



Committee Reports for The Belsize Square Synagogue Annual General Meeting 8pm, Tuesday 6 June 2017

HON SECRETARY'S REPORT - ANNETTE NATHAN

As I write this, on a cold February evening, the AGM seems a long way away. But I feel warmed knowing that last week the Synagogue was buzzing with the presence of over 1,000 London children who experienced our Holocaust Memorial Day for Schools Event. Every year Henny Levin and Sue Leon arrange this extraordinary event. We are indebted to them and to all the other volunteers who give up their time to educate and enlighten students about the darkest of times.

Going back over the last year, we had a successful Purim service and celebration, and the highest ever attendance at our Second Night Seder.

In May another regular event in our Synagogue calendar, the Israel Dinner, was given a makeover with a new name - *Celebrate 68* and new venue - our beautiful sanctuary. It was a huge social and financial success. In June at our 2016 AGM Jackie Alexander was voted in as Chairman. I know I speak for my fellow Honorary Officers, the Executive and The Board when I say how delightful it is working with Jackie.

Maxim Vengerov and friends delighted us in September with a gala concert and the music continued into October with our High Holyday services. We had record Synagogue attendances

but we also had the highest ever viewing figures through BelsizeLIVE.

In November we celebrated Shabbat UK followed by the BMG supper quiz and then in December the Chanukah Market proved another community winner with all generations in the shul over the weekend having a good time and raising just under £10,000.

The music committee were back in action on January 22nd with a delightful Vocal Concert in honour of Holocaust Memorial Day and that brings us full circle with HMD for schools, mentioned above.

This is just a snapshot. Please read the reports for a far broader insight into our thriving community. Thank you to everyone who has contributed in whatever way to make these events, activities and services possible, from singing in our choirs, doing security, working in the Synagogue Office, caretaking and so much more.

A new committee was formed this year. *Reut* (meaning Friendship in Hebrew) will support the work of our Community Care Worker Eve Hersov. The aims are to reach out to members who are in need, by training and coordinating a group of volunteers, to encourage visits to the elderly, coordinate a meal

delivery service to those in need and to help to provide pastoral care.

We also have two new youth leaders; welcome back Zoe Cowan and a warm welcome to Melanie Nathan.

Those of you who have been to Shabbat morning services will have seen our play area which is now out every week to offer entertainment for our very youngest friends. You might also notice (if we do it right!) a badge wearing Board member present at every service, available to welcome new members, visitors and answer any of your questions.

At the AGM Vera Pollins will retire from the Board after 30 years of service. She joined the Board in 1987 and became a member of the Executive in 1995. Vera continued a line that was started by her father, also a lifelong member of the Board and Honorary Treasurer. We have so much to thank Vera for and I would need an entire leaflet to list all the areas of BSS life she has been involved in. On a more personal level we have been partners on the grocery stall for about 25 years and more recently co-organisers of the Chanukah Market and since I became Hon Sec she has been my mentor, adviser, and trusted confidante. Thank you Vera, for everything.

FACILITIES COMMITTEE - DENNIS NATHAN

Once again our spiritual home is in good shape. This past year again has seen very few major problems. We took on a few projects to upgrade the building including redecoration of the entrance hall, stairwell, library and synagogue offices, replacement of some lights with LED fittings, and improving the drainage by the entrance.

Like other premises we suffer from the effects of wet wipes and similar products being put down toilets. In particular our disabled toilet, which relies on a motor to push through the waste. Unfortunately a blockage meant we had to replace this and at £500 this is expensive so please be aware what you flush down the pan.

We have a great team in Gordon, Paul and Jelena, and have the invaluable support of Lee and the office staff to whom we are again indebted and I cannot stress enough what a great job they do on our behalf. Last but not least thank you to committee members Michael Chester, Paul Fraylich and Peter Leon for sharing the load.

EDITORIAL & COMMUNICATIONS EMMA BROOKES

We are grateful for all support as we continue to work on our three main methods of communication:

Our Congregation is now a bi-monthly publication, slightly longer to ensure no content is lost. Ruth Rothenberg works hard and makes editorial decisions so that all submissions are included. We also decided that paper copies should be sent to all members, while an electronic version remains available, so everyone can read it as they prefer.

News From The Square is put together and monitored by Lee Taylor in the office, who ensures that events are publicised in the week they happen.

The website continues to be updated by Hilary Curtis and Yohele Heller keeps our Facebook presence updated. We are continually discussing ways to improve our social media presence.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE - ELIZABETH NISBET

The Committee would like to thank all our professional staff for their dedication and commitment to developing the Jewish experience of our members. Particular thanks are due to Head Teacher, Jeanie Horowitz, who continues to guide our cheder from strength to strength by her imaginative programming ideas and hard work in bringing these ideas to reality. Our thanks are also due to the Rabbi for his continuing commitment to developing education at Belsize Square and for his stimulating talks to Adult Education, and to Cantor Heller for the coordination of the B'nei Mitzvah programme. We would also like to thank Alyson Denza for her work with the Youth Choir. Thank you also to all the teachers, tutors, parents and volunteers who have contributed to the continuing education of our members over the last year - our education programme would be much diminished without your efforts.

I would also like to single out and thank in particular those of our lay leadership who have supported our professional staff and taken on their own projects and made the last year particularly special. There were three educational events over the last year that really stick in my mind as truly transformative to our educational efforts and could not have taken place without the unstinting generous efforts by key lay leaders.

Firstly, I'd like to mention the trip to the Cambridge Genizah, organised by Claire Walford (who also organises the regular Sunday Morning discussion group) which was extremely stimulating.

Secondly, I'd like to celebrate our youth involvement in the Shabbat morning service on 4 March 2017, where we welcomed back to the bimah 25 young members of the Community in Year 9 who celebrated their B'nei Mitzvah in the last academic year. This uplifting event demonstrating BSS's commitment to our youth and the future of the Synagogue was co-ordinated by Cantor Heller, who also trained the young daveners. Our thanks are especially due to Joe Hacker who helped train the leyners and to Leah Hurst for organising the whole project and enthusing all with her passion for the event.

Leah was also responsible for making the youth choir weekend of 25-27 March 2017 happen at all. We welcomed 35 members, including their youth choir and parents and clergy, of the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue in Berlin and they came to participate in the Shabbat services, the Cheder dinner, Cheder on Sunday morning and a

wonderful concert on the Sunday evening. Thanks are also due to Alyson Denza for her work with the both the BSS and the Pestalozzistrasse Youth Choirs to put together such enlightening performances during Shabbat and at the concert – it was no easy task but the result was worth all the effort. Thanks to the Simon Cutner who coordinated the youth activities for the two choirs, to all the families who hosted Berlin youth choristers and to the BSS parents who allowed their children to participate.

My own thanks are due to the Education Committee. I look forward to working with you again to create an exciting new year in Jewish education.

Finally, we look forward to next year which will be full of many stimulating and inspiring events. If you have any ideas of programmes that you would like to be involved in organising or events that could enhance our efforts, please get in touch via Lee Taylor in the office. If you can recommend speakers for the adult discussion group, please speak directly to Claire Walford. If you can help at cheder or would like to be involved in any way, please get in touch with Jeanie Horowitz.

Adult Discussion Group:

This goes from strength to strength and has had another wonderful year filled with learning, questioning and debating. The group is not short of enthusiasm for discussion be it on Philosophy, Jewish history, Judaism, Morality and ethics, Israel, Israeli politics, Trump, Corbyn and political events of the day. On some Sundays, the synagogue library, is jam packed with everyone bringing their own experiences and opinions to further enhance the topic of the day.

Highlights of the year have included a group outing to view the Cairo Genizah documents at Cambridge University library. Seeing ancient documents from a draft of Maimonides' Guide to the Perplexed, Isaac Luria's signature, children's Aleph Beit primers to a mother's letter to her son complaining about the same things mothers complain about today, is an experience to be recommended for all.

We have had many notable speakers, such as Dave Rich, deputy director of communications at the Community Security Trust (CST) talking about 'The Lefts Jewish Problem', Jonathan Paris, a former member of the shul and political analyst talking about Trump's Doctrine for the Middle East, Mia Hansenson, Gross of René Cassin

talking about Modern day slavery and Professor Sammy Smooha, Professor of Sociology at the University of Haifa and recipient of the Israel Prize, currently on sabbatical at SOAS, Department for Middle Eastern Studies.

Rabbi Altshuler has continued to teach The Great Philosophers and the Jewish Response for the first session of the morning this past year. Having started with Plato in September 2015 we are now discussing Martin Buber and his contemporaries. There are so many great Jewish thinkers yet to discuss that we will be continuing this into 2018.

Arrangements for a unique 'Behind the Scenes' Israel trip from 7-13 June are well underway where we will meet well-known politicians, journalists, rabbis, academicians, historians and students.

Adult discussion is open to anyone - there is no charge, no commitment and no obligation. Just come whenever you want or if the topic interests you. If you would like more details or want to join our weekly email list contact Claire Walford on: claire.walford@yahoo.com or call 078029393740.

Introduction to Judaism Classes:

Led by Rabbi Altshuler, this weekly Monday evening class is for everyone - those choosing to become Jewish (currently 18 students) and Jews who want to extend their knowledge and understanding of Judaism. The year course covers God, Jewish history, life cycle events, the Festivals, kashrut, Israel, Hebrew and so much more.

Interfaith Learning:

This year's four interfaith learning sessions with Rabbi Altshuler and Rev Nicholson of St Peter's, focused on life cycle events from birth, circumcision, baptism, confirmation, bar and bat mitzvah, conversion, marriage, careers and death and mourning. Congregants of St Peter's outnumbered us but for all those present every session was very enlightening. Shared learning leads to better understanding of the other and leads to friendships that would not otherwise develop. Next year promises to be just as good so do come along.

Cheder:

There are currently 85 children between Years 1-10. Compared with last year this has fallen by 20, due to a very small Year 1 class of 5 children entering and very large year 8 class from last year leaving and not returning for GCSE. We have combined Years 1 and 2 which has worked out quite well. Our classes are averaging at 9-11 children per class.

Every primary class has an open morning where the parents attend cheder and then meet with Jeanie to share their impressions. The parents are generally satisfied with the progress their children are making, but they are encouraged to bring issues that need to be addressed to Jeanie's attention.

Jewish Studies GCSE:

There are 2 students registered to sit the exam in May, the last who have studied the old syllabus. We have 6 who will sit the iGCSE in 2018. Once the exam is over in June, the year 10 students receive teacher training, in order to prepare them to be teacher assistants starting in January of Year 11.

Hebrew Programme:

Year 1 is learning Hebrew, mainly orally, through games and pictures with letter recognition and an introduction to reading. Year 2 begins to learn Hebrew reading. Year 3 reviews letters learned in Year 2 and learns to read phrases related to their Jewish studies lessons. Years 4, 5 and 6 learn Hebrew in year groups but have time to work in ability groups within the class. In Years 5 and 6, we ensure that children who require more individual help are receiving it ahead of their preparation for B'nei Mitzvah. Many of the teenage teaching assistants help out with this programme. Years 7 and 8 learn Hebrew in the second lesson through Siddur, dialogue and reading with meaning for the students with a higher level of Hebrew.

Festivals:

We celebrate the Festivals by creating an active, educational, but most importantly, enjoyable learning environment. This year we assembled Purim packages for 16 elderly members and our Cheder families delivered them. All the children made hamantashen and did a printing workshop. This year for Pesach we will learn about the Haggadah in an interactive way. Shavuot will be celebrated with the community on Sunday 12 June.

International Trips:

No trips were organised this year, but the Israel trip which used to take place every three years is under review.

Staff:

We have had some challenges with staffing this year. One of our strongest teachers left in December. We have several long standing teachers who are very committed to the Cheder but recruiting new teachers has been a challenge. Our team of committed staff have been teaching at the Cheder for many years help make it the warm, creative and stimulating place that it is.

Communication:

This year Jeanie has continued to produce a newsletter twice a term highlighting the events that took place the previous half term and letting parents know about future events.

B'nei Mitzvah:

In 2016, we saw 25 B'nei Mitzvot. The program is coordinated by Cantor Heller and supported by Rabbi Altshuler, Jeanie and Chair of Education who meet half-termly to discuss various improvements to the programme and individual issues.

We now have several key practices in place to ensure the programme runs smoothly and so that the BM Tutors' role in their weekly one hour lesson is freed to spend time on teaching the trope (cantillation marks) and sacred texts. Each young person meets with the Rabbi two months ahead of the date in order to prepare their D'var Torah.

The Kabbalat Shabbat Chat is still a success. The idea started as an informal activity on the 2nd Friday of the Month from 5.30pm and is followed by attendance at the Friday Evening Service with the whole family at 6.45pm.

High Holydays Services:

This is a most valuable 'jewel' in our crown and envied by other communities. The children really enjoy participating and get a lot out of their experiences. The service attempts to involve all the children in the community, whether their families are regular attendees or not.

This year saw an excellent trio of High Holyday Services, superbly co-ordinated by Dilys Tausz and Alyson Denza and their teams. Special mention goes to the readers of the Torah and Haftarah (Isaac Sanders, Georgia Barclay, Mia Brent and Daniella Kobrin, Ben Hurst, Rebecca Nisbet, Maya Brookes, Jake Brass, Suzanna Freudenheim, Isaac Antscherl and Emma Fox) as well as the readers, the soloists and the youth choir who worked so hard to make the services memorable and enjoyable for all. Thank yous are also due to Michelle Heller and Louis Cheslaw who delivered the Address at each service.

New prayer books were introduced last year, illustrated by the

cheder children. These were well received and, because we were in receipt of generous anonymous donations, were printed professionally and are of a high quality.

The team of Jeanie Horowitz, Leah Hurst, Joe Hacker, Karen Kacynski, Alyson Denza and Dilys Tausz will meet straight after Pesach to discuss any new issues for 2017. Rehearsals for the 2017 High Holyday Services start again in June. Although this seems early, it is essential because it brings home to those who have to read Hebrew that they need to practise over the summer holidays and allows those who are teaching them to iron out any problems.

Kikar Kids:

The Children's Services continue to draw in children and parents on the first Shabbat morning of every month. Attendance for the under 5's service ranges between 10-20 children, and we now have a core group of parents who lead the services. Richard Pollins has taken over the running of this and is developing new ideas, including more role play and a wider variety of stories.

The 5-9's service has a new Siddur incorporating the main prayers from the Shabbat morning service, along with songs and discussion points. Although attendance is often low, we have had three successful Cheder Year group Shabbat services for Years 1-3. On these occasions, the children have led the Kiddush with their very own Cheder-made Kiddush cups and Challah cloths.

Over the course of the year, we have continued the tradition of Kikar Kids' Pot Luck lunches, every 2- 3 months. These follow the main service. Our High Holyday under 5's services are always well attended and are important for welcoming in non-members or infrequent attendees at synagogue.

PARENTS' ASSOCIATION - MANDY BRASS

The Parents' Association has had another good year with a committed membership readily available to help.

We have a class rep system, which means that we are able to communicate with all parents of children attending our cheder. We also provide relevant food at the various festivals throughout the Jewish calendar. For example, we are responsible for the goody bags for Simchat Torah, doughnuts at Chanukah and falafel and pita at Yom Ha'atzmaut.

The Committee Members are:

Paula Keve, Nicole Horwitz, Karen Kidson, Sasha Spencer, Sophie Cutner, Karen Kaczynski, Sarah Percival, Victoria Freudenheim and Emma Brookes.

The synagogue received a very generous donation of children's toys, books and items for our services. Toys and books have also been purchased for use on Shabbat mornings when there are no children's services

Finally we would like to a big thank you to Harry King, who, as part of the celebration for the BSS B'nei Mitzvah of 2015-16 on 4 March 2017, has made a beautiful Ark for our services, using his outstanding carpentry skills.

Youth Choir:

Auditions for all Cheder members from Year 3 upwards are held during the first half of the summer term. Successful applicants join the rehearsals immediately to prepare for their first performances at the High Holydays. The Youth Choir consists of Juniors (Yr 4-8)

and Seniors (Post B'nei Mitzvah), who rehearse separately but perform together. There are now 38 registered members (approximately half of Cheder!). The Senior Choir maintains its membership up to A-Level!

The Youth Choir's responsibilities are:

- To rehearse during Cheder on Sundays and at occasional additional rehearsals as required for concerts and special occasions
- To sing for Shabbat morning services when there is a Bar Mitzvah.
- To sing for the Youth Services during High Holydays.
- To sing at concerts and additional services as organised by the Synagogue Music team.

In the summer, seven members of the

Youth Choir visited Berlin to perform alone and with the Professional Choir at the 150th Anniversary of the Neue Synagogue and in December, 13 members joined the Pestalozzistrasse Youth Choir at their Shabbat morning service, and the final concert at the Lewandowski Festival. In March 2017, 35 members of the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue combined forces with BSS for an uplifting weekend of music and shared traditions. This collaboration with Berlin has led to some close friendships between London and Berlin and we look forward to continuing this relationship.

Singing in the Youth Choir is an important responsibility as well as an excellent education (musically and Jewishly), but it is also an honour. As you can see from the report above, it is also great fun.

MUSIC AT BELSIZE - PHILIP KELLER

Starting this year we have moved to a calendar year season for Music at Belsize and started our 2017 L'Dor V'Dor Programme with a very moving and innovative HMD concert that featured an array of BSS talent including Ben Wolf, members of our Professional Choir and our Cantor. The rest of the Season will maintain this theme as we look to bring young and old together in a Choral Festival in March and a Family Music Day in May. We look to develop programmes and present events that our congregation and their friends/family will enjoy and be inspired by and we appreciate the support of our community at all our concerts.

Undoubtedly the highlight of our 2016 Season was the concert that we held last September featuring violin virtuoso, Maxim Vengerov, and a number of amazing musicians that he invited to perform for us. The capacity crowd enjoyed the intimacy and intensity and amazing music and musicians and we are eternally grateful for Maxim's generosity in giving his time, talent and Ruach. Thanks also to Rabbi Altshuler for introducing his great friend Maxim to BSS and to Ella Altshuler for composing the transcendental work, "Reflections", composed for Maxim to perform on the occasion. Thanks also to Peter Petzal for masterminding the event.

Finally, I would like to mention our BSS musical luminaries; Music Director, Ben Wolf and Cantor Heller as well as the whole Music at Belsize Committee.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE - JOHN ALEXANDER

The Committee was reconstituted last year and I was appointed as Chairman. We have subsequently held three meetings.

The main purpose of the committee is to attract new members to the synagogue. To enable this we need to focus on marketing/selling and the promotion of the synagogue in conjunction with the communication committee. It is also important to ensure the application process for potential new members is effective.

2016 saw a net increase in membership of 19 adults and 4 children. There has been a concerted effort to ensure that children of members become adult members in their own right when they reached the age of 21. An analysis of joiners and leavers has taken place and there is no dominant reason for their moves although the largest single group of joiners are those in the Rabbi's Introduction to Judaism class.

The committee, in conjunction with the office, have initiated a number of actions to raise the profile of the synagogue to attract new members. An advert was placed in the Jewish Chronicle in November and Jewish News in December, specifically targeted at the non-orthodox, in the hope of attracting the attention of members of other synagogues looking to move. It had some success.

We are increasing the use of the synagogue's Facebook page and YouTube account to promote services, events, concerts and our music generally. A new information leaflet has been designed and is published weekly and handed out to visitors by those on welcoming duty at Shabbat services. It has a brief introduction to Belsize Square, details of the service and of forthcoming events. Children's toys and books have been acquired and are put out at all Shabbat services to make us more accessible to younger families.

We are reaching out to non-members who attend our premises for various purposes, e.g. Keren Nursery families, attendees at Kikar Kids and other services plus concerts and other events by putting them on our mailing lists and inviting them to services and events as appropriate. We're looking at ways of actively raising the profile of our ministers with articles in the press, attendance at Kikar Kids services and hopefully future attendance at Limmud.

We are looking at ways to involve the 25-35 age group. We have engaged with the Communication Committee which is designing a new leaflet to promote membership to visitors to our services and people moving into the area. We are also looking at ways of improving our IT offering.

I would welcome new members to the committee with fresh ideas and who are enthusiastic and prepared to actively participate in the work of the committee.

COMMUNITY CARE REPORT - EVE HERSOV

It is now nearly two years since I took on the role of Community Care Co-ordinator. Interestingly, the demographics have not changed over the past year and we still have 131 members over the age of 80 and 61 people over the age of 91.

Probably the factor that has helped me most in the last year is that with time comes familiarity and it is now easier for me to remember names, ages, where people live and any specific needs or contact that has been established. It isn't that I'd want to be quizzed on this ability, but it is useful to have a better working knowledge of who people are, their approximate age, health issues, and post code, as well as their interests and information about the people with whom they are involved and who may be their primary supporters.

My job has changed dramatically this past year. When I was hired the role entailed a range of social functions such as birthday visits and phone calls, involvement in the Edgware and NW3 monthly lunches, the recording of *Our Cong* for sight impaired members, and managing volunteers and Telefriends. There was also the more pastoral side of the role such as visiting members in need of assistance and providing support to families of congregants going through life transitions or health crises, and overseeing the Bereavement Support Group.

Over time more of my time has needed to be spent addressing the care-oriented aspects of the role, and it was no longer realistic for me to make birthday phone calls or visits. The number of older members experiencing ill health has increased, and my priority has remained with those members who have no family here in the UK that can assist them. There is no doubt that during this past year I have spent more time visiting people in hospital, liaising with health and social care services, acting as a "surrogate" family member for people who have no family in the UK, and often becoming a point of contact for concerned friends here and abroad when someone has been ill.

More time also has been spent assisting families with guidance about navigating the health and social care system, and being there to talk about the pros and cons of in-home versus residential support. It's been important to help people to gain perspective and information about dementia, sensory impairment, and issues around mobility and recovery, as well as the frustrating realities of bed-blocking, and the

considerable amount of time it can take to find a suitable residential placement. The hours I spend assisting peoples' friends and family is invaluable. I view it as an investment because I know that each person that gains new knowledge is apt to share it and help reassure and support other people.

The increasing amount of time I devote to working with friends and families here or remotely when they live abroad, also builds trust and helps us to operate in partnership, thinking very carefully about what might help improve the lives of some of our older members who may be feeling isolated, depressed, or cut-off due to sensory loss, mobility issues, confusion or the realities of outliving a spouse or close friends. Recently, Lee Taylor and I visited Natpoint, the company carrying on the computer project started by the Six Point Foundation enabling refugees to receive easy to operate touchscreen computers that have voice activated software and a bespoke menu of options such as Skype, email and live-streaming of services and cultural events, as well as free computer tuition. Already, since that initial visit I have been able to convince more members to take advantage of this wonderful programme.

This year marked the end of the recorded version of "Our Congregation." Although it was an emotional decision, it was an easy decision since we had completely lost our listenership. Deafness impacted heavily on the ability of older members to enjoy the audio format and ultimately brought about the end of an era. Many thanks to the wonderful volunteer "readers" and of course to Fritz Klopstick whose commentary brought great joy to the people in the recording studio and to the listeners at home.

I cannot end this year without acknowledging the support of Vera Pollins, who hired, oriented, advised and line managed me for my first year in the role. Suzanne Goldstein, since stepping down as Co-Chair, has now taken on my line management, and I owe many thanks to both, for helping me to understand everything "Belsize." Additionally, I owe thanks to every single member of staff at the synagogue, because everyone helps me both directly and indirectly. I feel very fortunate to work with

people who care about our members and the work I do, and take notice of when members may need support. Our congregation is extremely "connected" emotionally, and I consider myself lucky that members and volunteers phone, email or share a concern when they see me – letting me know if there is something that they think I might be able to help with.

Our older members are a unique group of individuals; proud, opinionated, strong, often fiercely independent, cultured and Continental. I have enormous respect for each and every one of them, and can appreciate their honesty, humour and that sometimes there can be a trend towards what some people might call stubbornness. I prefer to think of this as "strength," but understand that sometimes to help people to accept help or to try a new activity takes a team effort, and one that involves trying to find time to get to know people well, and to learn who in their life might help us slowly to incorporate positive change. I don't believe in ever giving up in the quest to help improve lives but the largest hurdle I face is time, and having to set tight priorities because peoples' needs will always outweigh my own time and resources.

BELSIZE MEMBERS' GROUP MARION NATHAN AND DILYS TAUSZ

With so many committees organising social events the BMG has been concentrating on holding one fundraising event per year along with the Members' Breakfast.

Our amazing and talented committee work so well together that those attending the Supper Quiz would not have known how much effort went into producing this brilliant evening, which was enjoyed immensely by all. Each year our menu becomes more ambitious - this year a tasty vegetable tagine and couscous followed by homemade cakes. The sound system worked much better so everyone could hear the questions and we raised £1,900, which is more than we achieved in previous years.

The New Members' Breakfast is now the Members' Breakfast and is a huge success. It provides a congenial forum to meet with our Ministers and Board members and for everyone to get to know each other better. The committee feel that it is so important for the members to feel they are part of the Belsize family. Behind the scenes the committee organises the welcoming rota for the Shabbat services which again helps to foster that welcoming atmosphere which is conducive to a spiritual experience.

BOARD OF DEPUTIES - ERIC MOONMAN AND ROBERT SACKS

Interfaith relations have figured highly in recent months. Visits have been made to a number of towns including Bradford where conversations were held with leaders of the Muslim community. An intensive schedule included meetings with Naz Shah MP, Imran Hussein MP and community organisations including the Bradford Council of Mosques and the Muslim Women's Council.

Campus

Following the publication of a UCL report on the disturbances during a Jewish talk in October last, our community leaders met the UCL Provost to discuss the contents and implications of that paper. The delegation led by the Board of Deputies included representatives from the Union of Jewish Students, University Jewish Chaplaincy, the Community Security Trust and the Co-Presidents of the UCL Friends of Israel Society. They together said: "We commend Professor Rees and UCL for a report that is thorough, detailed and balanced. We note that it recognises that UCL failed to protect freedom of speech and accepts that changes are needed to safeguard students. The report found that there was a deliberate and concerted effort to disrupt freedom of speech by student activists at London universities. The report makes far-reaching recommendations to strengthen procedures to guard against a repetition of such incidents in the future".

Other Calls

Board of Deputies adviser on medical issues Professor

David Katz held a series of meetings on the issue of Brit Milah while attending the AJC Berlin European Forum on anti-Semitism.

Creating a Trustee Board

The Board is looking to bring about a change of structure for its numerous meetings. A proposal is currently being discussed to replace the Executive Committee with a Trustee Board in order to widen the membership of the group responsible for the governance of the Board. It is proposed that the Executive Committee be removed from the Governance structure but that the number of trustees be increased.

National Holocaust Memorial

The plenary was addressed by Sir Eric Pickles MP with details of the proposed memorial and design submissions. The Holocaust Memorial and accompanying Learning Centre will be in Victoria Tower Gardens, at the heart of Westminster.

A UK Holocaust Memorial International Design Competition seeks to identify the best architectural talents. Consultation with public, Holocaust survivors and those working in the field of Holocaust remembrance and education as well as technical experts will play a crucial role in forming the final decision of the jury. You can see more information here: <https://competitions.malcolmreading.co.uk/holocaustmemorial/#shortlist>

SECURITY COMMITTEE - JUSTYN TRENNER

I am pleased to report a quiet year on the Security front. We continue to work to improve security on an ongoing basis and in response to threats to the community at large. For example, we have adopted improved controls on access to the building, monitoring of activities and dry runs of procedures. In the light of the use of knives as a common feature of recent attacks, we are strongly encouraging security volunteers to use the stab-proof vests acquired last year with CST support.

The few incidents that have taken place in the last year, fortunately, have

been readily managed and limited to the need to bar two individuals and remove two others for anti-social behaviour.

However, the challenge is that we must remain fully alert - an act of insurance that we hope will rarely or, hopefully, never be called upon. We are very grateful for the care and support we receive from the Metropolitan Police, ranging from a continued physical presence to rapidly responding to check suspicious vehicles or provide support in the case of the incidents mentioned above.

We are always looking to increase our panel of CST-trained volunteers. The CST training is free, rigorous, fun and useful both at Belsize and beyond; and appropriate for anyone from 17-70! If you are interested in helping please contact me or the office for more information.

Finally, and most importantly, thanks to all our many security volunteers but most especially our volunteer supervisors – the people you see most frequently on the gate waving you in or out and on whom we depend to keep us safe inside.

BelsizeLIVE - ANNETTE NATHAN

As there have been no major issues this year, we have not needed to meet, and any decisions have been made by email. That is not to say there have been no technical problems and I am grateful to be able to call on Lee (Taylor) and David (Pollins) who magically sort everything out.

We face two major challenges;

The Six Point Foundation who have funded BelsizeLIVE since its inception, will cease to operate from March as they will have distributed all the funds raised from the sale of the Otto Shiff Housing Association. The running costs and licenses are in the region of £2,500 per annum, and of course there are always unexpected maintenance expenses. It is regrettable that this is yet one more cost for the Synagogue to bear but the Honorary Officers are committed to continuing this project which brings our

beautiful services into the homes of those unable to travel to Synagogue due to ill health or other reasons.

The second issue is our reliance on the good old Internet! From time to time it crashes and a service is not available. It is regrettable for any service, but particularly when there is a special event like a Bar Mitzvah. For this reason we can never guarantee that a service will be streamed and while it is very frustrating, it cannot be avoided. Likewise when there is a specially choreographed service for example Simchat Torah, we cannot show the service because of the fixed camera.

I will end on a positive note and tell you that the viewing figures for the High Holydays were the highest ever. We received several letters from very appreciative members who can no longer get to the Synagogue but told us of the great pleasure of feeling part of our very special community. And that is what it is all about.



LITURGICAL COMMITTEE - JOE BROOKES

The Liturgical Committee remains one of the larger committees and in the last year has met three times.

We discussed at length the Shivah Siddur that is currently used and discussions are ongoing as to how this will proceed.

The Sifrei Torah of the Synagogue are in need of repair and restoration, this will be a long term project which will be of great benefit to the Community.

Services

These continue to be the main remit of the Liturgical Committee and, as with last year, members of the Committee have taken the lead in helping to organise these Services. Once again thanks must go to Pat Hirschovits for co-ordinating our Purim celebrations, Pat has decided to step down from this roll. Alasdair Nisbet again provided the lead for our highly successful Tikkun Leyl Shavuot, this will be repeated on Tuesday 30 May and all members and friends are invited to attend. Rabbi Altshuler and Cantor Heller led a very

enjoyable 2nd Night Seder with a good attendance. The High Holyday Services were the highlight of the year with the Synagogue packed to overflowing on Rosh Hashanah, Kol Nidrei and Neilah. Following discussion at Committee a concerted attempt was made to increase participation on Simchat Torah and thanks to the initiative of Cantor Heller the dancing around the Bimah was excellent and will be repeated going forward. On Succot, Rabbi Altshuler guided each member of the Congregation in shaking the Arba Minim and for 2017 it is hoped that more members of the Community will purchase sets and attend the Services.

Participation

There has been an increase in participation in our Services, thanks to our lay leaders both young and older. The Gabbaim have made a concerted effort to ensure that aliyot are spread around the Congregation and thanks to John Alexander inviting congregants to participate has seen new and older members feel more included in our Services.

B'nei Mitzvah Service

This Service was introduced by Rabbi Altshuler soon after his arrival. It is a chance for the previous year's B'nei Mitzvah to come back and participate as a group in the Shabbat Morning Service. With the 2016 cohort totalling 31 it was wonderful to see 23 of the young adults leading the entire Service – davening, leyning, having aliyot, chanting Maftir & Haftah, reading the Prayers for the Country and State of Israel.

The Service is a true reflection of the fact that the future of any Congregation lies with its youth and in our case the youth is flourishing.

Finally, a big thanks must go to our Rabbi and Cantor for their spiritual and religious guidance.

As ever, the committee exists to reflect the opinions of the greater community, so if congregants wish to raise issues at the Liturgical committee, please get in touch with any of the committee or via Chair, Joe Brookes or Vice Chair, Pat Hirschovits.

ISRAEL COMMITTEE - REBECCA TRENNER

This year, the Israel Committee is redefining itself. As the Israel Dinner Committee now works as a stand-alone group, the Israel Committee can explore new ways of fostering engagement with Israel. This has led to an exciting new focus.

The Israel Committee will be celebrating the dawn of Israel's 70th year by taking a more inclusive look at the best of Israeli culture, food, sport, technology and a bit of politics too. We wish to bring in our younger members to events and build on the enthusiasm that they experience in youth movements.

So far this year, we have hosted David Portowitz of the Jaffa Institute as an introduction to our community's charities. BSS has been a staunch supporter of the Jaffa Institute and its fantastic work for many years.

On Thursday 29 June (post exams and Glastonbury!), we will be hosting Baroness Jan Royall and Zachary Confino of UJS for 'Confronting Anti-Zionism on Campus- Staying Safe and Being Heard'. We warmly invite all our current university students, university bound students, parents and anyone who would like to hear the inside story of what went on in the Oxford University Labour Club anti-Semitism crisis and the aftermath. To any of our children who wish to engage politically on campus or who have concerns about how to deal with any situations they might confront, this talk will be unmissable.

In the works are a football clinic with UK based Israeli players, an evening of secret foodie addresses (the best of Israeli food culture now and what's coming next) and a talk from an Israeli tech entrepreneur. Dates to follow!

As always, the committee is always looking for new members with exciting ideas. Please get in touch if you wish to join.

CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE MICHAEL HOROWITZ QC

Following the resignation of our Chair, Leah Hurst, last year, the committee has been reconstituted. The current membership is Michael Horowitz QC Chair, Judith Farbey QC, David Kendall, John Abramson (co-opted). The new committee met on 6 December 2016. We agreed that our current membership is of an appropriate size and skill set (we are all lawyers). We also agreed that our current terms of reference were appropriate for the time being.

Marriage Ceremony Certification:

Currently, BSS conducts marriage ceremonies valid in English law pursuant to certification issued by Liberal Judaism who charge a moderate annual fee. John Abramson raised for consideration certification by BSS on its own behalf direct with the Superintendent Registrar under the Marriage Act 1949. The Chair produced a paper (available on request) contending that under the scheme of the Act the Board of Deputies and Chief Rabbi arguably could not resist certifying any formal application by BSS as a synagogue entitled to registration. We are working on this and will inform our members of any significant developments. We will continue with our current arrangement until further notice.

Regulatory Issues:

Guidance from the Charity Commission continues to flow and grow. The 2010 Charity Governance is up for review and went out to Consultation in 2016. We have set ourselves the task of reviewing current governance structures to check whether they are compliant with evolving standards. We will advise the Board of any recommendations hopefully during the current year.

YOUTH COMMITTEE - SIMON CUTNER

Since last reported there has been a complete overhaul of the youth offering at Belsize Square. Adam Nathan stood down as Chair of the Youth Committee and I was asked to take over. In September, Michelle Heller also decided to stand down as our youth leader. I would personally like to thank both for the work they have done.

In November I was delighted that I was able to appoint Melanie Nathan and Zoe Cowen as joint youth leaders. Both Mel and Zoe have a strong background in working with children. Both are teachers and Zoe is the leader of the largest Scout group in London.

One of the areas I was keen to focus on was the social offering Belsize presented. We all have very busy lives and notice of upcoming events is essential. With that in mind we established our 'Youth Sunday'. The last Sunday of the month would be set in stone as the day an activity for the youth of Belsize would take place. To

date, Pizza Making, Rock Climbing, Laser Quest and Bowling have been successfully arranged and enjoyed by a broad range of our youth members.

A new name for the youth of Belsize was created. A competition was held and the winning name was Belsize Squared, (or B²).

One of our main focuses this year is to have a good look at the way we run our Machanes. Over the past few years these have been split into older and younger children. Though without any doubt a lot of time and effort had gone into organising them, their success has been a little hit and miss. With this in mind we have taken a completely new direction. Firstly rather than two small weekends away we will be holding just one, but for all ages. The general idea is that the older children (years 11+) will be running the activities, giving them a greater input into how the weekend is run. This will offer the older children the skills of organisation, leadership and

responsibility, and they can be a shining example to those who will look to run the camp in subsequent years.

The venue of Skeet House in Kent is one I have known for many years, having attended both as a child and as an adult, running numerous weekends away there in recent years. It is a secure, kosher house that can comfortably sleep up to 70 people in a fully catered facility. There is plenty of outside space including an assault course, tennis court and football field plus fully heated indoor swimming pool and art studio. It is, in a word, fantastic and I know that at the time of writing this report we are well on the way to getting a fabulous take-up! The camp is a highlight of the tremendous work Mel and Zoe have done thus far!

I am also pleased to say that we have a couple of new members on the youth committee, and are happy to accept more. Any thoughts, comments or suggestions are also welcome.

CEMETERY COMMITTEE - STEVEN BRUCK

Since Jackie Alexander passed the Committee chair to me last year, we have continued to work by email and telephone as much as possible. It has been agreed the committee will meet once a year unless otherwise necessary. The committee deals with matters which relate exclusively to the Synagogue and our burial and cremation arrangements, which can be very sensitive and personal to bereaved families. I am grateful to Brian Harris and Michael Brod for agreeing to join the committee. Calos continue to act as Funeral Directors.

My assumption of the chair of this committee coincided with my

appointment as vice-chair of the Edgwarebury Joint Burial Board, which includes our partners from the Spanish & Portuguese and West London Synagogues, and Liberal Judaism. The Board meets regularly to review policies, strategies and operational developments at the cemetery. We are also represented there by Henny Levin and Brian Harris, with Michael Brod as an alternate representative. Henny Levin and Dorothy White have also been our representatives on the Joint Operations Committee, which meets regularly with the cemetery director to deal with day to day cemetery upkeep.

The issues discussed are many and varied, ranging from personnel and budgets to grounds maintenance. As fully participating partners we are actively involved in the decision making process and inevitably there are matters arising over the year requiring substantive involvement. I am pleased to report that the underlying theme is of admirable and harmonious co-operation between four Jewish communities of varying religious complexions which is a model for the Jewish community generally. The cemetery is also very well maintained and the facilities have been progressively improved since we joined.

CHANUKAH MARKET 2016 – ANNETTE NATHAN AND VERA POLLINS

Another year and another successful Chanukah Market!

This year the major change was the introduction of the food court. A range of delectable delights were on offer surrounding sponsored tables in the Shul which also meant, much to the pleasure of our Ministers, that there was far less disruption to our beautiful Services. There was something for all palates; Mexican delights, Hot Dogs, baked potatoes, fish pie, fruit, bagels, doughnuts and in the hall where the stalls were situated together Sunday breakfast and tea with homemade cakes. Buskers entertained whilst guests enjoyed their meals and our Youth choir beautifully brought the weekend to a close.

Elsewhere there were lots of stalls and entertainment for the children and a relaxation area for people to enjoy various spa treatments on offer.

So many people helped us that it is impossible to say more than a general thank you to all our donors, sponsors and volunteers. However we are grateful to Cheryl Davies and Freddy Lehmann who both stepped up to help us with the planning. Also we thank our ever helpful caretaker Gordon who worked tirelessly to make our plans come to fruition.

It is of course wonderful that the Chanukah Market was a financial success but we were also thrilled that the atmosphere was so lovely and an enjoyable time was had by all our customers and guests.

So save the date – 3 and 4 December 2017!

The Chanukah Market committee will be well under way with their plans by the time this goes to print and would welcome any and all volunteers or suggestions to make your Market even more successful.