

Report to LJ Council – 4th July 2017
At The Montagu Centre

Since the last meeting of the LJ Council on 25th April 2017, Rabbinic Conference has met twice. The May meeting at the LJS was followed by a presentation given by Professor David Newman of Ben Gurion University. Newman is a world-renowned expert in the field of Geopolitics, especially in the Middle East and his insights are very helpful as we navigate our responses to the politics within and around Israel, as well as in the UK.

The June meeting took place in Birmingham and we are very grateful to Val Harrison and others at BPS who made us so welcome and showed exemplary hospitality. Margaret Jacobi also arranged a visit to the Mingana Collection at Birmingham University for the afternoon. Everyone who went was fascinated by the rare Jewish and Islamic documents (one of the earliest known texts of the Quran, plus some Cairo Genizah documents).

Among the agenda items discussed and proposals considered were:

- Reports and feedback from the very impressive WUPJ Conference in Jerusalem attended by six LJ rabbis, including one whose first WUPJ Conference was 68 years ago (any guesses who?).
- A question from the Association of Reform and Liberal Mohelim (ARLM) about the appropriateness of a delayed (i.e. not on the eighth day) Brit Milah taking place on Shabbat. Our guidance was to avoid this if at all possible, but that the mohel had discretion to conduct a Milah on Shabbat if they felt this was the best approach in a given set of circumstances.
- A review of the Day of Celebration, Music Conference and Friday night services, which including thanking and congratulating all involved for a very successful set of events, that raised the bar – yet again – for LJ conference gatherings. We thanked everyone at Northwood for their hospitality.
- Rabbinic Conference's keenness to collaborate on the plans being led by Graham Carpenter and others to make LJ the home of British Jewish composition and liturgical music innovation.
- That the Shira Britannia service could be held in other communities, with sufficient planning and organisation, to showcase our composing talent and liturgical interpretation.
- That Rabbi Aaron Goldstein be elected Chair of Rabbinic Conference, with effect from 12th July 2017, with outgoing Co-Chairs Alexandra Wright and Richard Jacobi serving as Vice-Chairs for a year.
- Congratulating Yuval Keren (100k walk) and Celia Surget (Paris marathon) on their achievements and their fundraising results.
- The benefits of partnering with progressive communities in Eastern Europe and/or Israel – something we feel could add creative energy and stimulus to all LJ communities.

- Our appreciation of the staff and everyone involved in keeping Liberal Judaism's HQ functions running while the building was out of commission. They truly did an amazing job!

A number of colleagues attended the Viva presentations by the Leo Baeck College class of 2017, which were all of a very high standard. We commend the College on the calibre of the programme producing such inspiring new rabbis. All who were at the ordination service on Sunday 2nd July also saw the capability of each of our new rabbinic colleagues.

Several colleagues attended the Leo Baeck College fundraising dinner on 6th June and/or the LJ Patrons' Dinner on 22nd June. The events were very different, but both reflected well the vibrancy of Progressive Judaism.

Our next meeting, to be held at LJS on Tuesday 11th July, will be a joint morning with the Reform Assembly of Rabbis and separate meetings in the afternoon. The joint meeting will welcome Carrie Shaw to discuss the Alliance and Israel Desk roles that she has taken up, as well as responding to recent Israeli government decisions. We will also be led in study by Rabbi Dalya Marx of HUC in Jerusalem.

If LJ Council felt minded to express its concern at the Israeli governments decisions about conversion or the Kotel egalitarian area, along the lines already voiced by the Israel Desk, Rabbinic Conference would be keen to attach its support.

Rabbi Richard Jacobi

On behalf of Rabbinic Conference

3rd July 2017