

SUKKAT SHALOM

EDINBURGH LIBERAL JEWISH COMMUNITY

Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community, was founded in March 2004 and we became affiliated to Liberal Judaism in September 2004. We are now part of the new Movement for Progressive Judaism (MPJ), formed from the union of the Liberal and Reform movements (<https://progressivejudaism.org.uk>). Progressive Judaism in the UK and Ireland is part of a global movement of 1.8 million people across 50 countries. It brings together timeless Jewish tradition with the diversity, richness and values of the modern world. At its heart is a commitment to every individual, couple and family being able to have full and equal participation in synagogue, community and Jewish life. We are proud to be part of the Progressive movement.

At the time of writing (August 2026) we have 155 adult members, 26 associate members and 58 children. We hold regular erev Shabbat and Shabbat services, we have discussion groups, a cheder (religion school) and an 'Exploring Judaism' class for those wishing to learn more about Judaism, often with a view to conversion. More details of all these activities are described in the following pages.

We are exceedingly fortunate to have Rabbi Mark Solomon as our Rabbi, for more than twenty years. Rabbi Mark lives in London and visits us once a month and for festivals, as well as leading services and classes online. In addition to serving as our part-time Rabbi, Mark is also Rabbi of the Leicester Progressive Jewish Congregation, Convenor of the Liberal Beit Din within MPJ, and senior lecturer in Rabbinic Literature at Leo Baeck College, the Rabbinic training college for Progressive rabbis.

We are always looking to involve more of our members in the running of our community. Members of Council (our governing body) are aware that it can sometimes feel daunting to volunteer to help. Please do so! The more of us who are involved, the better for all of us, as individual members and for the overall health of our community. As Rabbi Tarfon said, "You are not required to complete the task, but neither are you at liberty to abstain from it".

CONTENTS

(Control + click on title to go to heading)

[Organisation](#)

[Our Aim and Values](#)

[Membership](#)

[Safeguarding](#)

[From Cradle to Grave](#)

- [Birth](#)
- [Bar/Bat/B'nei mitzvah](#)
- [Marriage and Civil Partnership](#)
- [Funerals](#)

[Services](#)

[Welfare](#)

[Cheder \(Religion School\)](#)

[Adult Education](#)

[Jewish Status and Conversion to Judaism](#)

[Other General Information](#)

- [Communications](#)
- [Library](#)
- [Data Protection](#)
- [Contacting us](#)

[Sukkat Shalom and Israel Palestine](#)

Appendix

- [Associate Membership](#)
- [Bar/Bat/B'nei mitzvah](#)
- [Marriage and Civil Partnership](#)
- [Funerals](#)
- [Welfare](#)
- [Cheder Principles](#)
- [Jewish Status and Conversion to Judaism](#)
- [Summary of Key links](#)

ORGANISATION

Sukkat Shalom is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO, no. SC035678) and the business of the community is run by our Council, who are also the trustees of the community. Members of Council are elected at our AGM and further information can be found in the [organisation section of our website](#). A document describing the expectations of Council members can also be found [on the website](#).

Minutes of AGMs can also be found in the organisation section of the website, as can our community's [constitution](#). (Some areas of our website require a password, which can be requested by emailing webmaster@eljc.org.)

[click here to return to contents page](#)

OUR AIM AND VALUES

[Our aim and values](#) can be found on our website. They are copied below:

Our aim

Our aim is to sustain our community and continue its development through the provision of services and activities which embody our values and Liberal Jewish identity and which embrace the wide diversity of our members' faith, practice and support needs.

Our values

- We provide a modern and relevant interpretation of Jewish life and practice and we respect and embrace the diverse ways in which people express their Judaism and engage with it
- We are warm and welcoming and offer a friendly hand to all those who want to share in Jewish companionship, worship and study
- We particularly value difference and pride ourselves in embracing diversity in gender, race, age, sexual orientation and ability / disability. We are as welcoming to single people as we are to couples and families
- We nurture and support those within our community who are vulnerable or in need of help and we endeavour to ensure that financial circumstances are never a barrier to full participation
- We are committed to the pursuit of peace, social justice and care for the environment
- We seek to play a positive role within wider society and the world at large

- We welcome non-Jewish partners at our services and events and embrace them as part of our social network
- We commit ourselves to building our community through mutual respect, regardless of our differences

[click here to return to contents page](#)

MEMBERSHIP

To be a full member of our community you have to be recognised as Jewish according to the Movement for Progressive Judaism (MPJ). MPJ recognises anyone as Jewish where either parent is Jewish and the person has been brought up as Jewish, as well as where someone has converted to Judaism.

We also have Associate membership. This is open to anyone who is not Jewish but would like to be formally associated with our community, be that a partner of a member, someone who is converting, or someone who just wishes to show their support for our community. Associate membership status was formally agreed at the 2019 AGM, and details of the formal resolution which explains more details of Associate membership are in the [appendix](#).

We have a membership fee which is agreed each year at our AGM. At the time of writing (August 2026) it is £280 per person, with the membership year being from September – August. The Associate membership fee is half that of the full membership. However **one of our founding principles was that we would never refuse membership to anyone on the basis of the membership fee** and a confidential discussion with our Treasurer has always meant that a mutually acceptable agreement can be reached to ensure that anyone who wishes to become a member can do so.

We also have a reduced rate for those on certain benefits and a reduced rate for students who wish to formally join our community.

[click here to return to contents page](#)

SAFEGUARDING

Sukkat Shalom recognises that the welfare of all its members and visitors is paramount, and that all persons have the right to protection from all types of harm or abuse. We have a formal Safeguarding policy on these welfare concerns; the policy contains an appendix which gives details of how the policy is applied. Within the appendix are also links to other documents including our Complaints procedure and the Council Members Code of Conduct [The current version of the Safeguarding policy](#) can be found on our website.
[click here to return to contents page](#)

FROM CRADLE TO GRAVE

As a community we celebrate all life-cycle events:

Birth

A naming ceremony for a new baby is a very moving family occasion and we are happy to arrange this on members' behalf. While the Movement for Progressive Judaism may be able to assist with putting you in touch with a professionally qualified Progressive mohel who can perform a brit millah, there are few mohelim who now come to Scotland. Several members have found that the Edinburgh Circumcision Clinic (<http://circumcisionclinicedinburgh.co.uk/>) – which is actually based in Glasgow – offers a very good service.
[click here to return to contents page](#)

Bar/Bat/B'nei Mitzvah

Preparation for a bar/bat/b'nei mitzvah is a big commitment to Jewish learning for the young person and their family. Prospective b'nei mitzvah are expected to have attended cheder for the preceding years but as the date approaches extra support will be needed. This will consist of sessions with the Rabbi, be that during his visits or via Zoom, as well as support from parents or from other members who will help the young person to conduct part of the service on the big day. We have produced fuller guidelines about what to expect in the lead-up to, and on the day of, a b'nei mitzvah, which can be found in the [appendix](#). The Movement for Progressive Judaism has also set up *Ketuvim*, a national b'nei mitzvah programme designed for children from small and medium sized communities.

We are also happy to provide similar support to adults who, for whatever reason, did not have such an event at the usual age.

[click here to return to contents page](#)

Marriage & Civil Partnership

Our Rabbi, Mark Solomon, can conduct Jewish marriages and, at the same time as conducting the Jewish marriage ceremony, he is authorised in Scotland to register the couple in a civil marriage. In order for Rabbi Mark to officiate, both partners must be Jewish. For the avoidance of doubt, Rabbi Mark is able to conduct both opposite-sex and same-sex Jewish marriages and to register both opposite-sex and same-sex civil marriages.

To date, Rabbi Mark hasn't been asked to register a civil partnership at the same time as conducting a religious marriage, but this is also possible too. Further details of the legal aspects of this are contained in the [appendix](#).

Where only one partner is Jewish, Rabbi Mark may be willing to participate in a mixed faith marriage blessing, but this will need to be preceded by a civil wedding (which can't be conducted by Rabbi Mark). Community lay readers are also happy to conduct a mixed faith marriage blessing.

Where Rabbi Mark officiates at a wedding or mixed faith blessing, members make an individual arrangement with him as regards his fees and other expenses.

[click here to return to contents page](#)

Funerals

We can provide both burial and cremation services for members. We are able to assist with all the necessary arrangements and we have a formal arrangement with William Purves Funeral Directors, who we would recommend as the funeral director of choice. William Purves offer a reduced rate for funerals arranged through our community. We may also be able to help with the ritual of taharah (ritual washing).

We have reserved plots in the new part of the beautiful Dean cemetery (the section with an entrance just off Queensferry Road and Dean Path). These plots can also be used for the burial of ashes following a funeral service at the crematorium.

Arrangements can be made for members of the same family to be interred in the same plot or an adjacent plot, and a non-Jewish partner can be buried in the same plot as a member. While we have not been asked to conduct a woodland burial, there are woodland burial sites in and around Edinburgh and we would be able to officiate at a woodland burial.

We also try, where possible, to assist with the funeral arrangements of (Jewish) non-members.

Details of funeral arrangements, including appropriate fees, are in the [appendix](#).

Should you wish to speak to someone about funeral arrangements, please e-mail burials@eljic.org or leave a message on the community 'phone (0131 777 8024). [click here to return to contents page](#)

SERVICES

Our services are a mixture of in-person, Zoom and hybrid services. In-person and Zoom services are led by Rabbi Mark or lay readers, while hybrid services (services that are conducted in-person but also broadcast on Zoom) are only led by Rabbi Mark. Service times vary for erev/kabbalat Shabbat services (they can be at 6pm, 6.30pm, 7pm and on occasion 8pm) while Shabbat services are at 11am. We also have Havdalah services to mark the end of Shabbat, and festival services. Details of all our services are published in the various reminders sent out to members, and [details are also on the website](#).

Our in-person services are at one of the two venues we use for these services, Blackford and Grange (formerly Marchmont St Giles) church centre (Kilgraston Road, Edinburgh EH9 1TZ) and St Mark's Unitarian church (7 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2DP).

[click here to return to contents page](#)

WELFARE

Should anyone need help, please either send an e-mail to our general email, contact@eljc.org or leave a message on the community phone (0131 777 8024). While we have limited resources, we will always do our best to help and have links to e.g., Jewish Care who may also be able to offer assistance. Rabbi Mark can also make welfare visits on his visits to Edinburgh (depending on his schedule) and speak with members via 'phone calls.

We also have a general WhatsApp support group which offers mutual advice and assistance between members.

Further details of how we help each other are in the Welfare section of the [appendix](#).

[click here to return to contents page](#)

CHEDER (Religion School)

We have an active cheder which meets on a Saturday morning roughly every two weeks during the school year. The cheder is run by two senior teachers and supported by an enthusiastic group of teachers. Children of members and Associate members from ages 3 – 12 are welcome. Details of classes are communicated to cheder parents. The principles on which cheder is run are detailed in the [appendix](#).

[click here to return to contents page](#)

ADULT EDUCATION

During his time as our Rabbi, Rabbi Mark has always held adult education classes. He currently holds “Tea & Talmud” and “Philosophy” discussion groups, and we also have weekly and monthly member-led study groups. Full details of all classes are in our newsletter and reminders, which are sent to both members and non-members who sign up to our mailing list.

Many of our members join education programmes run by the Ark synagogue (<https://www.arksynagogue.org/>).

[click here to return to contents page](#)

JEWISH STATUS AND CONVERSION TO JUDAISM

“Judaism is not transmitted genetically but culturally and within families through example and influence. The process of transmission is one of education in the broadest sense, so that what is transmitted is not merely knowledge but beliefs and values, attitudes and ideals, and above all a sense of identification and commitment.” (From the document “Liberal Judaism and Jewish Identity”, 2005. This is one of a series of pamphlets from the Rabbinic Conference of Liberal Judaism, that was published by Liberal Judaism as part of its “Liberal Judaism in Practice” series.)

We have an active conversion class run by Rabbi Mark. The process for conversion to Judaism normally takes at least one year and typically up to two years. During this time those wishing to convert are expected to attend the ‘Exploring Judaism’ classes run by Rabbi Mark, to attend Shabbat and festival services and to become involved in our community.

The formal conversion process is overseen by the Movement for Progressive Judaism (MPJ), and details of the process and other associated information can be found on the MPJ (<https://progressivejudaism.org.uk/>). Once a person has attended the Exploring Judaism classes for some time and registered their intention to convert with MPJ, Rabbi Mark will ask them to take out Associate Membership by completing a form that can be obtained by e-mailing membership@eljc.org.

In January 2022 we produced a summary of the process which we give to those interested in converting. A copy of this is in the [appendix](#).
[click here to return to contents page](#)

OTHER GENERAL INFORMATION

Communications

Sukkat Shalom has a website (www.eljc.org/), is on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/Sukkat-Shalom-Edinburgh-409490615745959/>). Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/sukkatshalom_edi/) and while we used to have an X (formerly twitter) account, this is no longer active. You’re encouraged to use and contribute to all of them.

There's information about many of the topics in this Directory on the website, and information on current services and events. There are also other sections such as 'Jewish Edinburgh and Scotland', and songs that we use in our services. You do need to be registered to access some parts of the website; registration is free to all members of the community.

Our newsletter team produces a weekly email "What's On" of current information and events and our newsletter, Etrog, goes out by email every three months (a print version is available on request).

Library

We have a small library which is at St Mark's church. Members are welcome to borrow books from the library.

Data Protection

Our 'privacy notice' details how we handle members' data and our approach to data protection. The privacy notice is on the website [\(link to our privacy notice\)](#).

Contacting us

If you wish to contact us, please either send an e-mail to contact@eljc.org or leave a message on the community phone (0131 777 8024). We also have a number of specific e-mail addresses, as below:

Chair – chair@eljc.org

Treasurer – treasurer@eljc.org

Council members – council@eljc.org

Secretary – secretary@eljc.org

Cheder head teacher – cheder@eljc.org

Funeral enquiries – burials@eljc.org

[click here to return to contents page](#)

SUKKAT SHALOM AND ISRAEL PALESTINE

As is the case in many Progressive Jewish communities, members of our community hold differing but equally strong views about Israel Palestine and about the role of British diaspora Jews with regard to it. We are strongly committed to avoiding conflict and division within our community but would also like to be able to achieve mutually respectful, honest discussion of difficult topics which are too important to ignore. The following is taken from the section “Where we stand on the Middle East” on the “Our Purpose and Values” page of our website:

[The Sukkat Shalom position] on Israel [is the one] that has led to the most discussion and where people have expressed the most divergent views. Some members simply wish us to say that we support the State of Israel. Others urge that we include a statement in support of the rights for Palestinians and Arab Israelis as a first principle in our engagement with the Israeli State. ... Nevertheless we commit ourselves to building our community through mutual respect, regardless of our differences.

At this current time, it is even more important that we maintain these principles.

[click here to return to contents page](#)

APPENDIX

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

The membership category of Associate Membership was formally approved at the AGM held on 17th February 2019. The resolution passed at the meeting was as follows:

(1) 'Associate status' shall be established from the date of this resolution subject to the restrictions noted in 7A and shall be subject to the additional requirements below.

(2) The rights granted to those with associate status shall be all the rights enjoyed by members except the right to vote in general meetings, be elected to the council, or to receive certain religious services identified by the Council where such a person is otherwise ineligible to receive them for religious reasons.

(3) An ordinary annual subscription for 'associate status' shall be payable set at a rate of one-half of the sum payable by members.

(4) (a) Associate status shall be mandatory for those participating in the Exploring Judaism programme.

(b) The annual subscription for associate status shall be waived for a period not exceeding 24 months from the date the person is or was admitted to the programme.

(5) The right of the Council to regulate admission to associate status shall be identical to that laid out in the constitution for membership at 10-12.

(6) The power of the Honorary Treasurer or the Chairman noted in the constitution at 17 to accept from new or existing members a lower annual subscription on the terms that such a reduction shall be reviewed on an annual basis shall extend to those being admitted to or those with existing associate status.

(7) That the process established in the constitution at 21 for the expulsion of a member shall be applied identically to those people who have been admitted to associate status.

[\(click here to return to Membership section in the main section\)](#)

BAR/BAT/B'NEI MITZVAH

This guide has been prepared to help parents/carers (henceforth the term 'parent(s)' is understood to include carer(s)) of b'nei mitzvah children who are approaching bar/bat/b'nei mitzvah (BM) age with some of the practical details of BM planning. It was first produced following feedback that such a document would be helpful, and is intended to be a 'living' document in as much as if there are any aspects not covered, the document will be updated to include them. It has been written with those children who are at our religion school (cheder) in mind, but the general principles apply to anyone thinking of having a BM.

First Stages

Prior to any plans being made, the first stage in BM planning is to have a discussion with Rabbi Mark. This initial discussion is best had 2 or 3 months prior to the child's 12th birthday, but should really be no later than the child's 12th birthday. In parallel, it is often helpful to have a discussion with one of the two Religious Affairs co-ordinators (Maurice Naftalin & Nick Silk) who are responsible for the Sukkat Shalom services calendar and who can advise on some of the more practical aspects of the BM. They can also help answer such questions during the course of the year prior to the BM service.

During the initial discussions with Rabbi Mark, it is possible that what some may consider sensitive topics may be discussed, for example, whether a child has learning difficulties or to what extent Jewish rituals are observed at home. In all such cases, the purpose of asking such questions will be to allow Rabbi Mark to tailor his teaching to ensure the best experience for the BM. Any such discussions will only be had with the parent and, of course, the parent should always say if they feel uncomfortable with having such discussions and/or if they think them inappropriate.

Eligibility

To be BM at Sukkat Shalom, at least one parent must be a member of our community. The child must have been a regular attender at our cheder for a minimum of two years. There will always be exceptions, e.g., if a family moves to Edinburgh immediately prior to the child reaching BM age. In such cases, this should be discussed during the initial discussions with Rabbi Mark.

In cases where an Associate member is in the process of converting and they have a child who they wish to be BM, a discussion should be held with Rabbi Mark before any arrangements are made.

All adult full members can also have a BM ceremony should they so wish. Since this document has been prepared specifically for those children of around 13 years of age, while many of the questions answered will also apply to adults, any adult wishing to have a BM should discuss this with Rabbi Mark in the first instance.

Age of the child at the BM

The BM will typically be at least 13 years of age when they are BM. It is usually the case that they are BM a short time after their 13th birthday.

Date of the service

Since Rabbi Mark is only with us once a month, and this is typically the last Saturday of the month, this is typically when most b'nei mitzvah services are held. However, if you have a specific date when you wish for the BM to be held, Rabbi Mark may be able to accommodate this if he is given enough notice, and if suitable premises are available. This should be discussed during the initial discussion with Rabbi Mark, and subsequently with Maurice Naftalin and/or Nick Silk.

Rabbi Mark will discuss with the child and family the different possible readings from each weekly portion, and give them a choice in selecting the section to be used for their BM. This is usually around 15–20 verses in length.

There will always be some dates where it is not possible to have b'nei mitzvah, such as on certain festivals and when Rabbi Mark is on holiday. As above, this can be discussed during the initial meeting with Rabbi Mark

Venue

Sukkat Shalom strongly recommends that the BM service is held at St Mark's Unitarian church, which is our usual venue. This is not just for practical reasons – we have the Ark, service books etc at the venue – but also because the venue itself is well suited to holding formal services. Having said that, it is possible for the service to be held at an alternative venue. In such cases this should be mentioned in the initial discussion with Rabbi Mark and thereafter with Maurice Naftalin and/or Nick Silk, and Charles Raab, our senior warden.

Where an alternative venue is requested, the parents of the child are responsible for organising the booking and confirming its suitability with Rabbi Mark and Charles Raab. While we will do our best to help ensure that, e.g., the scroll and prayer books are transported to the venue, it is the ultimate responsibility of the parents to ensure that everything required for the service is at the venue.

BM lessons

In the year prior to a child's BM, they will typically have regular online lessons with Rabbi Mark. These lessons are arranged with Rabbi Mark and are generally held weekly after school for half an hour. The detail of the lessons and their timing will be discussed and agreed with Rabbi Mark during the initial discussions.

It is not mandatory that children have lessons with Rabbi Mark and lessons with other people such as relatives, or other Rabbis, can be held instead. In such cases, this should be discussed with Rabbi Mark to ensure that the 'alternative teacher' knows what is required.

If the child is not yet able to read Hebrew correctly, the lessons will include a crash course in Hebrew reading. In this case, lessons should begin a year before the BM date. If the child can already read Hebrew correctly, lessons should begin around 9 months before the BM date. Lessons will focus on reading, understanding and, where agreed, chanting the portion and associated blessings, as well as writing a d'var Torah on the portion. Some other prayers might also be taught, time permitting.

Expectations prior to the BM

It is expected that the child and parents will regularly attend services in the year leading up to their BM, and that the child will engage with their teacher so as to participate in the BM service to the best of their ability. We hold both in-person and online services, and each Shabbat there is always at least one service, be that an erev Shabbat or Shabbat service. (Details of all services are in our weekly reminders.) While it is not expected that the child will attend all services prior to their BM, it is expected that they will be familiar with the format of a Shabbat morning service when they are BM.

On the Shabbat weekend of the BM itself, it is usual that the family attends the erev Shabbat service if we have one, and particularly if there is a festival service.

Options for enhancing the meaningfulness of the occasion

Some families enhance the occasion of a BM by twinning either with a less well-off child in another part of the world (e.g. Eastern Europe or Israel, see <https://ortuk.org/who-we-support/uk/twinning/>), or with a child who perished in the Shoah (see <https://www.yadvashem.org.uk/twinning/bar-mitzvah-and-bat-mitzvah-twinning-project/>).

We encourage children and families to add an ethical dimension by choosing a 'mitzvah project' in the months leading up to the BM. This might be done through the synagogue, in consultation with the people responsible for welfare, or through an outside organisation like school, Scouts, etc.

Practice before the service

It is strongly recommended that the BM has a formal practice, including reading from the scroll, prior to the BM service. Since Rabbi Mark is only with us for one weekend each month, this usually means that the practice takes place on the morning of the service itself, normally at 10am, with the service starting at 11am.

The service itself

The basis of the service is a 'standard' Liberal Judaism service, although this can be modified to incorporate aspects which are particularly meaningful to the BM. This will be discussed with Rabbi Mark both during the initial meeting and subsequently in the year leading up to the service. Our services are conducted using the Liberal Judaism siddur (prayerbook), Siddur Lev Chadash. The siddur has five different introductory prayers and the child and family can choose which of these five introductory prayers is used. (After these introductory prayers, the format of the service is standard.) The actual participation of the BM in the service will depend on the child's abilities, and this will be agreed with Rabbi Mark. It typically includes reading from the Torah – some children wish to chant their torah portion rather than read it; this choice is entirely down to the child and their family – giving a d'var torah (a short introductory talk prior to reading from the Torah which is about the actual reading itself and the child's thoughts on the reading) and saying the BM prayer (a prayer in which the BM affirms their Jewish heritage), but may also include leading part of the service too. We are confident that we can ensure a meaningful BM, whatever the child's abilities.

Some of the practical aspects of a BM service are:

- While we typically use our prayerbook, Siddur Lev Chadash, for the service, some families like to produce a short booklet which has the Torah and Haftarah readings in, and others like to produce a booklet which has the whole service in it. Both of these are possible, and should be discussed with Rabbi Mark and subsequently Charlie Raab
- There are various traditions which can be incorporated into the service:
 - Presentation of the tallit to the BM at the start of the service
 - Passing of the scroll across the generations – from grandparents to parents to the child. This is where the family comes onto the bimah and typically takes place prior to the child reading the BM prayer
 - Parental address, where a parent addresses the child (this is a chance for the parent to tell the truth about the child!)
 - Presentation by the Chair of the community to the child (this will always take place)
- Where the service is held at St Mark's it will be hybrid and broadcast on Zoom. Where it is held at other venues, we would always hope that the service can be broadcast on Zoom, but this will depend on factors such as the availability of WiFi at the alternative venue. The Zoom feed can be recorded and made available to the family after the service for download
- Usually all the mitzvot (honours) at the service are available for the family. These include both 'speaking' and 'non-speaking' roles:
 - Opening and closing the Ark
 - Holding the Torah scroll
 - Hagbah (elevating the scroll)
 - Gelilah (undressing and dressing the scroll – this can be done by a younger sibling)
 - Having an Aliyah and saying the blessings before and after a portion (usually in Hebrew). In addition to the BM child, two other aliyot are normally available.
 - Reading the Haftarah with the blessings before and after; this is often done by a parent.

Kiddush

After the service we always have kiddush – the blessings over wine and bread (challah). There is no requirement for families to provide anything else after the service, but it is typically the case that they wish to provide some food afterwards

so that all those present at the service can help to celebrate the occasion. We are happy to help with the arrangements for this where the service is held at St Mark's. Where the service is held at an alternative venue we are happy to advise but would expect the family to be responsible for all the arrangements. Our minhag (custom/protocol) is that we don't serve any meat or shellfish at communal events.

Security

Where the service is held at St Mark's, we will ensure that people are 'on the door' to welcome those attending the service. Where the service is at an alternative venue, we would ask that the family confirm security and welcoming arrangements.

Costs

All costs associated with a BM service are typically paid by the community. Only when exceptions are made, e.g., using an alternative venue, preparing a service booklet, etc., will the family have to pay. Otherwise the only cost that families have to incur is should they wish to provide a kiddush after the service.

Safeguarding

As is the case with all of our activities, we need to be aware of our Safeguarding policy (which can be found on our [website](#)). There is a specific section in the policy related to cheder and within that there is a note concerning the teaching of BM lessons:

Some bar/bat mitzvah lessons may involve 1:1 teaching. Where this is the case, as with other 1:1 teaching, such lessons should always be conducted with a parent present or where they can hear the teaching of the lesson. This applies to virtual lessons as well as where the teacher and child are physically present

Where BM lessons are being conducted under the auspices of Sukkat Shalom i.e., where Rabbi Mark (or, should it be the case, any other member of Sukkat Shalom) is teaching BM lessons, then these requirements must be adhered to. It should also be emphasised that there is a joint responsibility on both the teacher and parents to ensure that these requirements are adhered to.

Hopefully stating the obvious

We hope this paragraph isn't really required, but just to confirm:

- Where only one parent is a member of Sukkat Shalom, this has no impact on any aspect of the preparation or service, and both parents will be fully involved throughout
- All friends and family are welcome to attend the service. School friends are very welcome
- As is the case with all our services, photography or filming isn't allowed during the service. However, a recording of the service can be made by Zoom. Photos can be taken during the rehearsal and, time permitting, after the service

[\(click here to return to b'nei mitzvah section in the main document\)](#)

MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

The law in Scotland (which is different to that in England) is such that it is the Rabbi who registers that a couple are married according to civil law at the same time as a religious marriage ceremony is undertaken. It is not mandatory that a civil marriage, or partnership, is registered at the same time as a religious ceremony.

The law regarding opposite-sex marriage has been in place for many years and Rabbi Mark has long been authorised to register such civil marriages. In 2022 Rabbi Mark conducted the first same-sex Jewish marriage in Scotland and he is now also authorised to register opposite-sex civil marriages.

It is also possible for civil partnerships to be registered according to civil law at the same time as a religious marriage ceremony is conducted. We have not, to date, been asked to do this but Rabbi Mark is also authorised to register civil partnerships.

The authorisation process that allows Rabbis to register civil marriages and partnerships is overseen by the Jewish Council of Scotland (JCoS, formerly SCoJeC).

[\(click here to return to marriage and civil partnership section in the main document\)](#)

FUNERALS

Because we are a small community we do not operate a burial insurance scheme included in the synagogue subscription. As such the cost of a funeral, cemetery fees etc. are met by the estate of the deceased.

The Rabbi is paid the standard Movement for Progressive Judaism rate for conducting a funeral. The Rabbi is also paid travel expenses for conducting a funeral unless the Rabbi is already in Edinburgh. These costs, which apply to members and non-members alike, are invoiced by the Rabbi to the Funeral Director who then recovers them from the estate of the deceased.

Where we are asked to conduct the funeral of a Jewish non-member, a fee equivalent to two years' membership is charged in addition to the fees above.

[\(click here to return to funerals section in the main document\)](#)

WELFARE

We have a variety of ways in which we help each other. Where we are contacted directly by members we will do our best to help. Rabbi Mark is able to have confidential discussions with members, and there are formal and informal ways that members keep in touch with each other. These are detailed in the table below.

What do we have / do?	More details
Keeping in touch – WhatsApp group	This is a group that any member who wants to sign up to can do so. It is a forum for general chat and also a self-help group, where members ask for help they may need e.g., shopping, advice on tradespeople etc. etc.
Help from Rabbi Mark	Rabbi Mark is available for members to contact him as required. Rabbi Mark's contact details (phone and e-mail) are published in our reminders and in Etrog, our newsletter
Council taking the lead on specific items	This doesn't happen very often but, for example, Council members between them contacted all members on several occasions during the covid pandemic to see if there was any help the community could provide
Access to Jewish Care	We have contact with Jewish Care who are available to provide members with specialist help / advice

Our general help line (e-mail and phone)	Our general help line is there for members (or indeed non-members) to contact us about anything, including requests for help / support.
Informal member to member contact	It is important not to forget that many of our members help each other on an individual basis

[\(click here to return to welfare section in the main document\)](#)

CHEDER PRINCIPLES

The following was adopted by the Sukkat Shalom Council at its meeting on 13th December 2018:

Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community runs a religion school (cheder) according to the following principles:

- There will be up to two Senior Teachers who are responsible for running the Cheder sessions, and for the welfare and safety of the children and other teachers. One of them will act as Lead Senior Teacher, being the first point of contact for all inquiries and questions concerning Cheder from within and outside of the Community, and for liaising with the Council. If neither of these teachers are members of Council, and no other teacher in Cheder is either, one of these teachers may be co-opted onto Council
- The Senior Teachers are responsible to the Council, via the Chair of the community. Any concerns, issues etc. that the Senior Teachers have are discussed in the first instance with the Chair
- All teachers have to be 'disclosed' and operate in accord with the Safeguarding policy
- Any concerns that a parent has with the running of the cheder are discussed in the first instance with the Lead Senior Teacher
- Only children of Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community members, or those actively participating in the Exploring Judaism (conversion) class, are permitted to attend cheder
- The main focus of the curriculum taught to all children is Prayer Book/Synagogue Hebrew and Judaism– i.e., the study of Jewish practice, Torah, festivals, traditions etc.

[\(click here to return to cheder section in the main document\)](#)

JEWISH STATUS AND CONVERSION TO JUDAISM

The document below was produced in January 2022 to help those thinking about converting to Judaism with Sukkat Shalom. While the text refers to Liberal Judaism, and we are now part of the Movement for Progressive Judaism, and indeed we know that the two protocols for conversion that were previously used by the Liberal and Reform movements are being combined, we have kept the 2022 document in this directory for the moment since the general procedures and principles are still correct. Some of the links below are to Liberal Judaism documents; at the time of writing (August 2026) these are still active and have been retained, again as the principles within the documents still apply.

Procedures in relation to people interested in conversion to Judaism

Sukkat Shalom

Edinburgh January 2022

As a Liberal Jewish congregation our prospective converts follow the procedures set out by Liberal Judaism (LJ) see [here](#) and in more detail in this [leaflet](#). These notes are intended as information for people interested in conversion and also for members of Sukkat Shalom, who may be acting as “buddies” for prospective converts.

First steps

The prospective convert should be given information about us and about Judaism, and encouraged to read the information on the LJ web site. At this stage we would expect them to attend services and other cultural and social events at Sukkat Shalom. They would also be encouraged to get their own copy of the prayer book *Siddur Lev Chadash*. An introductory interview with our rabbi (Mark Solomon) would then be scheduled at one of his visits to Edinburgh or via zoom.

The rabbi will then advise the prospective convert about the next steps and provide them with advice, suggestions and further study material, if appropriate. This might involve attending the exploring Judaism classes that he holds weekly on zoom or in person on his visits to Edinburgh.

Registration

The next stage is to apply formally for conversion by completing the form G1A along with their intended sponsoring rabbi (Mark Solomon again) and G1B for their own statement. It should be made clear to the prospective convert that they can

decide when they are ready to proceed to this. In the case of people who have had no previous encounters with organised Judaism we would not expect to receive an application until they had attended several Sukkat Shalom events and this would normally be over a period of around 3 months. If the rabbi accepts the applicant they are registered as converts with Liberal Judaism, at the Montagu Centre to whom the forms are sent.

On submission of forms G1A and B to the Montagu Centre, proselytes receive a letter requesting payment, normally half at that time and half upon completion, but other arrangements are possible, as are reductions in case of hardship, e.g., for students or those on low incomes. Fees are currently £520 and £320 for confirmation of Jewish Status – see [here](#) for details of when this applies. A proportion of the fee goes to Liberal Judaism for administrative costs, another portion goes into a fund to assist small congregations with proselyte instruction, and a portion is remitted to us.

On registration with LJ proselytes will complete an application to become Associate Members (AM) of Sukkat Shalom. When an AM is registered with LJ, no AM fees are payable for their first two years as an AM.

The learning process will consist of the following

- Exploring Judaism classes
- Instruction in basic Hebrew (at present by zoom classes organised by the Ark synagogue in London)
- Recommended reading

What we expect of converts during the learning process

- Regular attendance at classes
- Regular attendance at our services (except under exceptional circumstances). If this does not happen the conversion process may be delayed
- Jewish partners are required to become members of Sukkat Shalom before the candidate registers officially, i.e., by completion of form G1A and B, except in exceptional circumstances and with rabbinic consultation

Once the learning process is completed

- After an appropriate length of time for study and practice (usually around 12–15 months) the convert can expect to be asked or to ask if they would wish to go through the formal conversion process. Arrangements will then be made for them to travel to London to attend the Rabbinic Board or do so via zoom. Proselytes are required to submit two set essays one month prior to the interview with the Rabbinic Board as specified in the [LJ leaflet](#)

- B'rit Milah is generally required for male proselytes and should be arranged by the proselyte to take place some time prior to the Rabbinic Board. In certain circumstances the requirement may be waived, and this should be discussed confidentially with the rabbi
- Mikveh is optional in Liberal Judaism, although it is strongly recommended as a helpful and inspiring ritual. There is a mikvah located at the Sternberg Centre in North London, and a visit, with the rabbi in attendance, can normally be organised to take place on the same day as the interview with the Rabbinic Board. The visit to the mikveh is organised by the proselyte by contacting the Sternberg Centre, and a £15 fee is payable at the time of the visit

Once a proselyte is accepted by the Rabbinic board

- They become members of Sukkat Shalom and pay their dues (with any reductions for hardship negotiated with our treasurer, as is our arrangement for all our members)

What converts can expect from us

- Classes from Rabbi Mark
- Welcome at all of our events
- If they wish it, mentorship from a member of our congregation **who can act as a buddy** to help answer questions. Arrangements will be negotiated on an individual basis, usually at the time they complete the forms for LJ and become AMs. It is intended to be flexible and informal, maybe just meeting for lunch to see how the person's studying is going
- Elementary Hebrew reading lessons – and they should be expected to either attend these (see above) or get to an appropriate standard by some other means

[\(click here to return to Jewish Status and conversion to Judaism section in the main document\)](#)

SUMMARY OF KEY LINKS

The table below shows links to the main documents relating to our governance.

DOCUMENT	LINK
Constitution Held on the website	constitution
Council List of Council members, on website (this is password protected)	List of Council members
Aim and Values Held on the website but also reproduced within this document	Website link: Our aim and values Link to copy in this document
Safeguarding Policy Held on the website	Safeguarding policy
Privacy Notice How we deal with data and comply with GDPR, on website	Privacy notice

[click here to return to contents page](#)