kippur



On Yom Kippur, at the Minhah service. we read the Book of Jonah and at our afternoon Children's Service there was a lively re-enactment of this dramatic and perplexing story with the help of these engaging props. Don't be surprised that the boat looks as if it's setting sail on the North Sea rather than the Mediterranean – though Portobello is just a stone's throw from Joppa.

## Musical contribution

For the Cheder, Rebecca Wober has put together some tunes on paper for singing, most recently Hashiveinu with the theme of 'return', which is strong at this time of year, and a beautiful melody at any time. Here it is for all to share.

### Hashiveinu

Return us oh Lord to you and we shall return  
Renew our days as in the days of old

Ha - shi - vei - nu A do nai ei - le cha v' na - shu - va

8  
Cha deshya me-i nu k' ke - dem Cha deshya me i nu k' ke dem

## Letter from California

I have been living in Palo Alto (home to Stanford University) since May and fly back to Edinburgh, with the witches, on Hallowe'en. Six months in California in the time of Trump has everyone buzzing with thoughts of the End of Days, Gog and Magog, Armageddon. Zecharia spoke of the end of the world coming to pass on Sukkot, and as I write this on the last day of Sukkot I wonder.....

California is burning. Just 50 miles north of San Francisco the vineyards, homes, redwood and oak forests of Sonoma, Napa and Mendocino are being incinerated and 25,000 people have been evacuated. The air is thick with smoke and people are walking around wearing respiratory masks, schools have been cancelled and there is a warning to keep children indoors. My daughter has a friend from Sonoma who arrived on her doorstep with only the clothes she was wearing, her dog and her cat. We have watched the devastation caused by hurricanes with the friendly names of Irma, Nate and Jose as they swept away infrastructures, homes and people's livelihoods, making roads impassable and hospitals unusable. There was a very big earthquake in Mexico - and on it goes!

As Trump teases and plays with 'little rocket man' will his legacy, we wonder, be a nuclear attack on the west coast of the US? In San Francisco, people are wondering if the nuclear missiles of North Korea could actually be targeting this area. If so, the fires burning just now would be nothing by comparison. It reminds me of being here in the eighties when the fear of nuclear war with Russia was at its height and my children were taught to go out into the schoolyard and hide under tables in case of attack. people's livelihoods, making

roads impassable and hospitals unusable. There was a very big earthquake in Mexico - and on it goes!

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Out in the Mojave Desert, two hours in a jeep and an hour of walking into the Canyon, we set up camp. This was a Vision Quest, a day and a half alone, fasting but drinking water out there high up in the Canyon, sleeping on the ground. I took my tallit, prayer book and Shabbat candles for the Friday night alone. It felt close to the angels under the desert stars, as though there was nothing separating the heavens and the earth.

The Pacific Ocean is only forty-five minutes west of Palo Alto. A place of solace and joy with nothing more healing and peaceful than

walking along the

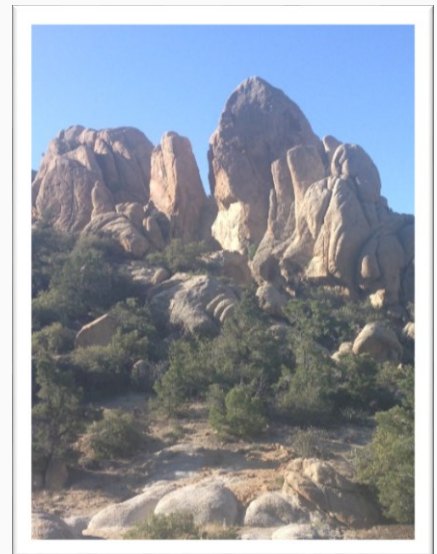
beach to the accompaniment of the waves and surf and the companionship of seals, pelicans and little wader birds.

Time in Berkeley along Telegraph Avenue is to go back to the days of the hippies and the sixties. An abundance of Katmandu tie-dye shops, hookah pipes, body piercing salons and yet, as everywhere, cafes with people absorbed in their Apple computers

sipping americanos, cappuccinos, macchiatos. Some things have become universal.

The great joy of my life here is volunteering at Zen Hospice in the Guest House, a six-bed Victorian house, transformed into a beautiful home for people who are terminally ill and dying, and at Laguna Honda Hospital in the hospice and palliative care floor.

You might wonder what joy could be found there? It is in being present with no agenda, just sitting by the bedside. There is often a spaciousness and authenticity and we (the



volunteers) are simply being a witness; often, over the time the residents are with us, we become friends. Many of the people have been homeless, addicts, lived on the streets, alienated from families and friendless. They come to the care of Zen Hospice and find that they are loved, treated tenderly, listened to with caring attention and perhaps find a new value and respect for themselves in this lifetime. I have also been teaching Mindfulness for Caregiver Education Courses, helping caregivers meet challenges, find resilience and learn skills to support themselves and others. It has been a great blessing to be so privileged.



**Hephzibah Plotkin**

## Sukkat Shalom Contacts

### Community Phone – 0131 777 8024

This phone number sends voicemail to members of the Contact Team

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