



Listen



Photo: Tea break at the quiz, held back in January. For more photos, please see page 6.

In this issue

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| From our Chair | 2 |
| Senior Warden's Report | 3 |
| Voices of the Holocaust | 3 |
| Holocaust Memorial Event | 4 |
| Alternative or Different Services | 4 |
| Quizzes | 6 |
| Sewing and Craft Group | 7 |
| Social Events | 9 |
| Diary | 16 |

From our Chair

Priscilla Dorrance

So much has changed since the last edition of Listen which came out in December 2019. We should have had an edition of Listen at the beginning of April but, with Covid-19, things were so up in the air it was difficult to know what should go into Listen. And, to be honest, I was so busy working out how the community could adapt to life in a pandemic, I didn't have time to think about Listen.

I hope everyone is coping OK with all the problems caused by the pandemic. We have been incredibly lucky as a community that no one has died. Nevertheless, many members of our community have suffered and are suffering. Some have had the virus (but fortunately have recovered). Others have had relatives and friends who have been seriously ill or died, which has been especially traumatic given the restrictions placed on funerals. Some of you have lost their jobs or been furloughed. Others of you are shielding and haven't been able to see loved ones. I don't think anyone hasn't been affected in some way by the virus and my heart goes out to all of you.

I fear it will be a long time until things are back to normal and we are going to have to adapt to a 'new normal'. The Council would like to know what you would like the new normal to look like.

One of the first things we set up was a telephone/email tree to ensure that everyone was being contacted on a regular basis by at least one person. Thank you very much to Marise Cohen for coordinating this and to everyone who volunteered to help contact people.

We currently have two Friday evening events on Zoom each month, one usually a more traditional Erev Shabbat service and

the other a discussion session. Are you happy with this programme or would you like some Saturday morning services? Should we be looking at streaming the services (e.g. via our website or our Facebook page)?

Socially, we have fortnightly 'Tea and Chat' sessions on Sunday afternoons, quizzes organised by Sarah and David Bernarde, and the Women's Reading Group is holding its meetings online.

We have a Shul Zoom account, which is available for members to use. For example, the steering committee of the MK Muslim and Jewish Women's Group are using it for their meetings.

On Sunday, 14th June at 3pm we will have our AGM on Zoom. I do hope that you will attend. Even if you don't have Zoom, you can attend via a phone link. After the formal AGM business is over, we will keep the 'Zoom room' open for general discussion. (For more on Zoom, see page 16.)

If you aren't on Zoom and would like to be, please contact me and I will put you in contact with someone who can help you.

In this edition you will find lots of photos of events that occurred before we were forced to shut our doors. I hope you enjoy the memories and that it won't be too long before we are able to see each other in person.

Senior Warden's Report

Henry Fried

I am often asked, "What does the senior warden do?" To list everything would be boring and wouldn't really answer the question anyway!

I am responsible for services – either taking them or ensuring that they are taken, which includes finding people to do 'meet and greet' and also wardens for Shabbat morning services to hand out mitzvot and help unroll the scroll etc. I'm also responsible for training people who may wish to take services. You may think that was a hint for you to volunteer – it was! Seriously, as a community we do need people to volunteer to help take services. I am also asked if services can be different – this is your opportunity to put your stamp on our services. Currently all our service takers are senior citizens and that does not bode well for the future.

Another responsibility is death and funerals etc which is obviously very sensitive, especially at the moment. Whilst, at the time of writing this, our community has not suffered a bereavement, the death rate amongst Jews has been some 5 times more than our number within the population would indicate. As senior warden I keep details of members' wishes which I have been told about and, whilst I understand how difficult it is to talk about this even to our nearest and dearest, it would help the shul considerably if you could pass on to me your wishes.

Note: since Henry Fried wrote this report he has decided to step down as Senior Warden at the AGM. Thank you very much to Henry for his work as Senior Warden over the past two years (not to mention the seven years prior to this as Chair). I'm very pleased that he said that he will continue to lead services. Ed

Voices of the Holocaust

Stan Cohen

A couple of weeks before the National Holocaust Memorial Day, some of us were very pleasantly surprised to be invited to the relaunch of the locally founded Holocaust Theatre in Education company. Members of the Synagogue had been involved with the group when it started up and thrived several years ago and then it disappeared from the scene. The company had put on several plays based on the real experiences of Jewish people caught up in the horror of the Holocaust. The plays, sometimes with music and poetry, were intended to describe graphically how the Holocaust was experienced so that young people, in particular, should be made aware of where hatred and prejudice can lead.

They toured schools and even appeared at the European Parliament and advised Downing Street on Holocaust education. They also performed at local Holocaust Memorial Day events.

Miriam Selwyn and I attended their first performance since reforming on 29th January and were pleased to reacquaint ourselves with Cate Hollis, their artistic director and founder, and also to meet other members of the company, including Mark Neil (the MK Poet Laureate) who, many of you will know, has written and performed poems at local HMD events, including this year's ceremony at the Rose in Campbell Park.

The group is applying for substantial funding to support its work in schools and communities across the country and to begin the transformation into a registered charity.

Previously we helped with advice and information and rehearsal space and it may

be that we will again be asked to help or to include the company in events that we might plan.

So watch this space and if you want to know more you can find them on Facebook: Voices of the Holocaust.

Holocaust Memorial Event 'Stand Together' at the Rose, Campbell Park, 27th January

Stan Cohen

Due to the need to make further savings because of more central government budget cuts, Milton Keynes Council decided not to organise its usual big event in the Council offices this year and instead to focus on the outdoor event at the Rose in Campbell Park.

Our choir, as usual, had been invited to participate and several members were able to attend to provide some songs and readings. Mayor Cllr Sam Crooks introduced and closed the event and there were also readings from a former Mayor, Debbie Brock, who is the chair of the MK Cenotaph Trust and Chris Roberts, who is a trustee of the same trust – a reminder of how important it is to remember both the victims of war and atrocities and the service personnel who gave their lives in those terrible wars.

The other contributor was Mark Neil the MK Poet Laureate whose poems inspire us all to speak out and stand together to combat racism, anti-Semitism, prejudice and hatred.

I think it is great that our local Council is still committed to encouraging Holocaust remembrance as a way of expressing cross party commitment to the values of

ensuring a free, respectful and democratic society... and that our choir is so committed to participating in events like this.

Alternative or Different Services

Stan Cohen

I began writing this article ready for the March Listen, but Listen did not happen and the Coronavirus pandemic did. I did not imagine then that our world would be turned upside down and that our services would be stopped and we would have to find other ways of praying and meeting.

Since then we have had Erev Shabbat services, studies, meetings and socials using the Zoom application and some of you may have tuned into other online services and events organised by the Reform Movement. At this moment, we have no idea when we might resume something like normal service (or services) and already are having to think about how we might manage the High Holydays in just a few months' time.

We will probably have to think creatively to ensure that, whatever the circumstances, the services provide the right mixture of prayer, music, thought and meditation to satisfy the spiritual and religious needs of our community. What I wrote in March I believe is still relevant so please read on...

Congratulations to Priscilla and Cheder for leading a family friendly, children inclusive Shabbat service on 1st February. Priscilla had already shown her talent for leyning (chanting) from the Torah and delivering a Drushah (sermon) so it should not have been a surprise that she could successfully lead a Shabbat service. It was also the Mental Health Shabbat and Priscilla and

Sarah Friedman gave us some sound advice and guidance on how to remain positive, and how to be helpful to others who might be in distress. Thanks to both of them for their thoughtfulness and to the Cheder children for participating so enthusiastically.

Henry Fried and I have been trying to encourage more members to have a go at leading services and preparing Drushot. Of course, the choir leads at least one Erev Shabbat service every year and Lou Tribus has twice led parts of a Shabbat service and will be jointly leading the Tu B'Shevat Seder with me later this week.

Late last year, when I responded to Henry Fried's invitation to lead services in 2020, I decided that I would try to do something different this year. In my first two Shabbat services I have been including prayers, readings and meditations from other parts of our siddur and from other sources. In the second service Lou Tribus led the Torah service and a discussion on the day's parsha.

As someone who has attended and led services for many years, I, too, can get bored or disenchanted by repetition. Those of us who attend services regularly want to get something out of them or we would not be coming, but it is probable that we all want or need something different.

For several years Marise and I have occasionally attended so called 'alternative' services at other synagogues. Those led by Rabbi Howard Cooper at Finchley Reform Synagogue have particularly inspired us. Here is what he has written about why he wanted to develop a different kind of service:

"A DIFFERENT KIND OF RELIGIOUS SERVICE?"

I became bored with conventional Jewish Reform services, and by bored I mean frustrated. To sit in a service and wait for something to happen – for something to turn up that's worth wanting – was in my experience, hugely frustrating. Why would you put yourself through that? Why would anyone? We know that that many hundreds of thousands of Jews – but it is the same in Christianity – have decided it is not worth putting themselves through the ordeal of waiting for something to turn up in services that's worth wanting.

What was I waiting for, and wanting? I suppose this waiting was for some new insight to be born, or some transformation of feeling, or some fresh insight into myself or life or holiness or God; or waiting for some moment of stillness, some space where an answer or response might arrive within that endless sea of words flowing around me.

So I had to create something, something more expressive, that I embraced and could speak about: some holiness or God; or thing that had people at the heart of it – the texts of our own lives at the heart of the Divine service."

And here is something written by Modern Jewish Renewal Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel but quoting one of the Chassidic masters known as the Kotzker:

"Even piety will not sustain the tedium of unlimited repetition. To preserve one's commitment with the intensity of its first ardour requires more than obedience. Surprise, spiritual adventure, and the search for new appreciation – all these are necessary ingredients for religious renewal."

These thoughts and ideas inspired me and gave me the incentive to do something different.

Our religious and spiritual life needs constant renewal and refreshment, at least mine does, so I hope that you will be happy to go on the journey with me and be prepared for the odd surprise and spiritual adventure in my services.

I hope, of course, to return to my plan as soon as circumstances allow.

Stay well and stay safe.

Quizzes

Priscilla Dorrance

Thank you very much to Sarah and David Bernarde for organising a very enjoyable quiz, back in January. The quiz raised £245 for the Shul. Here are a few photos from the event (see also the photo on page 1).



Since then, all our activities have moved online. In April, Sarah and David organised a virtual quiz on Zoom, which raised £120+ for Captain Tom and the NHS charities fundraiser. People participating in the May quiz were invited to donate to a charity of their choice. Here is a list of the charities people chose (apologies if I've missed some off):

- Alzheimer's Association
- Shelter
- Willen Hospice
- Leighton Linlade Cancer Support
- Salvation Army MK
- Cancer Research
- East Anglian Air Ambulance
- North London Hospice

Sarah and David have kindly agreed to organise another quiz in June.

Sewing and Craft Group

Sarah Friedman

Each month a group of us meet for a day of “needle” craft, be they knitting, embroidery or machine needles. The group is open to all who are interested and currently there are 27 names on the list though not everyone comes to each session and some only stay a few hours.

As a group we enjoy admiring others’ work and, where we can, we share skills and advice when requested. Everyone is very friendly; the hall echoes with chatter and laughter as we work. They say a picture speaks many words so I am including a good selection and, as you will see, there are different projects here on the go.

Jane and Diana are discussing not only the best way the fabric could be displayed as bunting, but how adding some yellow will make the end result shine.



Marise only began quilting a few months ago and is now already making her first pieced quilt for her granddaughter.



Suzie has been knitting amazing cabled cardigans for the family and in the new year will be working hopefully on a cover for the Torah scroll when it sits “undressed” on the bimah.



Sue lives in Giffard Park and has made some beautiful quilts. She is very particular and has a great eye for colour.





Sarah loves purple and is making this quilt from “left over fabric”. It will either be for a cousin’s daughter or go to “Momentum”, a charity that supports children with life threatening conditions.



Some people like to hand quilt as Lou is here.



Viv is the expert bag maker.



Note: the Sewing and Craft Group is, of course, not meeting at the moment. If you are interested in joining the group when it starts up again, please contact Sarah.

Congratulations

To Lois Charles on the birth of her grandson, Ezra Jack James Strawbridge, born 2nd March 2020, weighing 8lb 3oz, son of Barbara (Lois’ daughter) and Aiden Strawbridge.



Student Rabbi Elliott Karstadt

Congratulations to Student Rabbi Elliott Karstadt, who is going to be ordained in July. He has been appointed rabbi at Alyth. We wish him all the best.

Sadly this means that Elliott's last service with us will be on Friday, 26th June.

If we were meeting in person we would have had a special kiddush. As it will be on Zoom and we can't do a kiddush, please could people make signs saying "Congratulations" or "Thanks for your interesting drashot" (or whatever) to hold up at the end of the service. (A4 landscape would work best, as then we'll be able to see your face as well as your sign.)



Social Events

It seems like a long time since these events occurred, but I thought it would be nice to share photos from previous social events.

Chanukah

The Chanukah party was very well attended by people of all ages. Thank you very much to the Cheder children for their play, to the Choir for singing and to everyone who brought food to share.





Tu b'Shevat Seder

Thank you very much to Stan Cohen and Lou Tribus for organising the Tu b'Shevat Seder.



Purim party

As you would expect, there was lots of food at the Purim party, including some very delicious hamantaschen!



Thank you to the Cheder children for their performance.



Passover

Sadly, our Community Passover Seder had to be cancelled. Here are a few photos that members sent in, showing how they celebrated Passover at home and via Zoom.



New trees

Thank you very much to Marise Cohen for organising the planting of two new trees in our grounds: one is a Rowan and the other is a silver birch. Thank you also to Marise and Stan for very kindly going over every week during lockdown to water the trees and check the building and grounds are OK.



Streamed services

Priscilla Dorrance

When thinking about what services to organise, we decided to prioritise discussion sessions where there was more opportunity for members to interact with each other. However, many other reform synagogues are streaming services. You can find a whole list here:

<https://www.reformjudaism.org.uk/covid-19-information/synagogue-service-streaming/>

Radlett have asked me to let you know that you don't need to log in to their services. They are available on either their open Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/RadlettReform/>

Or their website

<https://www.radlettreform.org.uk/>

Other ones which have been recommended to me are:

Edgware & Hendon

<https://ehrs.uk/ehrs/live/>

and

Sha'arei Tsedek (Rabbi Shulamit's congregation)

<http://www.shaarei-tsedek.org.uk/webcast/>

Please let me know if you've participated in other synagogue's services and would recommend them. I will share your recommendations with the rest of the community.

For our Shul to operate well it's important that we have a Council which is full and strong. Currently all Council members retire at the AGM. If they are eligible for re-election and are willing to stand for another year they have to be nominated and voted in again.

Please email to Richard Assenheim your nominations for the nine core positions on Council:

Chairman

Vice-Chairman

Treasurer

Secretary

Senior Warden

4 Council members at large

Please note the rules regarding who may stand for Council. These rules prescribe that a nominee to Council:





1. must have been a member for at least six months;
2. must be in good standing with regard to payment of shul fees, and
3. must not be legally excluded from being a trustee of a registered charity.

If voting proves necessary, all members in good standing with regard to shul fees are permitted to vote, and voting will be carried out in accordance with the constitution.

AGM

Priscilla Dorrance

We will be holding our AGM on Zoom on Sunday, 14th June, starting at 3pm. Please do join us.



YOM CHAGIGAH &
AGM:
**TURNING CRISIS INTO
OPPORTUNITY**

Sunday 28 June 2020 1:30 - 5 pm

1:30 Opening Ceremony

**2:00 Panel: RJ and its Communities Response to Covid-19:
Successes and lessons learnt. How has this transformed us?**
with Rabbis Josh Levy, Jonathan Romain and Laura Janner-Klausner
Moderator: Bob Humphreys, Chair, FRS

**3:00 Panel: How can we capitalise on the successful increase in
volunteers' engagement and online participation now and post
Covid-19?**
with Rabbis Robyn Ashworth-Steen and Mark Goldsmith and
Charlotte Fischer (Citizens UK)
Moderator: Laura Solomons, RJ Board

4:00- AGM and election of new board members

To Register: [www.reformjudaism.org.uk/
chagigah/](http://www.reformjudaism.org.uk/chagigah/)

More Info: Chagigah@rjuk.org or
020 8349 5716



We want to understand more about the cancer needs of people in minority ethnic and faith communities. This is because research indicates people in these groups don't attend screening as often as they could, and their awareness of cancer services and support is lower than it should be.

That's why Community Action: MK and Macmillan are working together to help make sure everyone, regardless of their faith or ethnic group, can get the support they need when they're diagnosed with cancer.

So we need to hear about the cancer experiences and views of individuals and groups from ethnic minority and faith communities.

Can you help by sharing your experience?

To find out more or to get us at your group, get in touch.

 info@communityactionmk.org

 01908 661623

working together

**COMMUNITY
ACTION: MK**
promote·support·engage·involve

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

Diary

All events are being held on Zoom until we receive notice that we can hold in-person meetings again. The Zoom login details will be in the weekly MKDRS e-newsletters.

June

| | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--|
| Fri 12th | 7.30pm | DISCUSSION SESSION, led by Marise Cohen and Lou Tribus |
| Sun 14th | 3.00pm | AGM, followed by chat (see page 13) |
| Thu 18th | 12.30-2.00pm | WOMEN'S READING GROUP |
| Sun 21st | 4.00pm | TEA AND CHAT |
| Fri 26th | 7.30pm | EREV SHABBAT SERVICE, led by Student Rabbi Elliot Karstadt (please see page 9) |
| Fri 28 th | 1.30pm | REFORM JUDAISM YOM CHAGIGAH AND AGM (please see page 14) |

July

| | | |
|---------|--------|--------------|
| Sun 5th | 4.00pm | TEA AND CHAT |
|---------|--------|--------------|

How Do You Use Zoom?

Priscilla Dorrance

Zoom is a video conferencing program. There are other programs which do similar things. We've chosen Zoom for our Shul events simply because it seemed to be the one that most members were already using.

It is free to use and can be installed on computers, laptops, tablets and even smart phones. With the free version you can have unlimited 1-to-1 meetings and host group meetings (i.e. with more than one other person) for up to 40 minutes. We have bought the 'Pro' version for the Shul as it enables us to have longer meetings (up to 24 hours!).

Joining a meeting is easy. All you need to do is click on the link for the meeting, which you will find in the e-newsletter. You will be prompted to launch Zoom (if it is your first time using it, the prompt will be 'download and launch Zoom'). You may get a message saying 'Waiting for host to start meeting', which means that the meeting hasn't started yet. When the host starts the meeting, you will be asked for the meeting password (given in the e-newsletter).

Sometimes you may need to turn on your video or audio. You should find the buttons to do so in the bottom left hand corner of your screen (but it can vary with different devices).

If you don't have a computer, you can join Zoom meetings via phone, but obviously then you will only hear the meeting and won't get to see everyone.

I look forward to seeing you on Zoom!