# **Union for Progressive Judaism Annual Report**

2019-2020

# **Mission Statement**

The Union for Progressive Judaism exists to honour our tradition, inform the present and guide the future of our communities in the Australian, Asian and New Zealand region. This mission is fulfilled through:

- The establishment, strengthening and promotion of synagogues, schools and youth groups wherever there are Jews in this region searching for meaningful access to and expression of their modern Jewish values and life;
- Recruitment, training and placement of Jewish professionals;
- Sponsorship of programs and publications for youth, education, leadership development, and all aspect of community building;
- The pursuit of social justice and equal rights for all Jews, here and in Israel;
- Connecting and working with Progressive Jewish communities and organisations around the world to derive strength from one another.

#### **UPJ Executive:**

#### Va'ad

David D Knoll AM, Co-President Brian Samuel OAM, Co-President Roger Mendelson, Immediate Past President Helen Shardey, Vice-President Larry Lockshin, Honorary Secretary Sally Castle, Honorary Treasurer

#### Staff

Jocelyn Robuck, Executive Manager

# **Committee members**

Trevor Creewel
Sharon Davis
Judi Hall
Associate Professor Josh Keller
Marsha Rosenberg
Franklin Tate

#### **Ex Officio Committee members**

Helen Shardey (ARZA President)
Sefi Shalam (Progressive Community & Netzer Shaliach)
Lior Kalisse (Netzer Federal Mazkira)
Sharene Hambur (WUPJ Representative)
Rabbi Nicole Roberts (ARC Chair)

# **CONTENTS**

	Greetings from the World Union	n for Progressive Judaism	Page 5
	Greetings from the European Union for Progressive Judaism  Message from the UPJ Co-Presidents  Message from the UPJ Executive Manager		Page <b>6</b> Page <b>7</b> Page <b>1</b> 4
	Message from the UPJ Honorar	y Treasurer	Page <b>16</b>
	Moetzah Chairperson's Report		Page <b>18</b>
	Constituents' Reports		
	Australia		
	ACT		
	Canberra	Progressive Congregation, ACT Jewish Community	Page <b>2</b> 0
	NSW		
	Central Coast	Shalom Progressive Jewish Congregation	*
	Chatswood	North Shore Temple Emanuel	Page 22
	🌣 Woollahra	Emanuel Synagogue	Pag <b>e 2</b> 3
	Queensland		
	Prisbane	Beit Or v'Shalom	Page 25
	Sold Coast	Temple Shalom	Page <b>27</b>
	Sunshine Coast	Sunshine Coast Jewish Community	Page <b>2</b> 9
	South Australia		
	Adelaide	Beit Shalom Synagogue	Page 31
	Tasmania		
	🌣 Hobart	Hobart Hebrew Congregation	Page 33
	Victoria		
	Armadale	Kehillat David Hamelech (Kedem)	*
	Pentleigh	Etz Chayim Progressive Synagogue	Page 34
	Kew	Leo Baeck Centre for Progressive Judaism	Page 36

St Kilda	Temple Beth Israel	Page <b>38</b>	
Pendigo Bendigo	Kehillat S'dot Zahav Goldfields Congregation	Page <b>40</b>	
Western Australia			
Perth	Temple David Congregation	Page <b>42</b>	
New Zealand			
Auckland	Beth Shalom	Page <b>44</b>	
Dunedin	Dunedin Jewish Congregation	Page <b>45</b>	
Wellington	Temple Sinai	Page <b>46</b>	
<b>♣</b>			
Asia			
Peijing	Kehillat Beijing	*	
Bali	Kehilat Bnei Hof	*	
Hong Kong	United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong	Page <b>47</b>	
India	Jewish Religious Union	*	
Indonesia	United Indonesian Jewish Community	Page <b>50</b>	
🌣 Shanghai	Kehilat Shanghai	Page <b>52</b>	
Singapore	United Hebrew Congregation	Page <b>53</b>	
Thailand	Thailand Progressive Jewish Community	*	
🌄 Tokyo	Jewish Community of Japan	Page <b>55</b>	
Affiliates' Reports			
ARZA		Page <b>56</b>	
Board of Progressive Jewi	ish Education	Page <b>57</b>	
Emanuel School			
Netzer Australia			
The King David School			



**UPJ Awards** Page 66



2019-2020 Financial Report will be included in the AGM papers and posted on the UPJ website

\* Reports not received

MESSAGE FROM THE WUPJ
RABBI SERGIO BERGMAN, PRESIDENT



October 2020/Tishrei 5781

Dear friends,

On behalf of the 1.8 million Progressive Jews around the world, we send our best wishes to you as you conclude yet another amazing year of vibrant and meaningful Jewish life.

Despite this past year's considerable challenges on so many levels, your communities have continued to raise much needed funds to support those experiencing sudden changes in their social and economic situations, have kept in contact with those shut in and isolated, and have managed to stay connected while staying apart.

We are grateful for your ongoing and unwavering support of and leadership in the holy work of the WUPJ and the sacred projects of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ) in Israel.

Our communities in Russian speaking countries have continued to survive thanks to the generous support of the UPJ and the UIA Progressive Appeal campaign.

Together, we have maintained our impact and reach and have strengthened Progressive Jewish and values in Israel

and wherever in the world our brothers and sisters choose to live meaningful Jewish lives.

We hope and pray that the coming year will be filled with good health, safety and the continued doing of good deeds.

We look forward to being together with you in your beautiful country before too long.

With warm regards,

Rabbi Sergio Bergman, President Carole Sterling, Chair

World Union for Progressive Judaism

# MESSAGE FROM THE EUPJ

European Union for Progressive Judaism

The Sternberg Centre for Judaism 80 East End Road, London N3 2SY UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 8349 5651 www.eupj.org

18 October 2020

Dear Friends at the UPJ

It is our great pleasure to send to you the warmest greetings on behalf of all the EUPJ congregations and our teams in London and Brussels. Yes, indeed, you are reading this correctly. London has traditionally been the home of the EUPJ ever since it was established, together with the World Union for Progressive Judaism, in 1926 and our head office continues to remain there. However, two years ago, we decided, as a consequence of the successful establishment of more and more progressive congregations on the European Continent, that it was time for an additional base and we opened an office in Brussels, the administrative capital of the European Union.

We have since been able to team up with a number of Jewish partners for major projects and have been much encouraged by this opportunity to raise our voice and make pluralistic positions heard in what we all perceive as an increasingly narrow-minded world.

Other than that: What a year 2020 has been for all of us! We all miss the personal gatherings, meetings and conferences and congratulate you most warmly on your upcoming virtual Biennial. Without-doubt, it will be a remarkable event and we wish you every success.

The pandemic continues to have a massive impact on all of us and it is still too early to even speculate what the next year is going to be like. While we are all struggling with these challenges, our thoughts and prayers are particularly with those whose lives have been touched by illness and loss.

In all this, it is a great opportunity to at least be able to connect digitally and we are greatly looking forward to meeting you online, sometimes in the most surprising new settings, and even more so we hope we will be together again soon in person.

With all best wishes

Sonja Guentner Chair, EUPJ Gordon Smith President, EUPJ

WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE ליהדות מתקדמת מתקדמת

European Union for Progressive Judaism is an affiliate of The World Union For Progressive Judaism The WUPJ is a constituent of the World Zionist Organisation and World Jewish Congress. Charity Number 253000

President Gordon Smith gordon@jogid.co.uk

Chairman: Sonja Guentner sonja.guentner@eupj.org

Honorary Life Presidents: Leslie F Bergman Ruth Cohen

Administrator: Deborah Grabiner administrator@eupj.org

# MESSAGE FROM THE UPJ CO-PRESIDENTS

DAVID D KNOLL AM AND BRIAN SAMUEL OAM

It gives us great pleasure to present our first Co-President's Annual Report.

At the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting last year there was some concern that the Co-Presidency concept may not work. Both David and Brian were and are determined to ensure that the concept was and will continue to be implemented successfully. Whilst it is for you to judge, we both consider that our job-share has worked extremely well, and we have formed a much closer personal relationship as a result of this initiative.

At the 2020 Annual General Meeting, a motion will need to be passed to continue the Co-Presidency for the next year. We ask you to vote in favour of it.

#### IMPACT OF COVID-19

The 2020 year has been a difficult year to say the least. Following the horrendous bushfires of last summer, with the advent of COVID-19, we needed to put in place new initiatives to ensure the viability of our own organisation and also to work with as many of our affiliates is possible to ensure they, in turn, could survive the effects of the pandemic. We have accommodated to the extent we can financial stresses that some congregations have experienced, and by being very prudent with our expenses we have managed to finish the financial year above break even.

We operate on a very tight budget, and expect income to fall in the next two years before recovering, as is likely to be the case for the economy generally.

We acknowledge that the situation is similar for all our congregations and schools.

Supporting each other will be an essential part of all our strategies as we meet these challenges.

#### GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Our last face-to-face Executive meeting was at our strategic planning session at the beginning of 2020, just before the pandemic struck.

In February, our Executive met in Sydney to map out key strategies and priorities for 2020. It was becoming clear at this point that we were on the verge of a pandemic and certain changes would have to be implemented for us to survive.

We set ourselves goals to be pursued over a 3-year timeframe, including:

- Building a culture of collaboration.
- Increasing members' self-perception of importance of being Jewish.
- Building family-centred youth engagement strategies.
- Developing a new young adult strategy.
- Lifting our Movement's visibility by active engagement in the public space.
- Reinvigorating the Ambassador program.
- Cooperating strategically with ARZA; and
- Growing the UIA Progressive Appeal.

#### STARTING TOWARDS OUR GOALS

#### **BUILDING A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION**

Each of the affiliates of our Union for Progressive Judaism has its triumphs and its travails, but there will be more triumphs

if we collaborate with each other than if we struggle alone. And, so many of the issues we face are similar.

So, we have begun to build a culture of collaboration around common strategies and sharing of experiences.

We also need to grow. To do that we must be able to reach:

- those who see themselves as traditional but not Orthodox;
- those who see the selves as of no denomination, just Jewish, and
- those who seem themselves as Progressive or Masorti.

In Australia/ New Zealand, and the position is somewhat different in Asia, we wish to see the percentage of those identifying as Jews who join or participate in our communities rise significantly from the present 11-13% measured on the Gen17 survey. (Our potential market is 55% of Australian Jewry.)

And we must position ourselves to take advantage of the drift away from orthodoxy exposed in the Gen08 and Gen17 studies.

But shallow statistics cannot be the sole measure of success. Each affiliate will develop their own measures of success. They will include financial measures. They will include members numbers. And most of all they need to include attitudinal measures, so that they must measure relationship, impact and meaning.

The common strategy we are building is based on Ron Wolfson's Relational Judaism, brought to us by Ron over two Biennials. (See adjacent box)

We have held, over Zoom, several very enjoyable and valuable Relational Judaism training and feedback sessions in the past few months. These have served the purpose of introducing the concept to our affiliates, providing initial training and enabling collaboration among congregations.

People will come for programs, but they will stay for relationships.

This quote is from Dr Ron Wolfson, who was the keynote at 2018 UPJ Biennial:

"People will come for programs, but they will stay for relationships. Programs are wonderful opportunities for community members to gather, to celebrate, to learn. There is nothing "wrong" with programs; every organization has them. But, if the program designers have given no thought to how the experience will offer participants a deeper connection to each other, with the community and with Judaism itself, then it will likely be another lovely evening, afternoon, or morning ... with little or no lasting impact...."

A second round aimed at those affiliates which have not yet been able to participate will be organised in the near future.

We have always expected that different congregations will move towards strengthening their communities through Relational Judaism at different paces.

The Relational Judaism project is in intended to grow in stages. It is no overnight, band-aid solution. When we really listen to congregants (and potential congregants) and hear their needs and what inspires them, they will know that we care about them and will find ways to meet their needs.

Once we are perceived as understanding those deeper needs, which can only be discovered by building relationships of meaning and purpose, we will no longer be supply side - build it and they will come – program providers – but community hubs where Jews choose to belong and to participate.

We want to acknowledge the leadership of Judi Hall and Larry Lockshin, who have driven the Relational Judaism project forward. We also acknowledge the support we have received from the Sydney Alliance, who have been implementing relational meetings as a strategic technique for some decades now and have given us the benefit of much of their experience. Dave Barrow, its CEO, answers any questions we have and we have signed up as a "Organisational Friend of the Sydney Alliance". Eve Altman, who was working for the Alliance, guided us through the training program. Eve is now a member of the Emanuel Synagogue Board, and by the time you read this report many of you will have experienced her skills as a communicator and educator at our Virtual Biennial.

The following table, which is based on the first edition of Wolfson et al: Relational Judaism Handbook summaries the points of difference.

# **Programmatic/Consumerist Approach**

- Start with determining a program, event, or service that you want people to attend: Shabbat service, speaker presentation, adult education program, social justice event, etc.
- Professional staff, experts, or involved small group of lay leaders define, develop, and plan the program.
- Market and advertise to people to get them to "come to us."
  - You try to produce events and worship that are attractive.
- You hope that the programs are will attended.
- Reflect and evaluate so that you can program more effectively.
- You understand the synagogue to be the dispenser of Jewish religious goods and services.

**End result:** A program where a few people develop attractive programming that hopefully meets the needs of the "consumer," that is, the member. Congregants choose whether the programming as advertised is something they will or will not attend.

People attend quality programs. They are Jewishly educated (or have their kids educated) by professionals and experts.

# **Engagement Approach**

- Start with listening. Get to know your constituencies, what motivates them and their lives.
- Invest in and develop leaders who work together to own, define, and develop a vision of Judaism that is relevant to their lives.
- Really, really listen do not do a survey so that you can rely on leaders to build personal relationships and invite others to consider their holistic Jewish lives.
- Create and support small groups of enlivened stakeholders.
- Build an organic and imaginative community of communities that is owned and supported by those who have worked for its creation.
- Small groups are focused on dynamic Jewish learning and living, the development of Jewish spiritual practices, acts of loving kindness, and meaning making. They reach out willingly to grow their community.
- Personal transformation leads to communal transformation.

**End result:** Relationships are formed through an organised process; social fabric is woven; members become stakeholders. Identify and train new leaders who support small group of congregants who are working together to live Jewish lives that have personal relevance and meaning.

You have built a community perception beyond your current membership that yours is a community that cares about its people and is worth not only belonging to but also participating in.

#### PRESIDENTS' ROUNDTABLES

We also began implementing Presidents' Roundtables at which our affiliates' Presidents could interact with each other and with the UPJ Executive. This initiative for collaboration has been well received. We will continue with over the next years, always to creates opportunities for collaboration and not impose burdens on people' valuable time.

A particular benefit of our collaboration strategy has been to draw in via the internet, far-flung congregations in India, Japan, Hong Kong, Jakarta and Singapore. Also, through the good offices of Rabbi Nathan Alfred, now with the World Union for Progressive Judaism, a preliminary meeting has been held with leaders of the small community in Taipei.

We have been utilising technology for several years. However, we have much better communication as a result of the uptake of video conferencing.

From time to time, we have had the occasional congregation with internal issues reach out to the Co-Presidents to assist. If the problem was of a rabbinic nature, we have referred the matter to the Assembly of Rabbis and Cantors (ARC, previously the Moetzah) for guidance and intervention. If the problem related to the business side of the affiliate, we have been able to assist both legally and commercially. Another positive for the Co-Presidents role.

#### INCREASING MEMBERS' SELF-PERCEPTION OF IMPORTANCE OF BEING JEWISH.

The second goal adopted by the UPJ is to work collaboratively with congregations to increase meaningfully and measurably our members' and participants' self-perception of the importance of being Jewish from the relatively low 23% measured by Gen17. A confident, articulate community will be one where Jews choose to belong and participate.

The Assembly of Rabbis and Cantors has undertaken the task of building a stronger understanding of the values of Progressive Judaism in our lay leadership, so that, as we engage in Relational Judaism, we are more confident in articulating the values we stand for and their attractiveness for the Jews we want to reach but do not yet reach.

We expect that this coming year will see that strategy move forward. Stay tuned.

# BUILDING FAMILY-CENTRED YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES.

We owe a debt of thanks to Josh Keller who is designing this strategy. We look forward to engagements around Chanukah 2020. We do need volunteers with a passion for family-centred engagement to step forward and collaborate with Josh. (Once a core group is established, we will begin adapting existing resources such as the URJ's *Engaging Families with Young Children*.)

#### **DEVELOPING A NEW YOUNG ADULT STRATEGY.**

Sefi Shalam and Lior Kalisse have designed and will soon launch a branch of TAMAR which is a global platform for engaging Progressive Jewish young adults.

It is intended to create education, social connection and professional development networks.

# ATTRACTING YOUTH: THE IMPORTANCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

One issue that comes forth from a range of young adults as well as from Netzer is the need for movement-wide climate change action. The older generations may not see the importance of this issue but must come to understand that continuity and attracting young adults depends in part on our ability to engage on the big issues of our time. (Again, as TAMAR takes shape, there may be ways to begin adapting existing resources such as the URJ's *Paving the Road to Meaningful Young Adult Engagement*".) A climate change policy is under development to meet this need. We acknowledge the assistance of Rabbis Keren-Black and Kamins with the early drafting.

# LIFTING OUR MOVEMENT'S VISIBILITY BY ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SPACE.

At our last Annual General Meeting there was strong mood for lifting the visibility of our Movement in the media, particularly the Jewish Media. We have sought to do so, beginning with "A clarion call for Progressive Judaism" published in the Australian Jewish News in November 2019, and "How does Progressive Jewry Stand with Israel?" published in the Australian Jewish News in February 2020.

On 24 June 2020, your co-Presidents gave evidence before the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee public hearing into the Inquiry into Anti-Vilification Protections in Victoria. We took the committee to studies which showed that unless Antisemitism is specifically identified as a form of anti-racism in the course of anti-racism education, students do not automatically see having a go at Jews as being racist. It has to be made explicit.

Also, in June 2020, we joined our Youth leaders in speaking out about what was Bibi' Netanyahu's vaguely proposed annexation of Palestinian territories. We saw the proposal as giving up on the peace process, and forewarned that Israel's expanded ties with the Sunni Arab states, especially those bordering the Persian Gulf, would be harmed by reinvigorating a focus on the Palestinians that has largely dissipated in recent years. Those relationships have moved forward and the plan has been sidelined. For now, at least, a better outcome.

#### REINVIGORATING THE AMBASSADOR PROGRAM.

Our Immediate Past President, Roger Mendelson, is leading a renewal of our Ambassador program, and we are recruiting a small team to reach out particularly to communities without a Rabbi. We do need volunteers with Congregational management experience to contact Roger and join the team!

# COOPERATING STRATEGICALLY WITH ARZA.

The Australian Zionist Reform Association (ARZA) is the Zionist arm of the progressive movement in Australia. Our Vice-President, Helen Shardey is the ARZA Presdient, and she has reinvigorated ARZA through her boundless energy and networking skills.

Working together in preparation for the World Zionist Congress which has just been held, our coalition with the Masorti movement secured 6 out of 13 Australian mandates or seats. Ameinu and Meretz, politically progressive entities, secured one seat each. Australia was one of few regions which sent a majority of pluralist voices (8 out of 13) to the Congress.

And, ARZA, by registered member numbers is the largest Zionist organisation within the Zionist Federation of Australia umbrella. Truly a stellar achievement.

#### **GROWING THE UIA PROGRESSIVE APPEAL**

We have been conducting our annual UIA Progressive Appeal at various times throughout the year and despite the predicted doom and gloom at the outset our result by December should come close to the record result in 2019.

While the visit of Rabbi David Saperstein in March was cut short, its impact was very positive, and he continued to support us from Washington DC.

For those unfamiliar with Rabbi Saperstein, he served as President Obama's Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, and for 40 years, served as the Director of the Religious Action Center in Washington DC during which time he was designated by *Newsweek Magazine* as the most influential rabbi in America and by the Washington Post as the "quintessential religious lobbyist on Capitol Hill."

# **BIENNIALS: VIRTUAL AND FACE-TO-FACE**

We had grand plans for our Biennial which was planned to be held in Sydney in November 2020. These Biennials normally attract several hundred participants from all over the region including South East Asia. This has now been delayed until October 2021 and replaced with an exciting virtual Biennial scheduled for 8 November 2020 this year. The early bird registrations are exceeding expectations.

At our virtual Biennial many of you will have heard from Rabbi Sharon Brous who will be with us at the Face-to-Face Biennial next year, Covid-19 permitting.

Rabbi Brous graduated from Columbia University before being ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary, and is the senior and founding rabbi of IKAR. Launched in 2004, IKAR is a Los Angeles congregation rooted in the goal of "reinvigorating Jewish practice and inspiring people of faith to reclaim a moral and prophetic voice." It is among the fastest growing congregations in United States today, building a Relational Judaism that reaches both the committed and "the folks who wouldn't even walk in the door". Rabbi Brous' 2016 TED talk, "Reclaiming Religion", reached more than 1.3 million people in 22 languages.

Turning the tribulation of Covid-19 into opportunity, she wrote recently in Hadassah Magazine that: "The intersection of global health crisis and national social upheaval might seem like a strange starting point for creative, generative thinking. ... we will need to seize this moment, with all its vulnerability, and dream big."

# A LITTLE PLUG FOR MAZON AUSTRALIA

Mazon Australia is an organisation established thirty years ago within our Movement as a Jewish response to hunger. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Mazon Australia swiftly pivoted the 2020 Shavuot Appeal from communal cooking to providing bags filled with ingredients to make soup (#mazonsoupshare). Over three hundred bags filled with fresh veggies and a recipe to make a healthy soup have been distributed to a variety of charities in the general community. Please visit the Mazon Australia Facebook page for a taste of the #mazonsoupshare project, including online cooking demonstrations.

# HIGH HOLY DAYS AND THE NEW "NORMAL"

In August and September, we were busy organising programs for the High Holy Days. In previous years, we had Rabbis and lay leaders travelling all over the region to assist affiliates without a Rabbi during the New Year. This year, due to travel restrictions, those options have been unavailable. However, as most of our congregations are offering services virtually, we were able to set up a timetable for individuals to hook into a service of their choice anywhere in the region. Through CCAR, we secured for all our affiliates a flip book version of Mishkan T'Shuvah like the flipbook version of Mishkan T'Filah, which enhanced the online experience for many.

The very large numbers who zoomed create a great opportunity for outreach and growth!

#### **OUR AMAZING CLERGY**

We have had an excellent relationship with the ARC. Rabbi David Kunin guided us spiritually over the few years and during the year he has taken up a new role in Syracuse, New York. We thank him for his manifold services, and we wish him well in his new placement. At the time of writing, Rabbi Nicole Roberts has acted as chairperson with the very able assistance of Rabbis Kaminsky, Kamins, Ninio and Morgan.

We have a few Australian candidates who have completed their Rabbinic/Jewish educator training or are about to complete in the next twelve months. We are keen to see if we can seek permanent placements within our region. Loans made to these candidates are converted to grants if the candidate finds employment within the UPJ region.

Technology had become an integral part of synagogue requirements during the pandemic. Whilst nothing will replace the face to face observance of Shabbat, Festivals and High Holy Days, the last few months has enabled us to reach out to a much wider audience and this will hopefully lead to increased participation and membership when our congregations return to a sense of normal sometime in 2021.

# COOPERATION WITH THE WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM & THE ISRAEL MOVEMENT FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

Cooperation with the World Union for Progressive Judaism under Carole Sterling and Rabbi Sergio Bergman (when Rabbi David Saperstein retired) is an ongoing positive influence, as is our close working relationship with the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, ably led by Rabbi Gilad Kariv, his deputy, David Bernstein, and their staff.

# A PLAIN LANGUAGE CONSTITUTION

We have begun work on updating our Constitution not only to comply with legislative changes in Victoria (where we are incorporated), but to move to plain language so that the document become accessible and much easier to understand. We thank Matthew Goode, of Beit Shalom, Adelaide for giving of his professional skills.

An exposure draft will be shared early in the new year with all our affiliates, and constructive comments welcomed. The aim is to have a final version for adoption the 2021 Annual General Meeting.

#### THANK YOU

We would like to thank our elected Officers, our Executive and all our affiliates for their support during the last twelve months.

Sharon Davis and Trevor Creewel are retiring; Sharon after many, many years of outstanding service, including as Hon. Secretary. Trevor has been bristling with ideas, and is focusing on interests more local in WA.

We thank you, our congregations and schools, who have met every challenge that this difficult year has thrust upon you with creativity and commitment.

Our most profound thanks go to Jocelyn Robuck without whom this organisation would cease to exist. Jocelyn has been a tower of strength, knowledge, and guidance over what has been challenging times for all concerned. We look forward to 2021 with renewed vigour and pledge to continue our efforts for the advancement of Progressive Judaism.

# MESSAGE FROM THE UPJ EXECUTIVE MANAGER

JOCELYN ROBUCK

Perhaps due to the much-increased amount of time spent viewing movies, listening to music and reading books to pass the time and manage stress during quarantine, I realise I've included an inordinate number of cultural and media references in my message. Please indulge me as I reference a few songs, books and movies inspired by the past year, a time best described as one of biblical proportions.

Reflecting on the past 12 months, I immediately thought of James Taylor's beautiful and poignant lyrics: "I've seen fire and I've seen rain, I've seen sunny days that I thought would never end, I've seen lonely times when I could not find a friend, but I always thought that I'd see you again." Beginning with the catastrophic bushfires in Australia, unprecedented in their extent and intensity, we watched with horror and sadness as 33 people died, including 9 firefighters, and more than 3,000 homes were lost. More than 17 million hectares burned and more than one billion mammals, birds and reptiles were lost.

Massive dust storms swept through NSW in late January, followed by golf ball-sized hail in Canberra, damaging cars and smashing windows, including the Progressive Congregation's prayer space at the ACT Jewish Community centre. Severe rainstorms helped put out the bushfires, but brought with them their own flooding and dangerous conditions. And immediately on the heels of the bushfires, COVID-19 arrived, bringing a new threat to lives and our quality of life.

Thankfully our region covering Asia, Australia and New Zealand has managed the pandemic more successfully than many other places in the world, but we grieve for the lives lost and recognise there are still many areas, particularly Melbourne, that still suffer significantly with the affects of lock-down.

While thinking about the challenges of this past year, I am reminded of Charles Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities", which he began with: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." In is evident that our communal instinct has been to try to help others to alleviate suffering and bring an end to this crisis, and I am again reminded of one of my favourite movie characters, Colonel Brandon in *Sense and Sensibility*, who says when he learns of Marianne's life-threatening illness: "Give me an occupation, Miss Dashwood, or I shall run mad!"

Indeed from the onset of the pandemic, I was profoundly inspired daily by the immense dedication, hard work and care provided by UPJ congregations, who offered online prayer services and study opportunities and virtual chats to alleviate the feelings of loneliness and solitude during quarantine. Online Pesach seders bringing together virtual communities, opportunities to say Kaddish for loved ones, High Holy Days presented beautifully and meaningfully: all of these required tremendous effort from our clergy and synagogue leaders, and truly represented "the best of times" during "the worst of times". These beautiful acts of chessed (kindness and compassion) were the valuable gift our Progressive movement could uniquely provide.

In particular, I want to thank the following people who have greatly inspired me over this past year:

- Susan Kadar, chair of the 2020 Biennial, rose to the immense challenge of shifting from an in-person conference to a virtual one. She has been a pillar of strength and has dedicated many months to ensure a successful conference.
- Rabbi Shoshana Kaminsky generously again took on the task of coordinating submissions of weekly Parashat
  Hashavua drashot written by clergy, as well as once again compiling and editing this year's Elul Reflections, which
  were particularly important this year as a much-needed spiritual balm during the month of Elul.
- Our hard-working UPJ Executive provided friendship and valuable advice, and volunteered many hours to assist
  whenever asked: Trevor Creewel, Sharon Davis, Judi Hall, Josh Keller, Marsha Rosenberg and Franklin Tate;
  Rabbi Nicole Roberts, Rabbi Shoshana Kaminsky, Lior Kalisse, Sefi Shalam and Sharene Hambur.

My deep admiration goes to our hard-working Va'ad (office bearers): David Knoll and Brian Samuel, Helen Shardey, Larry Lockshin and Sally Castle, who devote countless hours to further the growth and vibrancy of our movement.

David and Brian have taken on ground-breaking roles as Co-Presidents, and their respective talents and strengths have been complementary and have contributed greatly. In addition to managing the many daily demands that arise, they have spent many months coordinating and co-chairing (with two other mensches, Philip Bliss and Alan Obrart) the UIA Progressive Appeal, which due to their perseverance exceeded expectations, despite the challenges of the pandemic. I am constantly inspired by their generosity and dedication, and thankful that they are always available to take my calls and provide much-needed advice and guidance.

Helen has worn "two hats" with both grace and hard work, serving both as UPJ Vice-President and ARZA President, and has dedicated her efforts to ensuring support for Progressive Judaism in Israel.

Larry, as Honorary Secretary, has generously shared his talents as an talented educator and presenter, as well as overseeing the many necessary administrative tasks of running an organisation.

Serving for five years as Honorary Treasurer, Sally has continued the time-consuming task of managing the UPJ's finances, and I am grateful for her generous support and friendship. Sally has spent many late nights/early mornings working on budgets and sorting out complicated spreadsheets, and has also travelled to Sydney to work with me in person when necessary.

I am thankful to have my supportive and helpful husband Rabbi Gary Robuck by my side, especially during this difficult year. Over the course of the lock-down in Sydney, we took plenty of walks in a nearby reserve and watched one movie produced in each of our 37 years of marriage!

Finally, I want to thank you, the members of our region, for contributing your talents to the success of our Progressive community, and for the opportunity to serve in this challenging and rewarding role. May we all be blessed with a brighter future, allowing us to experience the best of times with our vibrant Progressive family, bringing healing and peace to the world.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE UPJ HONORARY TREASURER

SALLY CASTLE, CA

I present the financial report of the Union for Progressive Judaism for the year ended 30 June 2020.

I can advise that a surplus of \$15k was made in 2019-20, compared to a budgeted surplus of \$35k. The surplus was a very good result considering the difficult circumstances of the second half of the 2019-20 year.

The smaller than expected surplus included the write-off of the \$15,000 financial assistance loan to Tammy Cohen, who has met the terms of her loan agreement and taken up the role of Learning and Engagement Mashpia at Temple Beth Israel. Although Tammy commenced her new role in October 2020, well after the end of the 2019-20 year, accounting standards require that the write-off be included in 2019-20. A huge mazel tov to Tammy and to TBI – it is an absolute delight to have qualified professionals returning to, and adding value to our movement in this region. This is what our loan program is all about.

# Income and impact of COVID-19

Income in 2019-20 was \$287k, a decrease of \$30k from 2018-19. The budget for income was \$267k.

Affiliation fees were below budget (\$129k compared to \$135k budget). This occurred because several congregations requested, and were granted, a fee reduction for two quarters because their own net income had declined substantially due to the unique circumstances arising from the global pandemic.

The WUPJ grant was also less than budget (\$97k compared to \$130k budget). As advised in previous years, the WUPJ grant is dependent on donations made to the UIA Progressive Trust annual appeal. 2020 campaign initiatives were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and collections were lower than expected, which had a flow on impact on the grant from WUPJ to UPJ. This source of income is always subject to fluctuation.

Our income this year was boosted by three items:

- the first annual appeal performance bonus of \$17,500 from the UIA. This will not repeat unless the 2019 outcome is repeated for the current appeal, with our Zoom appeal events scheduled for 12 and 15 November 2020;
- a one-off, unbudgeted \$10,000 contribution from the Australian Government as part of the COVID-19 stimulus package;
- One-off, unbudgeted JobKeeper payments (COVID-19 related) from the Australian Government totalling \$9,000;
- A one-off donation of \$5,000 from the Australian Catholic University towards our own costs for the UIA campaign.

Without these, our income would have been \$41,500 lower and we would have made a \$30k deficit.

#### **Expenses**

Expenses in 2019-20 were \$273k, a decrease of \$117k from 2018-19. The budget for expenses was \$232k.

The decrease in expenses was mainly due to it not being a Biennial year (\$100k), reduced employee expenses (\$51k), decreased office and travel expenses (\$6k) and a decrease in Netzer grants (\$11k) (for which we thank Netzer whose fiscal responsibility has been exemplary), partially offset by the financial assistance loan write-off (\$15k), UPJ contribution to the

Machzor project arising from donations from the PSN Trust and Vadasz Estate in prior years (\$30k), and Shir Chadash/gathering net expenses (\$10k).

#### **Outlook**

The 2020-21 budget has yet to be finalised. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant increase in UPJ-hosted virtual events, including the 2020 Biennial. This is resulting in lower expenses.

Despite this, our income is at risk, with some one-off revenue items unlikely to repeat. Affiliation fee discounts to constituent members whose own fee income has declined because of the pandemic will need to be tailored carefully. We are aware that our affiliates have been affected to varying degrees and not all affiliates have requested affiliation fee reductions. There is also much uncertainty around the pandemic's potential effect on the 2021 UIA Progressive Trust appeal.

Given the small surplus and the likely expense involved in the 2021 Biennial, we will all need to work together to manage the financial consequences of COVID-19 and keep the UPJ operational. In this environment of extreme uncertainty, we will continue to be conservative in our spending. In my view the impact of the pandemic has yet to play out fully.

# **Appreciation**

My thanks as always go to our auditors, Lowe Lippman; and to our bookkeeper Fran Freiman.

On a personal note, this has been an extraordinarily difficult and challenging year for me. I have been blessed by the ongoing support and friendship of my executive colleagues and the extraordinary Jocelyn Robuck, UPJ Executive Manager. You all made a huge difference to me when I needed it and for that I give my sincerest thanks.

# MESSAGE FROM THE ASSEMBLY OF RABBIS AND CANTORS OF AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND ASIA

RABBI NICOLE ROBERTS, ACTING CHAIR

The past year got off to an ominous start, as the ARC (Assembly of Rabbis and Cantors of the UPJ region, formerly known as "the Moetzah") met in Adelaide while bushfires raged across Australia and protests erupted in Hong Kong last November. Still, no one could have predicted what was yet to come, as humanity entered the



Covid era. ARC clergy, with the promotional support of UPJ and the technical infrastructure of TBI, responded to these devastating crises in collaborative and constructive ways:

Over summer, we donated funds as a body to the Australian Youth Climate Coalition. After Covid hit, twice weekly we shared words of hope in *Netzitzot* ("sparks of light") submitted by our clergy and distributed to the UPJ's mailing list. We organised a region-wide Healing Service of prayer and song, led by our clergy. We offered learning during lockdown in a collaborative Tikkun Leil Shavuot called *iSinai - Standing Together*, which held significant viewership over several hours and multiple streams of programming. Individual congregations joined forces to offer creative Tisha b'Av and Selichot online gatherings. We issued an invitation to all our communities, both with and without clergy, to contact a central liaison, should they wish to share in one another's High Holy Day programming. And we created a shared Covid resource bank in Google Drive to post safety information for *sh'lichei tzibbur*, including student rabbis serving our region during the *yamim nora'im* 5781.

This has been an indescribably busy year for our clergy. In addition to the above, and while meeting unprecedented pastoral demands (e.g., organising calling trees, supporting mourners through compromised funeral procedures, and finding creative ways to stay in contact with the aged), our clergy have quickly "upskilled" and reinvented ourselves, while working tirelessly to transition every aspect of shul programming to an online-effective platform, from b'nei mitzvah lessons to Hebrew school curricula, from the Pesach seder to Yizkor services, from Introduction to Judaism classes to the Zoom Shiva Minyan, and so much more. All the while, we have continued to share our weekly *d'rashot* in the UPJ newsletter throughout the year, and daily reflections during the month of Elul. As well, we have joined with UPJ and ARZA in raising our Progressive voice in statements on pressing world issues.

Current restrictions on travel, gathering, and medical procedures have necessitated the articulation of a Common Standard regarding Covid era conversion practices, including *brit milah* and the convening of online *batei din*. An interim Common Standard has been agreed among ARC clergy until we can "meet" properly in November to discuss the future. Our November ARC meeting will take place via Zoom on 4 and 5 November 2020.

This year, the ARC was pleased to welcome Rabbi Misha Clebaner, who joins Rabbi Nicole Roberts in Sydney, but sadly, both ARC Chair Rabbi David Kunin (Tokyo) and ARC Vice-Chair Rabbi Nathan Alfred (Singapore) have departed the UPJ region. We are grateful to Rabbi Nathan Alfred, who has made a significant contribution to the ARC specifically to benefit youth in our communities in Asia, so that the incredible work he achieved there can be continued. The departure of Rabbis Kunin and Alfred necessitated the interim appointment of an Acting Executive, which, as of 1 July 2020, consists of:

Acting Chair: Rabbi Nicole Roberts (North Shore Temple Emanuel, Sydney)
Acting Vice Chair: Rabbi Fred Morgan AM (Emeritus, Temple Beth Israel, Melbourne)

Acting Treasurer: Rabbi Shoshana Kaminsky (Beit Shalom Synagogue, Adelaide)

Acting Secretary: Rabbi Jacqueline Ninio (Emanuel Synagogue, Sydney)

A proper election will be held during our November 2020 ARC meeting. Rabbi Morgan has also taken on the role of Consulting Rabbi for the New Zealand region. Rabbi Kaminsky continues her work on the UPJ 2020 Biennial Committee and as Consulting Rabbi for several Asian communities, and she is now a signatory on ARC treasury accounts.

In "other business": ARC clergy convened numerous *batei din* throughout the UPJ region over the past year; and we developed a new ARC logo (see below), which was displayed during our collaborative services and study sessions held in conjunction with the UPJ.

We would like to thank Jocelyn Robuck, UPJ Executive Manager, for her ongoing support and facilitation of all we do, including procuring the online siddur and machzor, which have been so essential during this period. We are blessed by her unflappable commitment to the movement in our region, as we are by the leadership of UPJ Co-Chairs David Knoll AM and Brian Samuel OAM. We look forward to continuing to work together with the UPJ and all its affiliates, including ARZA and Netzer, to meet the diverse and ever changing needs of our communities during this extraordinary time in history.

# The Progressive Congregation of the ACT Jewish Community – Canberra, ACT

Peter Wise and Dan Rosauer, Co-Chairs, Progressive Committee of the ACTJC

The ACT Jewish Community (ACTJC) is the peak Jewish organisation in the ACT to which all Jewish entities are entitled to belong. ACTJC members, making up around



200 member units, are welcome to attend our Progressive or Orthodox services. The ACTJC also delivers extensive social, cultural and educational programming for all our members. This report speaks only to the activities of the Progressive Congregation of the ACTJC.

This year has marked a change of leadership of the Progressive Congregation. Jesica Dowell stepped down as Chair of the Progressive Committee. Daniel Rosauer and Peter Wise have agreed to be Co-Chairs for the coming year. We thank Jesica for her hard work steering the Congregation through a period of change, and for her former role representing the Congregation as a Board member.

Rabbi Gary Robuck and Jocelyn Robuck have continued to visit the Congregation regularly throughout the year. Their continuing support and commitment to our Congregation, and the ACT Jewish Community as a whole, goes far beyond contractual obligations. Rabbi Robuck has led services, shiurim (latterly also on Zoom) and events open to the whole ACT Jewish Community in a warm and inclusive manner, conducted planning days, met individual members privately, and been an ongoing resource for our congregation. His musical skills, vocally and accompanying himself on the piano, have undoubtedly enhanced the appeal of our services when he visits. He again conducted High Holy Day services expertly using the new machzor, *Mishkan T'shuvah*. Jocelyn, as well as assisting Rabbi Robuck in his visits, has made herself available throughout the year to assist the congregation in any way she can. We are grateful that Rabbi Robuck and Jocelyn will continue their involvement with the Congregation in the coming year. The ongoing support of the UPJ is vital to our small congregation.

A number of planning days were held throughout the year with congregation members and Rabbi Robuck. A new structure was developed, incorporating the following teams:

- Life-Long Jewish Learning
- Tikkun Olam (Social Action)
- Community Building
- Social and Spiritual Life
- Congregational Management
- Young Adult family and Family Engagement
- Progressive Israel Action Project
- Interfaith Friendship and Understanding

It is intended to establish these Teams in the coming year to provide a more effective organisational structure for the growth and development of the Congregation.

Membership and attendance this year has been stable, with long-term members Rebecca Lehrer and Deborah Sims leaving Canberra and the Congregation welcoming some new members. We have some members pursuing conversion. Oscar Rosauer celebrated his Bar Mitzvah in February.

We continue to seek to improve, with the support of Rabbi Robuck, the professionalism of our lay-led services and strive to hold services that are inclusive and welcoming.

Nicole Lisle has been working with Rabbi Robuck to increase the participation and involvement of young families in services and events. Unfortunately, a planned Shabbaton focusing on young families had to be cancelled due to Covid. It is planned to hold this event in the coming year if Covid restrictions allow. However, a number of successful events for young families were held throughout the year by Rabbi Robuck.

Following the completion of a new extension to the existing building, we were delighted to move into our beautiful new Progressive Synagogue this year after a dedication ceremony conducted by Rabbi Robuck. Having a dedicated, *heimish* prayer space has already resulted in increased participation in services and other events, and strengthened our identity as Progressive Jews.

We continue to seek to facilitate enjoyable social contact for our members and friends. We plan to institute monthly potluck dinners, Shabbat meals in members' homes and other social events.

A long-term member of our congregation (and former ACT Jewish Community President) Bill Arnold continues to provide chaplaincy to Jewish prisoners in Corrective Services Centres in Canberra, Goulburn, Cooma and Junee.

The congregation remains committed to Tikkun Olam and continue to coordinate an Oz Harvest food drive and engage with Mazon. We look forward to identifying further opportunities to act on our Tikkun Olam commitment.

We would like to conclude by thanking the lay leaders who make our weekly Shabbat services happen and who continue to do it with enthusiasm and warmth, as well as those who assist with the organisation and running of services and other events. Thank you to the ACTJC Board for their continued support of the Progressive Congregation. Particular thanks should go to Robert Cussel, Secretary of the Board and Progressive Congregation member, for his strong advocacy for the Congregation and his role in securing financial assistance from the JCA, which has made possible the continued engagement of Rabbi Robuck. Finally, we wish to acknowledge the office staff for their hard work and support.

We look forward to a year of continued growth and connection.

# North Shore Temple Emanuel – Chatswood, NSW

Gwen Harrison, President

North Shore Temple Emanuel celebrates its 60th Anniversary in 2020 and what an unusual "Diamond" anniversary it is turning out to be.

The year started with our "NSTE60" launch event - a Shabbat morning service, in which we honoured our founding families. In March we enjoyed a Purim celebration that focused not only on revelry, but the mitzvah of matanot la'evyonim, as we packaged gift bags of toiletries for residents of the Jewish House shelter. That month we were also entertained by a magnificent "Community of Choirs" in our sanctuary, in an event organised by Jewish Arts.

Then, like all NSW congregations, we had to cease all communal gatherings and, practically overnight, develop the technological infrastructure to "gather" remotely to keep our Temple family connected to one another. Our team of rabbis, staff, board and volunteers combined to enable a swift and effective move to a "virtual community" with the onset of COVID19 restrictions, creating online Shabbat and Pesach services, a Pesach seder, Kaddish and Yizkor by Zoom, an online "Pyjama Time" series for young children, online adult education, b'nei mitzvah lessons and Meah Hebrew and Religion School classes. Many other NSTE events were welcomed directly into our living rooms. We even held a 'virtual' communal mezuzah hanging.

Great efforts have gone into extra communication and frequent outreach during this period. When COVID first hit us in March, our rabbis, staff, board, and Community Wellbeing volunteers teamed up to check in on all NSTE members, delivering care packages if needed, as well as forming a bridge to other Jewish agencies as required.

With the easing of NSW Government restrictions, we were able to bring our Shabbat morning services and Sunday school back in-person, albeit with a revised format and protocols so as to comply with NSW Government guidelines for COVID safety.

Planning High Holy Day services was an enormous challenge. In July we made a decision to go exclusively online. Then followed an intricate process of reimagining every aspect of services, creating and pre-recording selected material, keeping the congregation informed and finding ways to make it all accessible to the community. These were huge tasks, made more complex by the shifting guidelines on COVID safety. We were committed to creating an inclusive, engaging and uplifting worship experience, and facilitating the introspection that the season demands. Our services were a blend of live prayers and music from the sanctuary, aliyot and honours from home, and creative features designed to draw everyone into the spirit of the yamim noraim (days of awe). The services were open to all. I am pleased to report that the results were very warmly received.

While the basic connecting mechanisms are now in place, we are still making improvements to our processes, quality of transmission, offerings, and all aspects of "virtual" shul life. There is still much newness for all of us in this. We do not know how long the COVID-19 pandemic will continue and we are yet to understand the longer term implications.

For now, in order to meet the diverse needs of the community and keep us Covid-safe we strive to be flexible and adapt readily to changing circumstances. I have the utmost confidence that although we are living in uncertain times, we will continue to go from strength to strength as a community in this 60th year and for many years to come.

# Emanuel Synagogue - Woollahra, NSW

Alex Lehrer, President, Suzanna Helia, CEO, and Rabbi Jeffrey B Kamins OAM, Senior Rabbi



The UPJ update on behalf Emanuel Synagogue will focus on the events of both 2019 and the unfolding events of 2020, which has so far been shaped by the horrific fires of the summer, followed by the unprecedented impact of COVID-19, still impacting us all. Like many synagogues in the region, we were able to go virtual quickly, being as engaging and inclusive as possible.

We are blessed to have a fabulous clergy team, dedicated and excellent staff, and a diligent and committed governing Board. We all share a vision of creating an engaged and inclusive community, inspired by the teachings of Judaism, to live a life of meaning and connection.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of people's lives across the globe. The prohibitions imposed on social gatherings have decimated some of the most fundamental practices and structures within Judaism. Not to mention Jewish customs which are so fundamentally aligned with congregating, praying, celebrating and of course eating together.

In this context, our staff, clergy and community have had to adapt.

Our clergy team has transitioned to a predominantly online mode of delivery and communication which has been remarkably impressive. The team has been supported ably and enthusiastically by the entire staff body and our congregation has embraced the new ways of doing things.

We are confident that Emanuel Synagogue is well placed to survive the current crisis and emerge stronger and wiser. We have already transformed our technological capabilities and together with the lessons learned and skills developed, we will be able to sustain an improved online presence permanently. This will allow us to connect on an ongoing basis with people who otherwise would not be able to participate in our community including those living remotely and those for whom mobility is a challenge.

The focus of 2019 for us was building the foundations for the next phase of Emanuel Synagogue's future. Our major achievements were:

#### Redevelopment

We commenced the architectural design for the Heritage Sanctuary and the North Wing learning centre. The Development Application for the Heritage Sanctuary is now proceeding but due to COVID-19 we have decided to put the development of the learning centre on hold until the economic environment becomes more inviting for funding and expansion works. We have finished small upgrades to the campus and the designs for the upgrade to the Woods Avenue entry will be finished over the next few weeks and have been funded by the Federal Government through the Safer Community Grant program as part of our ongoing security upgrades.

# Ruth's Garden

We all agree that not only the synagogue but Woollahra as a suburb was beautified by the establishment of Ruth's garden. As we enter the campus from Ocean Street walking through the lush greens of the garden, one's moods shift to peace and tranquillity. We are forever grateful for this serene space.

# Preschool on our campus

The Preschool is enjoying its new space and it has worked very well having the laughter and play on our campus. The preschool and synagogue are both enjoying a wonderful working relationship.

#### Nora's Kitchen

We have truly settled into operating Nora's Kitchen which is a fully-equipped commercial kitchen. Not only is the kitchen now a revenue generating space offered to external caterers but it also serves Emanuel's group of volunteers who often prepare kiddushim and meals for synagogue services and events (which we are all confident will return in 2021).

#### **Increased Community Engagement**

We are excited to report that we have had a significant increase in community participation in Synagogue events. Over the last financial year, we have had a 40% increase in the number of events organised and also a 70% increase in the number of people attending (on average).

Throughout 2019-2020, Emanuel Synagogue continued to foster partnerships across various platforms. We would like to acknowledge Plus 61J, Sacred Music Festival, Sydney Jewish Museum, the Zionist Council of NSW, Musica Viva as well as the Sydney Art Quartet with whom we hosted a highly anticipated music and dance performance last November.

# **Lifecycle Events**

2019 was a year of increased life cycle activity. Our clergy team has officiated a total of 71 Bnei Mitzvot, 11 weddings, 38 baby namings and britot milah, and regretfully 65 funerals and 47 consecrations. We look forward to sharing many more special occasions with our members, as well as being there to comfort them in the difficult times.

# **Financial Sustainability**

A strategic decision was made to build a more focused and sustainable future for the long term. We would like to thank the Board's finance team, led by the Treasurer Sam Chipkin, who together with our finance team, worked diligently to enable an outstanding result for the group. We look forward to further developments in the financial strategy including the establishment of the Emanuel Synagogue Endowment Fund.

We wish to acknowledge and commend the broader leadership of the Sydney Jewish community for its effective responses to the current crisis and note proudly the contributions of our members Lesli Berger and Jillian Segal. The Decision Makers Group comprising the President of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies (Lesli Berger) with the support of the ECAJ President (Jillian Segal) and NSW Council for Jewish Community Security Chair (Peter Wise), together with the Community Security Group has done a tremendous job establishing a community-wide response.

Finally, thank you to our members, clergy and staff for your ongoing support and for your resilience and adaptability during this crisis. The Jewish community has over time, through both necessity and an enterprising spirit, evolved, adapted, survived and thrived. No doubt, we will continue to do so.

# Beit Or v'Shalom - Brisbane, Queensland

Alvin Maradeen, President

We have been blessed to have not witnessed the passing of any Beit Or v'Shalom members in the past 12 months. However, there have been members who have experienced their own losses. To them, their family and friends, and to all those who have lost loved ones over the course of the year, we wish "long life".

It has been a wonderful year of further establishment and growth for Beit Or v'Shalom. Much has happened in our congregation, some obvious and much behind the scenes, with grant applications, maintenance of our existing assets, improvements in security, live-streaming of services and so much more.

During the year we have welcomed new members and associates to our congregation, had visitors to our Shul, Jewish and non-Jewish, local and interstate. We welcome all visitors and value their support of our community.

In March 2020, Rabbi Robuck and Jocelyn visited Brisbane for a few days. During their visit, a Beit Din was held, followed by a Kabbalat Shabbat service and dinner. We enjoyed a Shabbat morning service at which Jocelyn, in her role as UPJ Executive Officer presented Mavis with her Ner Tamid Award, an inspiring Sunday morning of learning and a wonderful Purim Party at which the Book of Esther was recounted and some beautiful artworks were created.

The closing of the Shul between March-June allowed some renovations to take place in our kitchen and office. Walls were removed, others were painted (along with the ceiling), a cupboard was built, the office was relocated and the kitchen landing was restored.

We resumed our services on Shabbat 13 June with a government imposed limit of 20 congregants. By mid July, with a relaxing of the restrictions for smaller venues, we were allowed to accommodate up to 40 congregants. Surprisingly, we had more people wanting to attend services than we did before the pandemic started.

For this year's HHD services, we had planned to be led by Rabbinic student Eliza McCarroll from Sydney. However, the closure of the Queensland border meant this could not happen. This situation led to some creative thinking, which resulted in an online Erev Rosh Hashanah/Kabbalat Shabbat service, a 'hybrid' Rosh Hashanah/Shabbat morning service and various online services for Kol Nidrei and Yom Kippur, provided by larger congregations from Sydney, ACT and Melbourne.

In order to maintain our greatest asset, we have spent considerable funds and arranged some major works to the exterior of our buildings. All of the windows have been restored, repainted and are now fully operational. The guttering and downpipes have all been replaced and the exterior of the main building has been fully repainted, giving a fresh new look to Beit Or v'Shalom,

Our Cheder continues to thrive under the leadership of Dr Andrew Cohen. Numbers have grown slightly and the children are enjoying the educational offerings that are available to them.

We have continued to run Shabbat morning services every week that we have been allowed to and have also enjoyed a Chanukah-Kabbalat Shabbat dinner, a Purim event, a Rosh Hashanah-Shabbat morning service, a Sukkot-Shabbat morning service and many online offerings. It is our hope that when the pandemic is over, we will be able to reintroduce our Kabbalat Shabbat services on a regular basis. Our services are led by a small, but capable, dedicated and increasing team of lay service leaders.

In this last year we celebrated the Bar Mitzvah of Eli Geffen, Sam Cohen and Jonathan Dekel. It is planned to celebrate the Bat Mitzvah of twins Michaela (Mikki) and Danielle (Danni) Manne on Shabbat 17 October. A sincere and hearty Mazel Tov to all families. In the next 12 months, we already have 5 B'nei Mitzvahs planned.

Our website, www.beitorvshalom.org.au provides members and others with information on services and other Beit Or v'Shalom activities. The contact form on the website is used regularly by visitors to the site. We provide a news feed and a wide range of handy links to the community. Our Facebook page is also a great resource for our members and others in the community, allowing an easy method of communication. We operate various FB pages and groups which allow us to communicate effectively and appropriately with the different groups within our community. Our Shul newsletter, "A Biseleh News" continues to be well received, not only by our congregation but also by others interstate and overseas. Thank you to our editors, Barry and Gael and also to all who have who contributed reports, stories and photographs.

Our congregation continues to function and grow only through the help and support of volunteers at every level. We have an active program of services, a wonderful Cheder and we hope to once more establish a calendar of great social events which depend on volunteers. My thanks to you all and a special thanks to the CSG volunteers who keep us all safe.

# <u>Temple Shalom – Gold Coast, Queensland</u>

Michael Shnukal, President

The role of the president can be an arduous one, unless there is a cohesive

board structure with open communication. Luckily, I have such a Board of Management to lead and I would like to explain to the congregation the vital role they play, both as individuals and as a cohesive group.

Temple Shalom \( \Psi \) Gold Coast

Affiliand with the Union for Programme Arthren

I would like to thank Louise Ward for her sterling contribution in the position of Vice-President. Louise is active, vibrant and has a good head on her shoulders. She has been instrumental in re-establishing the Cheder program this year. As well as the Cheder, she has been valuable in ensuring that all of the COVID-19 requirements have been met by the synagogue. Also, the weekly Friday flyer was an initiative of Louise's. In addition, Louise is the VP of the Guild and supports Jo Fletcher coordinating their very successful social events.

John Malone was elected to the board this year and has already made his mark. He has taken on the function of Board Secretary following the resignation of Judy Neumann. John has also taken on the mantle of Safety and Emergency and has been a key player in the upgrade of the Shul's database.

Robert Schinasi needs no introduction. As Treasurer, he manages the shul's money. He has been an active member of the board, ensuring all board members are kept abreast of the financial status of the shul and he has been the driving force behind the ongoing property development project.

David Neumann supports the house committee members and is responsible for much of the woodwork that has been provided for in the sanctuary. Quietly spoken, when he has something to say, it is always worth listening to.

The shul could not function if not for the Guild of which Jo Fletcher is President. The Guild does catering and they are heavily involved in fundraising and philanthropic activities to benefit the shul. Jo has been instrumental in the very successful morning tea in the park during the COVID-19 shut down. Jo to is also Secretary for the Chevra Kadisha.

My thanks also go to lan Fletcher, another board member who is leaving us. He has been coordinator of the house committee for the shul and has been a member of the surveillance team. My thanks for your help.

The services management team is coordinated by Susan Karanja, who has been kept busy throughout the year organising the different requirements for services and Chagim.

Peter Linton's background in the education sector has made him a valuable member of the board. He has been responsible for the writing of the TSGC constitution, writing terms of reference and has been available to offer opinions regarding correspondence which has required a technical response.

John Schinasi, Kate Lesser and Sara Longmuir have all had great experience in the role of President of the shul. They are active board members and their experience has been an invaluable source during board meetings. It would be remiss of me not to mention three other people who make contributions to the Shul.

For nearly 20 years, Howard Wiseman has been the voice of Temple Shalom. He has had to contend with numerous Presidents and their particular whims. Despite this, he maintains a level of dedication and commitment to his work and is a proven source of knowledge.

Everybody knows Jan Marriot. She has been the glue that binds the bricks of Temple Shalom together. In recent times, due to personal reasons, she has had to withdraw some of her support. Thank you Jan for all of your work. I wish you Refuagh Shlema.

Rev Cantor David Bentley has been like a breath of fresh air. His lovely voice has brought a wonderful dimension to our place of worship. He has supported the Cheder by taking on the role of b'nei mitzvah instructor. He was instrumental in organising and running our Kabbalat Shabbat services online. Currently he is devising services for the High Holy Days to be both online and in person at the Temple. David will be departing Temple Shalom in November and he will be travelling to Israel to take up residency there in order to spend time with his family. We wish him Nissim Tovah.

Serge Siboni has been seconded to be a board member and will take over the role vacated by Ian Fletcher, that being the house committee. I wish Serge much enjoyment in this role.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions the Annual General Meetings will be convened on a date yet to be determined. Consequently, the Board exists in caretaker mode, maintaining the smooth functioning of the Shul but not taking on any major decision making.

The biblical garden, Gan Elisheva, is looking luxurious with the fig, apple and lemon trees fruiting in their first year, all having been pruned and fertilised. The erection of a Sukkah and gazebo both enhance the functionality of the Garden.

It has been a pleasure to share this report with you. We may have had to close our "physical" doors, but our Community has remained very much open. We have learned other ways to come together to worship and support each other. We held online Kaddish Minyans, Erev Shabbat Services, First Night Seder and online UPJ wide study for Shauvot. Our Cheder moved to Zoom and we acquired a fabulous new teacher, Joanie Romick, who brings years of experience as a teacher. We developed a Members Only Private Facebook page and FaceTime coffee mornings. We now gather for social distancing bring your own coffee (or tea) mornings (see weekly newsletter and our members only Facebook page for dates etc).

Who knew we would become so adept at using social media and online meeting platforms! Maybe what we have discovered will help us to stay even more connected, once we return to some kind of normal.

# Sunshine Coast Jewish Community - Queensland

Gary Meyer, Immediate Past President



It is with great pleasure that I am stepping down, as President of the SCJC, knowing that there is a new and younger team in place to take the reins, and move the SCJC forward in

keeping with the wants and needs of a younger generation. And I would like to thank the new executive, Simone Collins (President), Lindsey Helitzer (Vice President) and Val Shahar (Secretary), for their commitment to the Sunshine Coast Community. Without the commitment of new young board members, the SCJC would simply cease to exist.

It is fair to say that over the past years I have noted a change in what Jews on the Sunshine coast want out of their community, and what they want and believe they need for their own and their children's future religious upbringing. I think those desires are less demanding of personal commitment than what we were used to in my day, but I suppose that the new board will feel their way through and be attentive to what signals the community puts out, and also be mindful of the fact that as members of the UPJ wider family, that they are able to draw on UPJ resources when the need arises, for which we are extremely grateful. There are also older members in the SCJC community who will also hopefully be available to help out, if and when needs arise.

I have made a commitment to Simone to schedule regular monthly meetings over the coming months, and even further ahead, to meet with the new executive, and I will be happy to prepare any topic to discuss and hand over as a means of knowledge and experience transfer, and it is vital that the new executive share the load and all take part in leadership and implementation of duties. It is also important that other members step up to join and help the board in future.

Over the past year our operations have been seriously curtailed, due to Covid 19, I would imagine much like most other UPJ member affiliates. Chabad who now have a permanent family resident on the Sunshine Coast have had a further small impact on our member numbers, with a few Israelis opting out of their membership with the SCJC. This is no great loss, but we are yet to ascertain how soon we will return to normal operations with the relaxation of Covid restrictions. We really rely on communal functions that rely heavily on social contact over meals and in relaxed venues, most of which are still closed to us in the format that we use them. Our family memberships are still at 45 even after losing a few members to Chabad, and we have sadly also lost 2 members this year who passed away.

Our ladies Chevra Kadisha team has been bolstered by a few new members, but it is still usually difficult to get a team together on short notice. Our mens team seems reasonably steady in numbers.

I would really like to thank the existing outgoing board for all their support over the past years, especially Madeline and Manfred Franklin, who have been real rocks of support, and who have gone above and beyond in all they have done. Alan Broder has always been a wonderful support, and someone I could count on to strategize with, and Rabbi John someone whose council I could always look to for alternate opinions and a wider religious perspective on topics. Sometimes the situations that the Sunshine Coast deal with are very different to those that our brothers and sisters in big communities' deal with, so a different level of approach is often required. Also, many thanks to Ohad Ladany who over the past few years has taken on the role of Treasurer, offering continued support to the community.

I would also like to thank all our members for their continued support of the SCJC over the years, and their ongoing support into the future. Most importantly, I would like to thank my amazing wife Kim who has always supported my endeavours and involvement with the SCJC since its inception. Without her support I would never have been able to work as closely with the community as I have.

So in conclusion, I wish Simone and her new executive all success, and I look forward to assisting and continuing as a board member moving forward.

# Beit Shalom Synagogue - Adelaide, South Australia

Janet Henrie, President



Beit Shalom is in the enviable position to be in Adelaide, South Australia, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adelaide has experienced lockdowns but not to the extent of the rest of Australia or indeed the world. In fact, with the advent of Zoom, Beit Shalom has expanded our base of participants in our services. Our rabbi embraced Zoom early and we have a blend of face to face services with a Zoom option.

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

Beit Shalom continues to maintain relatively steady membership numbers. In total, we had 139 memberships in 2019-20. We welcomed three new member units this year. We mourned the passing of two dearly beloved members. We celebrated two B'not Mitzvot, while we had to postpone or reschedule two others. We anticipate next year to be quite busy as we catch up on all our life cycle events.

#### **ACTIVITIES**

In 2019 we were proud to host the UPJ president's meeting. It is always insightful and inspiring to be able to attend the sessions and the related services, which is usually limited to just a few members who are willing to make the trip. Our small congregation gets so many benefits from being able to attend here in our own city.

We had a visit from Dean Staker to lead a singing workshop and he also provided music for the shacharit service during the UPJ meeting.

The Ner Tamid and Vatik awards were presented to Kitty Goode and Alison Dwyer, respectively during the UPJ meeting. We are proud of our volunteers who contribute to our Adelaide community and are pleased that they get this special recognition by the larger Jewish world.

In March 2020, we held our community Purim Carnival on our grounds, with attendance from all segments of our community. This was a highly successful event which included two Purimspiels, one performed by the children and an adult version as well as games, a bouncy castle and photo booth. This was the last event before lockdown from COVID-19.

As our usual planned events had to be cancelled, we have tried to reach out to our older and isolated members during the festival seasons of Pesach and Shavuot. Parcels of food along with toilet paper were hand delivered by congregants to these members, following proper COVID prevention protocols, supplemented with cards created by our cheder.

We were able to hold Mussar study sessions via Zoom. Participants especially enjoyed being able to be in the comfort of their own homes on cold and rainy nights.

We received a Commonwealth Grant for a security upgrade. We were able to install a new gate and enhance our pedestrian gate, but further installations have been delayed due to travel restrictions for the Sydney CSG.

#### Committees and Volunteers

With pleasure tinged with sadness, we honoured Eva Phillips' dedication to our Rabbinic Fund at our Tu B'shevat seder Tree Hugger Bash. We presented her with a chocolate receipt for her thirty years as treasurer as she has stepped down from this role. Time flies when you are doing something you love. We would not be able to provide the necessary support to our members without our long-serving devoted volunteers. This includes our shamuses, bimah associates, choir members, Purimspeil actors and directors, librarian, maintenance and clean-up crews and the Chevra Kadisha.

#### SISTERHOOD

The Sisterhood continued to be very active with its regular book club over the year, despite restrictions. Lively discussions could still be had, though with a distinct lack of the usual refreshments.

#### CHEDER

As the only ongoing Jewish education for children in Adelaide, Beit Shalom had an incredibly full Cheder this year with 25 students and a range of teachers, including recent B'nei Mitzvah student teachers. The cheder successfully transitioned to Zoom early and it proved to be a highlight of the week for many students experiencing lockdown from their other schooling. Regular sessions have now resumed to the joy of the students.

In summary, Beit Shalom is managing not only to survive, but to thrive in 2020. May it continue to do so.

# <u>Hobart Hebrew Congregation – Hobart, Tasmania</u>

Jeff Schneider, President



It has been an unusually eventful year for the Hobart Hebrew Congregation, with a combination of many challenges and positive outcomes.

On 4 July, we celebrated the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of the synagogue. The series of events planned for the weekend were sadly cancelled due to COVID-19. Many members of the greater Australian Jewish community were meant to join our local community to mark this historical milestone. However, despite this setback, we still enjoyed much favourable media coverage, and were able to have a small event on the anniversary weekend for our congregation.

As of this writing, Tasmania has been fortunate with COVID-19 as after a few months of lockdown, most activities were resumed, including services at the Hobart Synagogue. During lockdown, the Jewish community worked together to ensure the well-being of our more vulnerable members. We also took this time to perform much needed restoration work to our synagogue, and also transcribed the congregation's meeting minutes that go back all the way to 1841! These archives are available on the Hobart Synagogue's website.

There were a few unfortunate incidents this year for the Tasmanian Jewish community. In particular, in February, much media attention was given to a resident of Perth, Tasmania who was publicly displaying Nazi symbols outside of her house. As President, I was able to represent the community through various media outlets and called local politicians' attention to this matter. I filed a complaint with the Tasmania Anti-Discrimination Commission about this public display. Later, it was apparent that the resident displaying the Nazi symbols did not have the mental capacity to understand the meaning of the symbols, nor did we get the impression that she was targeting Judaism. Therefore, we withdrew the complaint. The resident later removed the symbols from display.

We have engaged with many local politicians throughout the year and hope to continue this in the future. In August, we hosted a federal senator for a meeting at the Hobart Synagogue. It is our plan to have a community Shabbat in 2021 to continue to grow relationships with politicians, the media and interfaith representatives of the Hobart community.

In February, we were fortunate to host Rabbi David Saperstein, president of the WUPJ, for a dinner and it was lovely to meet him and his wife and take them on a brief tour of the synagogue.

While the state borders are currently closed, we welcomed many tourists earlier in the year, and recently have been sharing Judaism with many local school groups during tours of the synagogue.

I am glad to report that the Hobart Hebrew Congregation and the Tasmania Jewish community continues to grow. While a small group, our community is active and we welcomed new Jewish residents to our congregation earlier in the year. Also, there is much optimism and excitement, as we recently established a cheder to ensure Judaism in Tasmania will continue for many years to come.

# Etz Chayim Progressive Synagogue – Bentleigh, Victoria

Pam Spiegel, President



The past year has been one of extraordinary change and challenge. In February 2020, Pam Spiegel was appointed President of Etz Chayim, succeeding Maureen Barten. We would like to thank Maureen and Gary Trytell, Immediate Past Vice President, who both stepped down in February and made a tremendous contribution to our community over the past 5 years. Gary was replaced by Lewis Bearman & Jade Rosenberg as joint Vice Presidents. Both Maureen and Gary have continued to serve on the Etz Chayim board, ensuring continuity and stability.

What a year! Last year when we were in Shule for the HHDs no one envisaged the year that was about to befall us! The Shule building, devoid of a congregation, has been supplemented with cameras, speakers, computers, cables and mobile phones. Suddenly we were virtual, which was a new concept for our rabbi, cantorial soloists and our community. A huge learning curve for all!

During our first lockdown in early March, we engaged David Nathan as our volunteer technical adviser and set up a Tech team comprised of Jade Rosenberg, Frank Moore, Pam Spiegel, Suzie Eisfelder, and Adrian Kirkwood who worked together in shul and in their homes to create both an advisory team and tech shammas team to manage the transition on the ground and assist our members, a vast majority of whom are elderly, to connect in this novel online medium. We are so grateful to David, Jade & Frank for the hours of work to set up in a week to start sending out our first virtual service and throughout the High Holy Days. In addition to using Zoom and Zoom Webinar, we are also now streaming live to our You Tube channel. An unanticipated benefit of our online services has been the increase of attendees, including members and non-members, our regulars and those who used to attend infrequently increasing their service attendance, those who were in hospital, care, or physically unable to attend were able to fully participate, and the non-members who chose to make donations with their gratitude for being able to participate in our services.

With the incredible work of our Treasurer, Ron Popper, we are working with CSG to finalise a grant to improve the security of our building. We appreciate Ron's meticulous focus on the finances to help guide us through these challenging times.

As Melbourne went into lock down, our rabbi and ritual committee came up with many different programs to fill in the many hours people had on their hands. Necessity is truly the mother of invention! Many of the congregation participated in Zoom Seders with their families and Rabbi Allison ran a Zoom Seder on the second night of Pesach from her home.

Beatrice Coleman, our Membership Chair, and Samantha Walters coordinated a group of members to ring our congregation weekly to see that they were travelling ok and to check if they needed any help. This has continued throughout the COVID shutdown. The members were very grateful for the phone calls and help offered and we thank Bea and Samantha very much. There were many new activities including Zoom cooking lessons, storytelling, art & craft lessons and study classes led by a combination of our rabbi and volunteer members. Cuppa Club, a monthly morning gathering featuring different guest speakers on a vast range of topics, went onto Zoom mode as did our monthly discussion group, hosted by our former Treasurer, Dan Poll. We thank all of the people that helped with all of these events.

Our High Holy Days proved to be an extraordinary challenge with incredible success. Rabbi Allison expects perfection and everyone rises to the occasion. Our talented Musical director, Sharon Mattatia worked with our cantorial soloists Galit Klas, Vered Harel, Jordan Walters-Brown & Adrian Kirkwood for their parts in the services. Due to the restrictions in Melbourne, Hanna Silver, our pianist did not play in Shule, and spent hours preparing music on Soundcloud for each singer to use for their performances. This enabled us to have an additional person in shule for each service. It was like musical chairs in the Synagogue with people coming and going to ensure compliance with the restricted number of 5 in the Shule. Regardless of all the ins and outs of singers and tech staff, the services were so appreciated by our congregation, many of whom were unable to attend HHD in the past due to distance and illness. Distance is no longer a barrier and we welcomed visitors from Germany, Israel, United States, and interstate.

We would like to sincerely thank our amazing Rabbi who wrote, directed, and performed the two Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur family services and dramatized stories, featuring cameo performances by adult and children members of our congregation. The services and stories were available on YouTube and our Website. Twelve-year-old Raphi Conyer spent many hours editing the footage. We thank them, and all who participated, very much!

Lockdown has impacted the finances of our community at large. While our membership numbers have been relatively consistent compared to last year, a number of our congregants have approached us for relief on their membership fees. Prior to COVID, we negotiated a change with Rabbi Allison's to move to a part-time role, enabling her to pursue further studies. This change together with the JobKeeper eligibility for all our staff, has been critical and enabled us to maintain our full staff during these challenging times. We are deeply grateful for the generosity of members and non-members who have made donations in a show of appreciation for the opportunity to Zoom in with Etz Chayim weekly for Shabbat, Yom Tov, and for the various programs we have offered.

We are incredibly grateful to Samantha Joseph, our office administrator who has supported us so ably as we transitioned through various stages. We are also incredibly fortunate to have such a positive, collaborative, and cooperative Board who has worked tireless to ensure we maintain our connection and the services we provide our community.

We would also like to acknowledge the support and co-operation through the PJV community and the collaboration between the various synagogues during the High Holyday period. This has helped draw the community closer together during these very challenging times.

# Leo Baeck Centre for Progressive Judaism - East Kew, Victoria

Gillian Lubansky, President

This time last year, The Leo Baeck Centre was eagerly approaching the final event in celebrating our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Gala Dinner was a great success and the end of



the Anniversary celebrations marked the beginning of a strong future. It demonstrated our attachment to the traditions handed down to us by past leaders while at the same time acknowledging that we have to ensure that we engage the future and younger members of our community. We are fortunate that we have no major debts to service, but our income stream is primarily membership-based, and in the current financial climate we have, at best, a static membership. We need to continue to keep revising our way of thinking about this, and at the same time create a legacy for the future. Our Immediate Past President, Dr James Beck, has worked very hard to enable us to look confidently towards the future and started this work. I thank him very much for all the work and effort he has given to our Centre in his role as President and his new role as Immediate Past President.

One way we have sought to engage the future generations is to take advantage of the new, younger members of our Board. Together with other members they have set up a new group called REJEWVENATION, an action-oriented group whose aim is to build community, broadly and without borders. While taking off slowly, it is engaging those who otherwise might not be involved. It is particularly focussed on reaching young professionals that feel Jewish, to connect, network with and build a community.

We have, like everyone else, had a challenge in maintaining the connection and engagement of our members through the covid crisis and lockdown. Thanks to the excellent work of Rabbi Keren-Black, and the unstinting work of our tech team, all of whom are volunteers, our services were able to be presented interactively via zoom. We have had the pleasure of engaging not only our regulars, but many other people who for one reason or another could not attend shul in person. It was disappointing that our regular activities could not be held in person, but we even managed a Pesach service on line, then regular services leading up to a wonderful effort for the High Holy Days, which presented congregants with the opportunity to reflect and participate in the service from the safety of their own homes.

Zoom has also given us the opportunity to continue to run the centre as best we can. The Board meets regularly by zoom, and the office staff work from home. There are many activities that we can offer that are being held by zoom.

The Sh'ma program for Jewish studies for children has also been held via Zoom. The hard work of the teachers in engaging children who have participated is to be commended. We hope to be able to return to classroom activities next year.

LBC House of Studies usually holds several major events during the year. These are:

- LBC Annual Lecture delivered in March: this year the speaker was Doctor Helen Caldicott the anti-nuclear activist and author. As our first Covid era event this was delivered via skype to a small audience in the shul. The usual audience size for this event is around 60.
- Shavuot. This event was held via zoom with the four speakers illustrating their talks via Power Point. The event attracted 38 participants most of whom remained until midnight.

Normally Chavurah Lunches are held one a month but due to tightened controls only one was held in November with the topic "I never knew I was a Jew".

Replacing the Lunches were a series of on-line LBC Studios run by Rabbi Keren-Black. These have covered: Contemporary Slavery, Suddenly the plague Ceased; Refugee and Asylum seekers; Royalty or Republic"; God's Role in Tragedy. The Dunera Boys

In February a special Pride Panel was held.

Our regular Women's Discussion group has been going strong. Meeting in person regularly, then online, they have covered topics such as:

- Highlights of the new High Holidays Prayerbook.;
- 'Jewish New York';
- 'A Jewish Engagement with Mitochondrial Disease-Could Jewish Inherited Disease Be Prevented;
- 'Unique Perspective on Corona Virus, as a member of Australian Intelligence, A Networked Community, Jewish Melbourne in the 19th Century.';
- Dr Sandra Hacker on "My Feminist Journey;
- Dr Anne Peters from LA on the pandemic

Our longstanding Treasurer Marlis Cohen was awarded an OAM in the Australia Day honours this year. Sadly, we lost her just before the High Holy Days. She will be sadly missed.

The Board, the office staff, the Rabbi and all volunteers must be thanked for all the work they have done in maintaining our community during this crisis, and we look forward to next year.

## <u>Temple Beth Israel – St Kilda, Victoria</u>

Rebecca Silk, President



The year 5780- 2020 has been dominated by the COVID-19 crisis and, for TBI, the pivots involved in becoming a virtual synagogue and navigating the organisational challenges of this crisis.

Religious life, learning and programming were disrupted by COVID in March 2020. The subsequent government restrictions in Victoria have kept our building closed for worship (aside from service leaders) and as a workplace, until the time of this report (and possibly beyond). We are very proud of the way that our clergy, admin, technical and support teams have responded to the many challenges of this extraordinary time.

The use of internet technology, digital infrastructure, and some spiritual creativity at TBI allowed for an expanded program of prayer services online. This included week day Maariv, Shabbat and festival services being streamed from the synagogue. Our parallel minyanim Gesher and Hineinu also each continued monthly online thanks to our dedicated lay leaders.

An absolute highlight of the year was the creation of yachad.org.au – our online platform for the High Holy Days. This site not only provided easy access to services but also encouraged involvement by community members, featuring their Elul reflections, shofar blasts, children activities, blessings, recipes and much more.

The talents of our Bimah team were showcased on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with a liturgical group of only four including Cantor Laloum, and a producer (as permitted by Stage 4 restrictions in Victoria) in our sanctuary, and Rabbi Kim Ettlinger and Rabbi Gersh Lazarow broadcasting from their homes. The spiritual experience had a quality and depth that went beyond the expectations of our congregants and visitors. The reach of yachad, YouTube and Facebook meant that over 10,000 screens from 25 countries viewed our services.

In terms of learning programs, Melton adult learning classes went online with teachers and students from other states easily accessing these courses. 134 students were enrolled in these online courses through the year.

Tutoring for B'nei Mitzvah and pre B'nei Mitzvah students also went online. Some students rescheduled their celebrations while others opted for the virtual offering i.e. streaming from the family's home as well as the synagogue. Of the many positives from this year, the ability to "zoom in" family members from around the world to participate in the service was surely one of the highlights. A total of 30 young people became b'nei mitzvah.

In terms of communal life, our army of dedicated volunteers have reached out to members through regular and frequent phone calls and care packages. In many ways we have never been more connected.

Another great benefit of the year has been the collaboration within the Progressive movement. Internet access to festival and Shabbat services has been facilitated by Progressive Judaism Victoria. Clergy and service leaders from the movement ran Torah study sessions and combined services during the Yamim Nora'im, and it has been our pleasure to stream the monthly Netzer led "Sprout" Kabbalat Shabbat service from TBI.

Many significant celebrations have been curtailed or put on hold in 2020. We therefore look forward to properly celebrating Rabbi Ettlinger's 10 years at TBI, Rabbi Morgan's 36 years as a Rabbi, Rabbi Levi's 60 years in the Rabbinate, and the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Temple Beth Israel.

We have been overwhelmed by the support from our members for our virtual synagogue and by their generosity in these difficult times.

Both the challenges and opportunities of this year have been immense. We could not be more grateful to Rabbi Lazarow, Rabbi Ettlinger, Cantor Laloum and our wonderful staff for all they have done to keep our community together, while being apart – We are truly "yached lev el lev."

# Kehillat S'dot Zahav - Goldfields Congregation Inc.

David Kram, President

#### COMMITTEE

Thanks to Elisabeth Holdsworth for being on the committee until her and her husband's move to La Trobe Valley. We welcomed Jerome Winston OAM and Ailsa Jean as neew members.



Dr David Kram AM remained President and acted as Public Officer, Sarah Austin remained Vice-President, Bruce Sokel Treasurer. Jerome Winston became Minute Secretary, and committee members were Ailsa Jean and Leah Mow-Yoffee.

#### THANKS TO

- ARZA, PJV and UPJ, and for their publicity and communications. These organisations are very important to help present a unified voice to the world.
- The Bendigo Interfaith Council for their support. It is so important to know that we are part of a wider community keeping religious faith alive in the Goldfields.
- Leah Mow-Yoffee for developing the social aspect of KSZ with two very successful gatherings.
- The Hon. Howard Nathan OAM, assisted by Sarah Austin, for their gigantic, far-reaching advocacy of the
  preservation of Jewish history in the historic White Hills Ceremony, an important initiative being in train for the year
  2020-21.
- Lynne Newington, who commissioned a sculptor to fashion a bronze *magen david* which graces our events, donating it to our community and providing beautiful photos which are the basis for greetings cards.
- Fran Sokel for assisting with financial oversight.

Special thanks as always to our visiting rabbis: our consultant rabbi Cantor Michel Laloum, as well as Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black, who has become a focal point of our interfaith open-air services each February, also to Rabbi Fred Morgan, who brings torot up to our small community and leads inspiring workshops. Speaking of workshops, thanks to committee member Jerome Winston for leading thought-provoking discussion forums, live and on-line, which help to educate us and answer the many questions from our members and guests.

Thanks again to our members and guests, who not only attend functions but bring donations of food and are actively involved in site and food preparation and clearing up.

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

In the 2019-20 year there were 34 subscribing members, 36 last year, 34 the year before).

Noted with sorrow the passing of Greg Kerr and extend sincere wishes to his family.

#### FINANCES/ASSETS

The subscription remained at \$35 per year during 2019-20. KSZ's financial year is July 1-June 30 year to year.

As at June 31, 2020: Account balance \$1,436 in the black, cash reserves \$175, Paypal \$25.

We do have some non-cash assets. A collection of siddurim (*mishkan tefillah*), some second-hand books (KSZ library), a box of ritual accoutrements (kiddush cup, candles, seder plate, various cloths etc), a metal sculpture of a *magen david* (donated by Lynne Newington) and a box of basic catering items.

# **KSZ EVENTS**

31/8/2019 A Shabbat service was led at Rotary Gateway Park, Kangaroo Flat, Bendigo by Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black, who brought a torah scroll. The rabbi blessed Oscar, son of Michelle Atlas and David Sparks, with the name *Baruch Alon ben Michal v'David*. After the ensuing AGM, Sarah Austin led a visit to the Jewish section of the White Hills Cemetery and we said a few prayers.

5/10/2019 Shabbat shuvah was at West End Hall, Castlemaine. Jerome Winston led a discussion group and Israeli-Australian Alon Trigger read from torah. We officially thanks Lynne Newington for her gift of a bronze *magen david*.

23/11/2019 Rabbi Fred Morgan led a torah service and workshops in Kangaroo Flat. A Committee meeting ensued.

29/12/2019 Leah Mow-Yoffee organised an informal chanukah gathering at Ray Bradfield Room, Castlemaine. This was well attended and there was much conviviality. An ad hoc candle-lighting, blessings and songs concluded the event. The Bendigo advertiser published an article about it on 4th January 2020.

7/8/2020 The KSZ committee welcomed back Rabbi Keren-Black and his wife Sue with a shabbat meal at a restaurant in Kyneton.

8/2/2020 The by now traditional interfaith service at Malmsbury Botanical Gardens was again led by Rabbi Keren-Black – this time we went indoors to the Shire Hall as it rained for the first time.

8/3/2020 Leah Mow-Yoffee organised another successful social gathering in Castlemaine where there was a colourful array of fancy dress outfits, delicious hamantashen and other delicacies, and a review of the *megillat ester*.

No seder event took place in 2020 owing to covid-19 lockdown.

24/5/2020 The usual Shavuot-themed study day went on-line via Zoom and the attendance was good. Jerome Winston took us through some interesting topics and we were honoured to have Cantor Laloum's involvement.

All other events up to the end of KSZ's year (June 30) were cancelled.

## Temple David - Perth, Western Australia

Jane Figgis, President



As elsewhere, COVID-19 necessitated changes – upheaval! - to Temple David practices during the first months of the pandemic. The building was closed, services live-streamed, and activities either cancelled or, where possible, conducted online. However, Western Australia has had no community transmission of the disease since 11 April and, as a consequence, many restrictions have been lifted.

Most importantly, we were able to hold all our High Holy Day services in the synagogue. All in attendance recognised that being able to be together was an immense and rare privilege, and it added an extra sense of spirit and specialness to the days. We were even able to have our popular Rosh Hashanah luncheon, albeit with new rules about serving food and social distancing. Our hearts did (and do) go out to all of you who cannot share our Jewish holy days, physically, with your congregations.

One of the outstanding features of Temple David is the range of activities that have been initiated and run by members of the congregation. Shmooz is the outstanding example: a monthly luncheon complete with musical entertainment for older members which also attracts many Jewish non-members. At least a dozen volunteers from the congregation are involved cooking, serving, setting up, and cleaning up for Shmooz. The Yiddish Club, which was inaugurated last year, is going well. There is Israeli dancing once a week, Mahjong also. Pre-COVID, the Baby Boomers group had an Indigenous tour of King's Park, saw films, attended exhibitions, and enjoyed meals together (of course). The Book Club fills the boardroom five times a year, with lively discussion and debate.

I must include among the activities that are run by congregational volunteers TDSecurity. They are at the gate every Shabbat morning for the start of the Temple David Religion School (TDRS) and maintain their vigil till the service finishes. The members of the Board, the Executive, the Committees and teams, responsible for the smooth running of Temple David as an organisation, contribute their time, intelligence and commitment. This year the Board undertook a thorough review of the practices and policies which had become habit and reconfigured some into a formal set administrative rules and policy.

We have two parallel formal programs beginning designed to further embed the tenets of Relational Judaism in the fabric of Temple David life. *Neighbourhood Mensch* is designed to bring together about a dozen people living in the same or neighbouring postcodes. Their meetings will be designed by the groups themselves although all will include paired relational conversations. *Connect* is a more formal program which Rabbi Adi has based on an American model where group leaders, who will receive training, lead conversations on topics (for example, what are you thankful for? what does the world need from you?) with Jewish source material to consider.

The Temple David Religion School (TDRS) has gone from strength to strength with a more structured curriculum, additional teachers and, especially, the incredible group of teaching assistants all relatively recent bnei mitzvah. Indeed, a recent Shabbat morning service was dedicated to honour these young people who give up their Saturday mornings week after week to pass on their Judaism to the younger kids. The work of the TDRS teachers has been recognised, first by a funding

grant from the Office of Multicultural Interests, and second by achieving the first stage of the state's Pathways to Improvement (PIP) program.

Temple David is in a better financial position than at the time of last year's report to the UPJ when the possible relocation of the Congregation was under active consideration. While we have yet to establish a long-term financially sustainable business model, we now know exactly what is required to maintain our current premises and we have the resources to do so for the next few years – barring any awful surprise.

While COVID-19 did impact on our income, COVID-related Commonwealth funds provided reasonable compensation. Further, a sizeable donation by a former Temple David member, matched by a handful of generous current members, along with help from the Temple David Permanent Trust and the timely payment of membership fees have all ensured that our bank balance will remain positive through FY2021. We are working hard at the moment to understand how best to keep the services of Rabbi Adi Cohen after his contract ends 30 June 2021. He has, in many ways, rejuvenated Temple David; his contribution to our current vitality is a credit to him and deeply appreciated by all of us.

# Beth Shalom - Auckland, New Zealand

Olga Bernstein, President

As it has for all communities around the world, Covid-19 has presented challenges for Beth Shalom that we've never faced before. One of the positives that has come out of a very dark situation has been how the community has worked to ensure that we care for those who are more vulnerable, and also stay connected and continue to celebrate, pray, learn and grieve together, using remote technology.

In addition to the usual ebb and flow of community life - births, b'nei mitzvot, marriages, welcoming new members, celebrations, conversions, deaths - Beth Shalom has two exciting projects underway.

The Orthodox community in Auckland has bought a new site for their synagogue and the Jewish day school and Beth Shalom is in discussion with them about the possibility of creating a Jewish Community on the site and relocating our community.



ETH SHALON
בית שלום
Litring Judicion
The Progressive Joseph Judicion
Georgestion of Judicional
Manufact of UPJ

The other big initiative is a Vision Project, which will refine our values and priorities for a changing world. As a community, we're relooking at our purpose and who and how we're serving. And out of that, we'll have a clear idea of who and what we are, who we serve and want to serve, and the services we want to provide.

# **Dunedin Jewish Congregation – Dunedin, New Zealand**

Jamin Halberstadt and Keren Segal, Co-Presidents

Although the COVID pandemic compromised our ability to hold many activities, the Dunedin Jewish Congregation has largely been able to weather this year's challenges. Last year's co-presidents – Jamin Halberstadt and Keren Segal -- stayed on to continue the work of re-invigorating the community, and were joined by David (Zim) Sherman (long-serving treasurer in his final year in the role), Robin Lamont (secretary), and four committee members: Lynette Taylor (treasurer in training), Ariela Yehezkely, Emily Schwartz, and Sarah Pezaro.

This year's primary goal was to continue to work toward realizing our vision: "a thriving Jewish community preserving and celebrating our cultural heritage and enriching our world." Our post-AGM activities began promisingly, with a well-attended Chanukah party, followed by a a talk by Dr Peretz Segal, Jewish philosopher and former Head of Legal Counsel at the Israeli Ministry of Justice on Jewish History, Myth and Faith. The event was held in the public library, part of a Jewish seminar series we hope to develop in conjunction with the Dunedin City Council.

As for most communities around the world, however, the new year brought unanticipated challenges that put much of our further plans on hold. Although New Zealand has been at the international forefront in our pandemic response, we were fully locked down, or in a heightened state of alert, for about six months of the year, during which face to face gatherings were either prohibited or ill-advised. Nevertheless, we put on two very popular events – our traditional Hannukah celebration, and a Purim party just before the first lockdown and hosted several service/pot lucks (our signature event) when possible. Despite extensive work to host the High Holidays on our own (special thanks to our sub-committee of Sarah, Emily, and Keren), we ultimately opted to direct members to online service options provided by the UPJ. Restrictions lifted just in time to host a Havdallah/break-the-fast event on the final day of the holidays, providing some much-needed "live" social interaction. Most recently, the community participated in the Dunedin Abrahamic Interfaith Group's annual "Peace Lecture," this year delivered by the Rt Hon Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and Administrator of the United Nations Development Fund. Emily Schwartz, a rabbinical student, represented the Jewish Community in a panel discussion of "Peace in the Age of COVID-19".

Security remains a concern after last year's Christchurch terror attacks, though it has taken a backseat to the more immediate health threat posed by the pandemic. In a significant breakthrough, we were the recipients of a major grant to upgrade security (part of a nationwide bid on behalf of Jewish congregations in NZ). The upgrades, which include a security fence, new alarm and video systems, new exits and locks, and shatterproof coatings on all windows, will enhance not only security but also aesthetics and well-being in our community, creating more usable social space and addressing a number of (non-terror related) safety hazards. The work should be completed by the end of the calendar year, and we look forward to a fresh start, free of COVID, and with more inviting community space, in 2021.

# Temple Sinai – Wellington, New Zealand

Jeremy Smith, Chairman

As with most congregations, life in the world of COVID-19 has changed with the way we work, socialise and pray. Who would have thought Zoom services would be a key part of member engagement. We have also found that our members want more social interaction, with good attendance over the High Holy Days.



The functioning of Temple Sinai continues to rest on the dedicated efforts and support of its volunteer members serving on the Board and its committees, as lay readers and chazzanim, educators, on the security team, producing our Bulletin and much more. The Board have been working on a strategy to find ways of supporting and developing all our volunteers and at the same time encouraging a culture of engagement and involvement in Temple life.

Our young families and youth continue to be a priority through ongoing successful programmes:

- Tot Shabbat and Kid's Shabbat have been well attended. Kid's Shabbat is a new programme started for 4 to 7-year old's and is led by parents.
- Our Beit Midrash programme is on hold as we don't have students in the 7-12 age range which is a consequence of an age gap in our congregation. We look forward to an upcoming younger cohort starting in a year or two.
- Garin Sinai, the Temple Sinai youth group has blended with Habo. During the Covid-19 lockdown, they joined up online
  with Habonim Dror across New Zealand. Young Adults Young adults continue to be an active part of our community
  with a continuing regular 'habayit' activities and deepening involvement in congregation

The New Zealand Progressive Jewish Forum ('Kiwi PJ') continues meets on Skype every few months to keep in touch and discuss issues concerning Progressive Jewish communities across New Zealand.

Covid 19 and New Zealand going into lockdown was a big factor in how we ran our services this last year. We started using Zoom for our services and have continued with a monthly Zoom Shabbat since lockdown has ended.

Pesach 2020 was truly unique; via Zoom it was celebrated exclusively with memorable anecdotes of previous family gatherings in South Africa, Europe, Egypt, NZ, etc., by quite a sizable gathering. Our community Passover Seder with Max and Shannyn had to be abandoned under the lockdown. Instead a range of online Seders from near and far were on offer. Temple Sinai supported Max and Shannyn in providing a rich "Quarantine Seder" experience to Temple members.

With Covid 19, our new revitalised Kesher Team and Neighbourhood Hubs were kept very busy during lockdown reaching out to all members of our community and providing support where needed. This included shopping for more vulnerable members and phone calls and emails.

Our membership is stable with 2 new members. Some of the new members last year took up their own individual membership separate to being part of their families.

As a final note, it is necessary to mention the topic of operations and management. Whilst our membership remains stable the ongoing low interest rate environment has impacted on revenue. The major renovation work that was planned for this year is delayed until the new year due to complications but grants and fund raising will need to be sought to cover the costs. Looking to the future we are considering the option to engage a Rabbi for our congregation.

My thanks go to our Board members, members of our various committees and congregation who devote their time and energy to sustain our Temple family.

# **United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong**

Rachel Fleishman, President



The United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong (UJC) had another successful year in 2019. The UJC Sanctuary and other parts of the Jewish Community Centre (JCC) were the main venue for Shabbat services, holiday services, festival celebrations, educational programs including Shorashim. Shorashim, the congregation's religious school, began its 19th year. Many life cycle and other celebrations were held, including B'nai Mitzvah, Brit Milah, conversions and naming ceremonies.

Leadership: Rabbi Stanton Zamek, Education and Programming Director Rabbi Martha Bergadine, and Cantorial Soloist Ayal Ben Or provided spiritual leadership and developed and expanded programs for the congregation and the greater Hong Kong community. An Annual General Meeting on 18 June 2019 elected the following UJC members to the Executive Committee: Priscilla Adams, Charles Allard, Cheryl Blanco, Bob Cooper, Victor Elias, Sergio Fernandes de Lima, Rachel Fleishman, Andrew Gordon, Thomas Kaplan, Joshua Lavin, Robin Roschke, Alan Schiffman, Yuval Tal, and Barbara Thomas. Robert Green, as Founding Chairman, Robert Meyer, Mark Michelson, Charles Monat are Honorary Members of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee chose the following officers: Rachel Fleishman (president), Alan Schiffman (vice president), Andrew Gordon (treasurer) and Robin Roschke (secretary). Nancy Lui, Executive Administrator, Charlene Hsia, Assistant Administrator continued to make outstanding contributions to the operations and spirit of the UJC.

**Membership**: Membership figures (in units) as of 31 December, 2019, were as follows:

Family: 88 Individual: 31

Individual "Under 35": 2 Non-Resident: 14 Associate: 6

Life: 3

Total members: 144 (248 adults, 103 children)

The majority of members have come from Progressive, Reform, or Liberal congregations in North America and Commonwealth countries, and many have also been affiliated with Conservative synagogues. The UJC has broad international representation, including members from Australia, Brazil, Britain, Cambodia, Canada, China, France, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand and the United States. A number of UJC members are originally from Hong Kong.

We estimate over half of our congregation have lived in Hong Kong for more than five years. Many have lived in Hong Kong for decades.

#### SHABBAT AND HOLIDAYS

**Shabbat services.** The UJC holds weekly Friday night Shabbat services in its permanent Sanctuary in the auditorium of the Jewish Community Centre. On Saturday mornings, Torah Study sessions are held in the Rabbi's apartment in Robinson Place. Every Friday, 7:00pm in The UJC Sanctuary, followed by Shabbat dinner at the JCC. When the Rabbi and Cantor are away, lay leaders conduct services.

**Torah Study/Parashat HaShavua:** Held every Saturday, 9:30am-11:00am at the Rabbi's Residence; Study of the Torah portion of the week, drawing on both traditional and contemporary sources. A light breakfast is served.

**Holidays and Festivals:** The UJC again organised an active and diversified schedule of holiday and festival events during the past year. Rabbi Stanton Zamek, Rabbi Martha Bergadine, Cantorial Soloist Ayal Ben Or, Nancy Lui, Charlene Hsia and numerous UJC volunteers took the lead in planning, coordinating and conducting these celebrations.

#### **EDUCATION**

**Havdalah Pajama Party:** A monthly program for "older" 2's, 3, and 4-year olds and their parents. Held in The UJC Sanctuary, the children learn about Shabbat and holidays through songs, games, crafts and stories.

**Shorashim:** Under the leadership of the Education and Programming Director continues to provide quality liberal religious and Hebrew language education to primary and middle school age children and their families. The school is inclusive and egalitarian, reflecting the values of Progressive Judaism and the diversity of the Jewish Community in Hong Kong. Shorashim is for children pre-kindergarten to grade 8 and covers history and social studies, holidays and ceremonies, Hebrew and prayer, ethics and values and Torah. High school students continue to be involved with learning and also serve as madrikhim ("guides" or teachers' aides) for the lower grades. Education is the cornerstone of The UJC, and the quality of Shorashim emphasizes that commitment. On average, 35 students were enrolled during the year.

**Anti-Defamation League Program:** When reports that upper middle school and teenage students of The UJC were receiving antisemitic harassment (ranging from "jokes" to direct insults) at their weekday schools, Educational Leadership scheduled a program with the Anti-Defamation League. The program was presented via Skype on May 19, 2019. B'nai Mitzvah Students and madrichim took part.

**Adult Education**: Introduction to Judaism; "One Congregation, One Book" Project, "The Story of the Jews, Vol 2" and "Antisemitism: Here and Now"; Hebrew-in-a-Day Marathon with Rabbi Martha; Prayer Book Hebrew for Adults; HeBrews – Conversational Hebrew by Ayal Ben Or.

**Visiting Rabbis, Scholars**: Rabbi Dena Bodian (25 March 2019) and Rabbi Or Rose (7-10 June 2019)

# SPECIAL PROGRAMMING RELATED TO THE HONG KONG PROTESTS

As the Hong Kong protests, intensified in the autumn of 2019, The UJC provided programs to help members understand the situation and manage the on-going stress:

**Prof. John Carroll** (6 September 2019); Prof. Carroll provided historical context for the protests and explained the politics driving the current situation.

**Special Discussion Session** (13 October 2019); Rabbi Zamek led a discussion which allowed participants to share their concerns and provide support to each other in a confidential setting.

**Psychologist Theresa Tang B.A., M.A. RP(HKPS)** (24 November 2019); Ms. Tang presented a session entitled "Managing Difficult Situations: Strategies and Skills to Help Parents Navigate Hong Kong's Current Climate."

#### TIKKUN OLAM

**UJC NETT Service Learning Project:** The UJC NETT (Native English Teen Tutor) Service Learning project completed its seventh year. Fourteen UJC teens travelled to Tin Shui Wai approximately once a month to serve as English tutors for English High-Achieving students at the HLC School. After the visit, The UJC NETTs joined Rabbi Zamek for Shabbat lunch and a learning session. For the final session in March 2019, the HKFYG/Lee Shau Kee EHAs visited The UJC. The NETTs also had a special session with English Low-Achieving students at the HLC School in the end of March 2019.

**UJC Make a Miracle Mitzvah Day:** On UJC Make a Miracle Mitzvah Day (8th December, 2019), over 135 individuals came together for a day of volunteering with Hong Kong charitable organizations. UJC volunteers as young as age two worked

with organisations serving underprivileged children, vulnerable populations, and environmental concerns. Prior to the event, a supplies drive was held to gather items necessary for one of the projects.

**Volunteering with Habitat for Humanity:** Several UJC members volunteered as a group with Habitat for Humanity. Together they painted public housing apartments.

#### **SOCIAL ACTIVTIES**

Breakfast Havurah: A gathering that features lively discussion over breakfast usually with visiting scholars in attendance.

**The Bookhers:** The UJC's Book Group meeting on a monthly basis for anyone who likes to read and discuss Jewish books – fiction, memoir, biography – the group to selects.

**OOMF – The Overlords of Maniacal Fandom:** OOMF is the UJC affinity group meeting on a monthly basis for lovers of nerd culture in all its myriad forms.

Millennial Quiz Night - For All Adults: 4 November 2019

**YoPro**: Several Young Professional members of the UJC have taken leadership of a YoPro Group for members age 25-40. They have planned several well received events including a Tu B'Shevat Hike, and Quiz Night. Given the enthusiasm of the core of YoPro members, it seems likely this group will continue to thrive next year.

**Youth Group:** The purpose of YG is to provide an opportunity for UJC member children age 13+ to socialize together. The primary events were two APJ Shabbatonim: Bali 12-14 April and Tokyo 15-17 November.

**Life Cycle Events**. During 2019, UJC members celebrated: 8 B'nai Mitzvah, 6 Brit Milah, 3 Naming Ceremonies. In addition, 1 child was born to UJC members during the year and more are imminently due.

**Funding**. The Congregation is partially funded by membership dues and fees for specific programs and events. UJC members and other friends of the congregation make general donations to the congregation and also make donations to recognize Holidays and life cycle events. The UJC is grateful to the Ohel Leah Synagogue Charity for their generous subvention to our Congregation, including the UJC office premises, the UJC Sanctuary and the apartment for the UJC Rabbi.

I would like to conclude by thanking all the professional staff, the office staff, my colleagues on ExCo and the many volunteers who have contributed so much time and energy to making the Congregation such a vibrant, vital community during the past year.

# **United Indonesian Jewish Community**

Rabbi Benjamin Meijer Verbrugge

## PASSING FINANCIAL CRISIS

In 2019, after nine years serving as a voluntary (not paid) local rabbi and chairman of the United Indonesian Jewish Community (UIJC), suddenly I lost my job at a French company in early May 2019. I had to struggle for one year doing anything to support my family. The local community members, who live in very medium-to-low level income, could not support the local rabbi's livelihood, and they also suffered due to epidemic problems.

The President of UIJC Jakarta decided to personally support my family financially for five months starting November 2019. He did this in order to allow me to not go forward with my plan to leave the country and work overseas. He did not want the community to lose its leader and rabbi. May HaShem bless him for his generous support.

A friend from the USA suggested that I make an application to the Jewish Agency Emergency Community Assistance Loan Fund. However, after reviewing my application, the Jewish Agency replied that my community did not meet the eligibility criteria for this fund.

We have kept in our mind that we have run the UIJC for almost 10 years with a self-sustained system, both in financing and leadership (human resources). I finally decided to ask the donor to stop his financial support to me in March 2020. I decided to ask for a loan from the government bank to support five months of my living expenses, and was happy that the bank approved it.

The Coronavirus pandemic caused me to be in lock-down in my province since March 2020. I was unable to do any travel for business and rabbinical work to supervise my area community groups. Therefore, I focused on teaching consulting and counseling work, and led Shabbat services for the community twice a month and High Holy Days services. We have mostly used LINE audio/video messengers since 2014.

Baruch Hashem, in May 2020 my former company invited me to work not as an employee, but as a business partner. I accepted the offer, and have conducted business from July 2020 until now, and gradually my financial problems have been resolved. I am happy that now I am the business owner of two companies, as well as a coffee processing plant and factory - small but beautiful. The Policy of New Life from my government allows me to travel to other provinces for business purposes. Slowly my local community members have started to achieve the means to support their families.

## REFRESHED LEADERSHIP

The UIJC was founded in October 2010in response to a strong demand of local Jewish descendants who wanted a local Jewish community to bring them back to their Jewish roots, and to gather as one Jewish family and to study Torah.

As Indonesia is a very pluralistic community, we realise that only local people can lead their own group. UIJC has eight groups scattered in Indonesia:

- 1. UIJC Beit Tefillah Lampung- South Sumatra
- UIJC Beit Shalom Jakarta
- 3. UIJC Magelang-Central Java
- 4. UIJC Beit Yisrael Menado-North Sulawesi
- 5. UIJC Amboina, Ambon- Maluku
- 6. UIJC Beit Touroti Masohi Seram Island, and Ambon Maluku
- 7. UIJC Mahanaim Timika West Papua.
- 8. UIJC Mahanaim Sentani and Jayapura, West Papua

Despite living at a very low economy standard, we are very proud that our local Jewish communities have the strength to form local leadership with strong human resources; they love the Jewish tradition and want to dedicate themselves to lead and maintain their own groups.

At this time, we have three laymen/women who assist the local rabbi with life-cycle ceremonies. UPJ Rabbis David Aaron Kunin, and Shoshana Kaminsky understood the community vision and mission, and helped me complete Smicha for the following 3 laymen/para rabbis in December 2019:

- 1. Moshe Lemuel Manakha Frans a spiritual leader of UIJC Ambon, Maluku
- 2. Vicky Avshalom Ratumbanua a spiritual leader of UIJC Menado, North Sulawesi
- 3. Ariela Agustha Korwa a female spiritual leader of UIJC Timika and Jayapura West Papua

In our record, we have 128 certified Jewish members scattered in seven areas, and four more families plus one individual studying to convert. Others are only participants.

UIJC Jakarta has had one more local female cantor: Tziva Batya Colfoorth (Pesch family), who has been under my intensive training and mentorship. She joins our community in using the melodies heard in Conservative synagogues. In addition, they have two Torah readers, and one child who reads Haftarah. In our Papua community, more and more members and kids read from the Torah scroll. I hope that my daughter Devorah Verbrugge, who has beautiful voice, will soon join as a cantor to support the community. We also have one excellent member who diligently studies Torah and Talmud. He shares his knowledge via WhatsApp and helps me teach new members for conversion.

I again learned about Shechita (ritual slaughter) in January 2020 for chicken from one Israeli Orthodox rabbi, and I have passed the knowledge to local leaders and members. The knowledge starts from how to prepare separated knives. I am happy that local members can do Shechita for their own family and group.

UIJC Youth from eight to 18 years have joined Ofakim Dror Habonim for three months already; 20 kids joined using Zoom. They have learned many things about Zionism and Zionist leadership about how they can support Israel. I am about to launch a Virtual Hebrew School (ages seven to 12) for our 27 kids from those seven areas. I source the material from Berhmann House.

10 UIJC members have registered as delegates to attend the UPJ Virtual Biennial 2020, and I want to thank the UPJ conference team for the subsidy. We try to raise funds through monthly tzedekah from our members for the next planned UPJ rabbis' supervision in January 2022, as supervision has always consumed the biggest allocation for our community. HaShem always provides!

May HaShem always bless and keep us here and throughout the UPJ.

# Kehilat Shanghai - Shanghai, China

Josh Kurtzig, President

From Shanghai, we are happy to report that Jewish activities, like life in general in China, has nearly returned to normal. As far back as Passover (April 2020) we were able to meet in person to celebrate.

Although we were unable to bring back our community organizer because of Covid, many community volunteers stepped in to fill the gap.

As a result, we were able to host many in-person events. We began monthly Jewish trivia nights, hosted a Black Lives Matter Shabbat in conjunction with the African-American community in Shanghai, and we had over 100 people attend Rosh Hashanah to celebrate together. We are especially grateful to Rabbi Art Nemitoff and Congregation B'nai Jehudah in Kansas City for sharing their High Holiday services by video with us. Our Tov! Sunday School reopened for its third year in October with around 30 children and we continue to host monthly family Shabbats to let our youngest members experience their Jewishness.

In October, we held another B'nai Mitzvah for three of our young adults at the old Ohel Moshe Synagogue (1927) and Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, which has just undergone a USD 90 million renovation and expansion. We were honored that Kehilat Shanghai was able to use the space even before it was re-opened to the public.

Kehilat Shanghai also actively supports, runs and/or collaborates with Limmud, the Jewish Young Professionals Network, BBYO, PJ Library, Scotch & Cigars and many other organizations and events to further develop an inclusive Jewish life for all Jews living in or visiting Shanghai with their friends and families.

Our Executive Committee underwent changes this year, with several long-time members stepping down to make way for new ideas in leading our community forward. We wish to thank and recognize Stephane Wilmet and Zach Lichtblau for their long service to the development of Kehilat Shanghai. Arie Schreier, who founded Kehilat Shanghai nearly ten years ago, was named Honorary Chairman.

In the coming year, we plan to renew our focus on creating spaces and events for Jewish living and growth in Shanghai. We look forward to national and regional cooperation opportunities, engagement with local communities, and strengthening of our programming to allow more people to be part of progressive Jewish life in Shanghai.

# <u>United Hebrew Congregation – Singapore</u>

Cary Horenfeldt, President

# UNITED HEBREW CONGREGATION

#### Overview

Despite a number of challenges we had a very successful season at UHC Singapore. Our membership and volunteer commitment remains very strong and our financials and donations continue to ensure sustainability.

We restructured the board in November 2019, at our annual AGM, to include ten (10) members (originally 7), aligning each with a portfolio of volunteer committees. This allowed us to better liaise with each committee lead to ensure necessary support and regular communication.

We established several new committees including Tikun Olam, Social, Governance and Marketing and Communications. All were tasked with specific deliverables. One of which was to create an operating manual that would assist the board in increasing overall operational professionalism as well decrease the learning curve for new volunteers.

Sadly, this was also the year that we said goodbye to our dear Rabbi Nathan Alfred. Rabbi Nathan made Aliyah with his family to Israel under unfortunate circumstances and I and the board concluded that it was in the best interest for Rabbi Nathan and the UHC to conclude our relationship. We endeavored to ensure that Rabbi Nathan was supported to the best of our abilities in his final year while simultaneously embarking on a search for his successor.

# **Highlights**

We are very happy to report a number of key highlights from the 2019-2020 season at UHC Singapore.

The search and subsequent engagement of our new Rabbis – We are thrilled to have run a very successful and professional search process and subsequent engagement of Rabbis Miriam and Beni Wajnberg. They will officially join us in July of 2021 but are already supporting us from the US. Their participation through the High Holiday season was a particular highlight for the UHC community and all those that participated in our various programming.

## Our pivot to support digital programming due to COVID-19

I am thrilled and incredibly proud of all of our volunteers for the way they were able to so quickly pivot to support all of our digital programming, when we were no longer able to meet face-to-face. I am exceptionally thankful to our Gabbai (ritual) Committee, now affectionately known as the UHC A/V Club, who have been so instrumental in ensuring our ability to continue to run wonderful and meaningful weekly and festivals services. In fact, traditionally, we would meet as a community twice monthly for Shabbat, weekly for Thursday minyan and on an ad hoc basis for B'nei Mitzvah and other lifecycle events. Since COVID-19 made it impossible to meet, we have actually increased our services offerings and now offer a weekly Kabbalat Shabbat service that has become a community highlight, with new and wonderful community participation.

**Lifecycle highlights** – We have had a number of digital firsts, including a triple adult Bar Mitzvah, several traditional Bar and Bat Mitzvah, multiple Brit Milah and even a digital Chuppah. Each of these events was again supported by our incredible Gabbai Committee.

**Digital High Holidays** – We went in to the high-holiday season with a lot of trepidation. We weren't sure if we would be able to bring the kind of kavanah that our community expects of us, for this season of celebration and solemnity. We decided that if we couldn't be together than we would be hyper-inclusive and opened up our program to a global audience and global participation, including two Chazanut from Canada and the US and a host of lay participants. We also hired a production company to help professionalise the visuals and lighting. Our new Rabbis were wonderful and so adaptable and they helped propel us through what by all accounts was an incredibly successful program.

**Digital Jewish Country Tours** – Digital programming has a number of challenges including choosing the right content, digital fatigue and timing. Happily we were able to deliver a variety of programming, including a successful series of expert led, digital Jewish country tours. Each were facilitated by a country expert and included visuals and Q&A time. Highlights included Yemen and Bulgaria.

All told, it has been a turbulent, difficult, stressful but incredibly fulfilling year. I am so very thankful to the board, to all of our volunteers, to our incredible admin, and to our Rabbis for their support, participation and commitment. Everything we do truly is and will continue to be a team effort.

I am so very excited for our new Rabbis to join us in person next year and look forward to the UHC Singapore continuing to grow and thrive.

## **Jewish Community of Japan – Tokyo**

David Semaya, President, submitted by Marsha Rosenberg



For the Jewish Community of Japan 2020 has been a year of transition and coming together as a community during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Our small, diverse community has been able to maintain most of our religious, educational and social activities via Zoom or appropriate social distancing at our synagogue building. From March we closed our building to all in person services and events and moved online. We held our Passover Seder and all Shabbat services via Zoom which allowed past members and friends from all over Japan and the world to reconnect. As restrictions were lifted in Tokyo during the past few months, we resumed limited in person services and religious school.

In addition to managing our needs during COVID we also began a search for a Rabbi to replace Rabbi David Kunin, who returned to the US in June. We have been fortunate to hire Rabbi Andrew Sheer who will hopefully arrive in Japan with his lovely wife, Tali, in February 2021. Rabbi Sheer has been leading some of our Zoom services and participating in religious school virtually giving him a chance to be part of our community from his current home in New York.

Our High Holidays were led virtually by Yoni Roth (our Hazan for many years) from Israel. The Torah was read by a member living in northern Japan and Rabbi Andrew joined from New York. We were able to hold one small in person service for Yom Kippur in addition to our large online services.

As we decorated and ate in the Sukkah in small groups we look forward to the time when we can be together once again in person as a community.

While the COVID 19 pandemic has been a challenge, it has also opened up our community to new and innovative ways to reach out to our members. We will continue to work as a community meeting new challenges and looking forward to the time when we can go back to a new normal environment.

## **ARZA Australia**

Helen Shardey, President



It is with pleasure that I report on the activities of ARZA

Australia to the UPJ for the 2019-2020 year. I was pleased to be elected as President of this Progressive Zionist organization at its 2019 AGM, in addition to being elected Vice President of the UPJ. ARZA recruited new and young members to its Board with 40% now being under the age of 35 years, who now join the more experienced members.

ARZA, as you know is the Zionist/political arm of the UPJ. At a planning weekend of the UPJ held in Sydney in February 2020, an agreement was made that moving forward, the UPJ, ARZA Australia, the Assembly of Rabbis and Cantors (ARC) and Netzer would endeavour to work together in mutual co-operation and communication. This was done to ensure that the Australian Progressive Movement as much as possible speaks in unison with one voice in support of our Jewish Homeland Israel. I believe this decision has paid huge dividends for the Progressive Movement,

With the World Zionist Congress planned for October 2020, the Australian Progressive Movement hoped to maximize its voice in Israel in support of Pluralism and equality in the Jewish Democratic State. To this end ARZA Australia moved to encourage all Progressive Jews to join as members to ensure the four mandates held by ARZA at the 2015 World Zionist Congress would be maintained.

ARZA successfully participated in the Area Election Committee and maintained the current number of WZC delegates, with a 30% increase in membership numbers making ARZA the largest Zionist organization in Australia. It is disappointing that the congress cannot take place in person, but we hope to participate in the decisions to be made virtually and look forward to a conference in 2021.

The organization now has a comprehensive membership list, provides a weekly communication to all UPJ congregations and ARZA members. Regular posts are also made to the ARZA website and social media. Statements on key issues such as annexation, normalisation with Arab States, gender equality and other issues are published, often jointly with the UPJ and ARC. ARZA Australia has now established a sub- committee which is in the process of examining our role in the community going forward.

Finally I would like to congratulate our joint Presidents, David and Brian, the UPJ Executive and the amazing Jocelyn for all that has been accomplished during this incredibly difficult year. So much has been achieved, particularly helping the Progressive Movement to stay unified and speak with one voice. I have enjoyed working with you all.

# Board of Progressive Jewish Education - Sydney, NSW

David Speiser, President



The Board of Progressive Jewish Education (BPJE) has been at the forefront of providing and/or facilitating Progressive and Pluralistic Jewish education to students outside of the Jewish Day School system for over 40 years. BPJE delivers a range of programs through its five member campuses to approximately 450 students coming from over 143 different schools (both public and private) in NSW and the ACT. Our campuses locations are: Canberra (at the ACTJC), Woollahra (at Emanuel Synagogue), Chatswood (at North Shore Temple Emanuel's Meah School), Sydney's Inner West (through Inner West Shiurim) and we also operate programs through Netzer.

BPJE believes that pluralism and inclusivity is not just about presenting and accepting a spectrum of Jewish religious observance without judgment, but it is also about bringing together Jewish students from diverse social, economic and family circumstances. We reach some of the most economically and socially marginalised Jewish students in NSW and ACT.

Over the last 15 years there have been highly significant demographic and attitudinal changes in the NSW Jewish community that have led to a shift away from Jewish Day schools and toward public and other independent schools. Over the last 6 years BPJE has seen its student numbers increase by 80% while funding has been reduced by 43%. Continued and sufficient funding of the BPJE is critical to ensure Jewish continuity for future generations.

In the last year BPJE established a new campus in Sydney's inner west in response to community need. Through *Inner West Shiurim*, we are helping to build and grow the local community and foster a vibrant and meaningful Jewish education for Jewish students in this area who would not otherwise have access to any Jewish education. We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the quality of the programs that we are supporting.

We continue to be approached by other Jewish educational organisations seeking support for their programs and planned educational outcome in areas beyond the well-established and integrated parts of the Jewish community.

In July this year, the BPJE conducted the 2020 BPJE Parent Attitude Survey which showed exceptionally high satisfaction levels across a range of factors including quality of teacher instruction, alignment of values, quality of curriculum content, family engagement, formation of Jewish identity and overall levels of enjoyment.2020 was unprecedented with respect to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We were able to respond quickly, offering online, live zoom classes and additional home and family-based activities to maintain Jewish education and offer support.

BPJE is a volunteer board that is proud of the service that it provides to the students of NSW and ACT Progressive and Pluralist communities.

## Emanuel School – Randwick, NSW

Andrew Watt, Principal



As the only pluralist and egalitarian K-12 Jewish School in NSW, we actively promote dialogue, engagement with and respect for diversity in all its forms: in relation to society, the individual and all streams of Judaism. Emanuel advocates for, and promotes human, social, political and economic equality within an inclusive Jewish ethos and with an emphasis on Tikkun Olam.

We have reached the midway point of our 2019-2021 Strategic Roadmap, which has involved a consistent focus on five key pillars – for our students to be:

- 1. Adaptable: Cultivating highly adaptive students who can thrive in a changing world.
- 2. Curious: Fostering curious students who dig into questions, challenge assumptions and learn deeply.
- 3. Informed: Improving teaching and learning through the way that we collect and apply data.
- 4. Jewish: Inspiring our students to experience and express their Judaism and personally and communally meaningful and transformative.
- 5. Unique: Ensuring that every student engages in powerful learning that is suited to their unique selves.

We create a safe, supportive, caring environment where students flourish. Our students are encouraged to be well-rounded and grounded individuals, who are guided to develop their diverse interests and passions so as to make a positive difference to the world. At Emanuel we believe that education encompasses the broad domains of academic, social, emotional sporting, musical and extra-curricular learning, while building a strong sense of responsibility, compassion and justice. We strive to connect with our community and create a welcoming and inclusive environment that is known for its genuine acceptance and understanding of diversity.

Emanuel is unique in being small enough to provide student-centred, high-quality education in a Jewish community environment. At the same time, it is big enough to offer a diverse range of subjects, extra-curricular activities and high-quality facilities. Our alumni have excelled in many areas and most recently, for example, Hannah Beder, Class of 2012, was recognised as NSW Young Woman of the Year – an exceptional achievement.

Our Jewish Life program strives to engage the hearts, minds and hands of our students.

We offer a variety of Jewish Studies electives challenging our students to critically consider pertinent issues and concerns in the light of Jewish principles and ethics. Our weekly tefillot and kabbalat shabbat programs bring our students together as one community experiencing our Jewish ritual in joy and ruach. We celebrate chagim by both renewing our commitment to a living Judaism through creative and traditional ritual. We help those who are in need within the Jewish and wider communities with a variety of tsedakah programs such as collecting non-perishable food items for Mazon and Oz Harvest, as well as raising awareness of local and global issues, many of which are chosen by the students.

Our Year 8 Hebrew camp, Machaneh Krembo and our Year 10 Machaneh Ayekah, challenge our students to live their Jewish tradition and culture through exploration, discovery and partnership. Our Year 10, six-week Israel immersion program, 'Chavayah', provides our students with an "experience" of a lifetime, as they immerse themselves in experiencing Israel as the historic land of our people and as a dynamic and diverse expression of an evolving Judaism, in keeping with the pluralistic ethos of our Emanuel School community.

This year we had to re-think many programs, events and activities due to COVID-19 restrictions. Our teachers have risen to the challenge with resilience, responsiveness and adaptability. Our students have discovered that there are many new ways to learn, interact and discover. We have started the new year of 5781 with renewed vigour as well as gratitude for the silver-linings that the past year has uncovered.

# **Netzer Australia Progressive Zionist Youth Movement**

Lior Kalisse, Federal Mazkir (Chairperson)

Despite the most challenging circumstances (arguably ever to face Netzer Australia) 2020 has been a year of innovation and development. I'm deeply proud of everything we've been able to achieve thus far and so excited for what's to come.

NETZERAUSTRALIA

It has been an incredible privilege to conclude my 13 years of Netzer life as Federal Mazkir.

It's been an honour to share 2020 with my dedicated and passionate Federal Hanhagah and I'd like to give my thanks to: Liat Swieca (Melbourne Mazkira), Michael Sacks (Sydney Mazkir), Tahlia Bowen (Head of Education), Michael Liebowitz (Shnat Co-ordinator), Leigh Shapiro-Ellis (Treasurer) and Tom Krieser (Head of PR) for their hard work and support.

It's my pleasure to introduce Michael Sacks as the Federal Mazkir for 2021. This year Michael has served as the Mazkir of Netzer Sydney and I'm excited to see him take the movement to new heights next year.

## **Camps and Activities**

<u>Camps:</u> Camp seasons have inevitably been challenging for us. With Bushfires in January, we were forced to relocate our Federal camp. However, due to the immense support of our community we were able to make the transition relatively smoothly. Our first ever online Winter camp (Machine Messiba Babayit) attracted over 100 chanichimot and delivered a remarkable camp experience for all those involved.

<u>Bogrimot:</u> This year Netzer grew from 36 leaders in 2019 to 38 leaders in 2020. This has allowed us to continue to engage with our hundreds of chanichimot nationwide and introduce a new generation of leaders into the Bogrimot body in Shnat Perach.

# **Netzer Appeal**

This year our Netzer Appeal was initially aimed at raising \$25,000. Centred around ensuring continuity in our community, the Netzer Appeal was able to raise over \$37,000. This could not have happened without the significant support we received from experts within our community who were there with us every step of the way as we embarked on a totally new model of fundraising.

I'd like to give a special thanks to the PJCF, Advisory board members and Maureen Barton for lending their expertise. Next years' appeal will focus on 'broadening the tent' and reaching out to synagogue membership to raise awareness of Netzer's impact to those not always in direct contact with our activities.

## **Netzer Advisory Board**

The Netzer Advisory Board began meeting in 2020. Our esteemed panel consisting of Robert Hersham, Susan Kadar, Amanda Mace, David Krug and Jess Harrison have been immensely helpful throughout the year. This forum has contributed to our formulations around camps, covid safe strategy, internal structures and the Netzer Appeal. Every member of this Board has contributed significantly to every one of these challenges and they have assisted Netzer go above and beyond in so many ways this year. This board has proved to be an incredible addition to the organisational structure of Netzer and will be crucial for years to come.

#### **ARZA**

Netzer has been more active than ever in the ARZA space in 2020. The crisis at this year's World Zionist Congress forced us all to recognise the paramount importance of our community's political representation. We now understand the serious need to engage with ARZA as an organisation that fights for our values as progressive Jews and informed zionists. We are

so thankful for the space ARZA is providing young people with to voice their concerns and contribute to the political future of our community.

## **Sprout**

Our monthly online service Sprout, delivered interactive and meaningful services when we all needed them most. Drawing crowds from all over the world, Netzer's spin on progressive jewish Shabbat has made a permanent mark in our community and will be a fixture for years to come!

#### **Tamar**

Delegated to us this year, we see the establishment of a Tamar (Young adult engagement pathway) as a pursuit of ideological merit and of serious importance. Though we remain in the early phases of gathering interest, establishing the charity itself and scouting potential leaders, ensuring we deliver on this project will be a central priority over the summer months.

#### Virtual Snif

Learning from our move towards virtual programming early this year, our innovative 'Netzer Bites' which gave our chanichimot a weekly opportunity to stay in touch with Netzer and brought in many from smaller communities. Using this framework as a launchpad, we hope to establish a mechanism which will enable constant programming for chanichimot in our smaller communities across Australia and Asia within the next year.

# Strategic Action Plan

In 2019 Netzer Australia voted to establish a new document named the Strategic Action Plan (SAP). This document seeks to solve the issue of generational 'revolving door' leadership at Netzer. The nature of the one year term for office bearers has meant handing over knowledge and progress is always a challenge. With hard deadlines and enforcement mechanisms, the SAP seeks to streamline Netzer's medium to long term thinking by handing down the top priorities of the movement.

#### Shnat

## Shnat Perach 2020:

With their year called off early in 2020, we had to move quickly to ensure the 13 Netzer Shnattim did not lose out on the crucial Progressive Jewish education and leadership training that Shnat provides. As they returned to Australia, we provided a two week online seminar as they quarantined together. In the following months we moved to integrate any interested into the borgrim body. All Shnattim (besides the two who stayed in Israel) have joined the leadership body, lead on our winter camp and will hold positions of responsibility in Next year's Federal and State Mazkiruts. The group has also been provided with ongoing education and training from an external educator (ex Bogeret) hired for the express purpose of developing shnat Perach into the Netzer leaders of tomorrow.

## Shnat Tzuf 2021:

Shnat Tzuf is an incredibly promising group of young individuals. We are aiming to send 8-10 to Israel and sign ups are now open. They have been a close group throughout the year despite the pandemic and have engaged with the seminars and programs run for them online. Though there is some uncertainty in the air, Masa have agreed to assist in facilitation of ensuring the Shnatties are permitted to enter Israel. There is an amazing program waiting for them that we hope they all get the chance to experience.

#### Shlichim/Project manager

Sefi Shalam has continued to be an invaluable member of Netzer and we're thrilled to have him helping us. His constant

support, knowledge and dedication has allowed the Hanhagah to do its job exceptionally well and Sefi has been central to the well oiled machine of Netzer 2020.

We were extremely grateful to also receive the support of Jordan Werner Hall as an interim Project Manager for our Sydney community. His expertise has been incredibly handy and we thank the Sydney community for rallying so swiftly to ensure we had someone in Sydney to assist with our activities.

# **Leadership Training and Engagement**

As our movement grows, so does the demand for the upskilling of our borgrim. Though they have been mostly online, thanks to our incredible Chinuch (education) roshot, we've been able to continue providing our bogrimot with chances to challenge themselves ideologically and professionally.

## Conclusion

2020 has been an unbelievable year for Netzer Australia. In the face of undeniably challenging circumstances, every single bog, chanich, parent and friend of Netzer has risen to the challenge. This has not been a year of simply reacting to the crisis thrust upon all of us. Netzer has worked hard to ensure we are in a position to continue providing life changing experiences for chanichimot for years to come. We feel we still have much to offer the community and look forward to expanding our sights!

I would finally like to thank the community as a whole. The UPJ, PJV, ARZA and all other affiliate organisations and shuels, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your continued trust and support. We feel it is crucial for young people to be involved at all levels in the future to ensure our community remains relevant and representative. The above mentioned organisations have gone above and beyond to include Netzer and young people in the decision making process and we only stand to benefit from this approach.

Thank you again to the whole community for continuing to stand with us on our journey to ensure continuity and nurture the future and present leadership of our kehila.

# **Progressive Judaism Victoria**

Dr Philip Bliss OAM, President

Like every other organisation, this previous year since the last annual UPJ conference, has been unique and troublesome but strangely a year where unexpected opportunities arose.

PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM
VICTORIA INC.
https://doi.org/10.1001/10.1

The most distressing period of the summer holidays were the severe bushfires that not only were a national disaster but also threatened all Zionist summer camps. Fortunately, our Netzer

leadership including our Shaliach, Sefi Shalam, were able to move the camps from the main threatened areas to a very acceptable camp near Wilson's Promontory. It was very well attended, in fact to maximum capacity. Soon after this our Shnat year group had to return to Australia prematurely due to the world wide out-break of Covid 19. On return to Melbourne the group remained together and continued their 'Zionist' experience less the bit about being in Israel. But again the leaders put together a terrific study program that has been enjoyed by all of them and continues.

The 'remote' winter camp was again very well attended and the participants had a really enjoyable time that had been very well planned by the Netzer madrichrim. We wait to see what will be available for the summer camps and whether they can have live camps again!

At the same time just before Covid lockdown the Melbourne Progressive community were hosting the interim president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, Rabbi David Saperstein as our guest scholar to launch the Progressive UIA Appeal. Rabbi Saperstein was the head of the Religious Action Centre based in Washington. RAC is the social action arm of the North American Reform movement. He had also been invited to give the prayers at the inauguration of President Obama and later appointed the ambassador for interfaith activity around the world. We were very fortunate that his program in Melbourne was completed before he had to return to Washington before travel restrictions came in to force, but before he could complete his Sydney commitments, again due to Covid 19. In Melbourne he was exposed to the wider community both Jewish and interfaith groups where the question of antisemitism and anti-Zionism were addressed in much detail. Public forums allowed exposure to the general Jewish Community. Our overall fundraising for the UIA matched last year's total which was very surprising considering the impact of isolation, economic downturn and lack of contact for many.

Progressive Judaism Victoria took the opportunity of the move to use Zoom for meetings to introduce a series of forums that have been held late on Sunday afternoons. We have held two series and more to follow after the Yamim Noraim. A number of the topics were Israel based ranging from discussions on the then proposed annexation, a wonderful discussion on Israeli culture, mainly music and a forum where the community were free to ask the 'difficult questions of Israelis. Other topics for these sessions included a forum on Climate Change, two sessions involving the view of several rabbis on their vison of God and a wonderful session on attendees being able to ask any questions that they always wanted to ask their rabbi.

We also set-up a working taskforce to look into how our congregations and affiliates can work together more effectively and how we can use our resources to greater effect. They will meet again after the High Holidays.

That series ended with a wonderful interview of the new president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, Rabbi Sergio Bergman from Argentina who has a very strong Zionist world view and had been the minister for the Environment in the previous Argentinian Government. We did a Facebook recording in conjunction with the Zoom events that attracted

many, many hundreds each week. Far more than we had imagined and we look forward to starting the third series again in early October. Again the new series will include a couple of Israeli themes including one on Israeli culture, a discussion on "The New Middle East" and Reform Zionism and it's relationship with younger generations.

As I write this report, PJV launched it's very successful Virtual Mishpacha website that combined all the services, study sessions and family programs of all four Progressive congregations (Etz Chayim, Leo Baeck Centre, Temple Beth Israel and Kedem) plus in put from Netzer. All our services were available on line via Zoom, webinars and You Tube. There were study sessions before each shacharit service over the period and Erev Rosh Hashanah was a combination of all four congregation each taking a part of the service. Whilst there we a few sound hitches the feedback was great. Many members commented that they really enjoyed seeing the different style of services that each congregation provided for this unique event.

A pretty full on year that gave us opportunities to reach out to our members and the general Jewish communities whilst we look eagerly to re-entering our synagogues as soon as we can. What that means post Covid is anyone's guess but more that ever before we need to be flexible for the next challenge.

Bet Olam our funeral Progressive Chevra Kadisha also had a steady year the profit from which basically supports the cost of our Netzer Shaliach, who at this time is Sefi Shalam and who has been wonderfully active and a great Progressive voice in the Zionist movement's political arena. PJV upgraded our Yiskor memorial webpage.

I would like to thank the PJV executive who all have been active and very supportive especially Maureen Barten, Kathy Kaplan and Alan Samuel. We also enjoyed a much greater working relationship with our clergy. Our Virtual Mishpacha website was actually set up within a few days and Rabbi Gersh Lazerow worked often into the small hours with Maureen and Kathy.

Wishing all at the UPJ a successful and fulfilling 5781 and may next year's conference see us all come together once again!

# The King David School – Armadale, Victoria

Marc Light, Principal



2019-2020 was a period of contrast for The King David School. While we have continued our growth in terms of student numbers, educational programs and both curricular and co-curricular opportunities, the 2020 year has been one deeply affected by COVID-19 lockdowns and precautions.

After finishing 2019 on an incredible high, the vast majority of the 2020 school year has been spent in distance-learning mode with our teachers adjusting their pedagogy and practice to ensure that they provide engaging learning opportunities which were accessed remotely.

The wonderful creativity and flexibility of our staff was on show with an adjustment to provision of meaningful academic, social and Jewish life learning opportunities in radically different forms. For instance, virtual Yom Hashoah commemorations, Yom Haatzmaut celebrations and a Rosh Hashana festival have all featured. So too did a virtual Year 11 & 12 School formal.

Throughout this challenging year the School has been supported by a wonderful parent community who have partnered meaningfully with the teachers to ensure constancy in educational delivery. Our staff have risen above and beyond in their professionalism and their genuine warmth and care for the students and one-another. Our students have shone with their resilience, positivity and embracing of the variations to plans. The Senior Leadership Team and School Council have offered wisdom, guidance and adaptability in the face of unprecedented challenges presented during the pandemic.

It is gratifying to note the continued advancement in academic standards as demonstrated by the VCE results for the graduating class of 2019 which placed The King David School (KDS) in the top 20 schools in the State. While the 2020 Year 12 cohort have had a very interrupted year we have high hopes for their performance and are proud of the wonderful character demonstrated by the group.

Known for innovative programs, KDS is also thrilled with its continued development in entrepreneurial thinking. This was evident in the huge success of our Project Based Learning activities across the School. So too has our commitment to holistic learning.

Once again, our students thrived with rich holistic learning opportunities in the Visual and Performing Arts and Sports.

While the 2019-2020 year has been one of deep learning and some genuine challenges we know that our community stands together united in the face of whatever the future brings.

# **UPJ Awards**

The 2020 award recipients (in red) were announced during the UPJ Virtual Biennial on Sunday 8 November.



<u>Vatik Award:</u> This award honours past presidents of congregations and affiliation organisations who have continued to give outstanding service and make valuable contributions to their congregation and the wider community for at least five years after the end of their term of office. We recognise these worthy individuals and their continued commitment to the community and furthering the Progressive movement in our region.

# **Vatik Award recipients:**

Merrilyn Ades, Edwin Argy, Ken Arkwright, Arthur Berman, Philip Bliss, Helen Bryant, Philip Coleman, Julie Contole, Geoffrey Cowen, Phyllis Dorey, Alison Dwyer, Maree Findley, Joshua Goldman-Brown, Matthew Goode, Sam Granek, Phillip David Green, Ruth Gross, Sharene Hambur, Ron Hoenig, Hans Jensen, Peter Kolliner, Michael Lawrence, Kate Lesser, Tony Leverton, Joe Lewit, Larry Lockshin, Peter Marks, Stephanie Markson, Philip Mayers, Frank Moore, Howard Nathan, Lynette Ninio, Eva Popper, David Robinson, Jerry Rosenberg, Brian Samuel, John Schinasi, Sam Sharman, Jonathan Taft, Tex Waxman

<u>Ner Tamid Award:</u> Since the Biennial Conference of the Australia New Zealand Union for Progressive Judaism held in Melbourne in 1990, we have honoured the "Unsung Heroes" – members of congregations and affiliation organisations who perform exceptional service for our congregations and community, as well as the wider community.

# **Ner Tamid Award recipients:**

Tony Abo, Fred Albert, Dr Libby Appelboom, Judith Arkwright, Stan Benjamin, Albert Bentata, Heinz Bohm, Garry and Nola Braude, Eric Briskman, Nicole Brown, Margaret Capkin, Sally Castle, Zvi Civins, Judi Cohen, Marlis Cohen, Arnold Cohn, Beatrice Coleman, Nathan Companez, Rachel Dennyss, Anthony and Diane Deutsch, Dr George Deutsch, Suzie Eisfelder, David and Sue Esterman, Norma Survana Esther, Mick Fettmann, Judy Firestone, Jo Fletcher, Ellen Frajman, Ted Friedlander, Bev Gelbart, Rachel Gillespie, Mark Ginsburg, Sydney Goldstein, Leon and Sue Goldwater, Katherine Goode, Liz Goodman, Sandy Graetzer, Dorothy Graff, Sidney Grant, Brian and Jennifer Green, Noel Hall, Rhondda Hall, Janet Henrie, Rae Hesling, Fred Hirsch, Albert Isaacs, Elijah Jacob, Lorraine Jacobs, Ailsa Jean, Naomi Johnson, Rebecca Kanthor, Barbara Karet, Devorah Komesaroff, Harvey Livschitz, Alison Marcus, Charles Monat, Sue Morgan, Betty Mortimer, Myra Mortlock, Fred Mote, Joan Motta, Judy Myers, Dorothy (Dot) Nathan, Rhonda Nirens, Alan Obrart, Teresa Petrzelka, Eva Phillips, Amelia Rauner, Gena Reiss, Marsha Rosenberg, Peter Rosenfeld, Mavis Rudd, Mervyn Rudd, Ian Samuel, David Sharp, Chris Schiller, Nat Sharpe, Fred Silberstein, Harry Smith, Dr Leon Sterling, Linda Stern, Joe Stupel, Geoff Sussman, Michael Taft, Ruth Taft, Joan Taylor, Dorothea Tropp-Boas, Reuben Urban, Tanya Warms, Betty Watkins, Betty Waxman, Jerome Winston, Peter Woolf, Sandy Zaccar

<u>President's Award previous recipients</u>: Judy Campbell, <u>Sharon Davis</u>, Phyllis, Dorey, Stephen Freeman, Sharene Hambur, Penny Jakobovits, Peter Kohn, Michael Lawrence, <u>Roger Mendelson</u>, Joel Oseran, David Robinson, Neil Samuel, Dr Rob Sward