

## Rabbis' Report

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Once again, our community's annual report, especially the chair's report, gives some flavour of the diversity of our community and all its activities. As members – co-creators of community – we each form our own connection, or rather connections, to the community and to each other, across a diversity of locations centred on Radlett. One challenge of the variety, particularly in a large community such as ours, is that those connections between others are not always obvious: the AGM is an opportunity to step back and appreciate how much we achieve and offer, but also how in the future we might deepen/broaden those connections and do more. There are always those who come for cheder (to teach or to learn or to hang around after dropping children off) or for hadracha (leadership) training, or to play bridge or table tennis or guitar, or to learn Hebrew or general Jewish literacy, or, in more depth, to discuss Audacious Jewish History or study the Psalms or Jewish liturgy, or for another evening adult education session or visiting speaker, or to cook lunch together, or to welcome Shabbat on Friday night with joy and music, in Radlett or perhaps at one of our chavurah services in Welwyn or Borehamwood, and then perhaps to share a Friday night meal together, or to have tea and good company at the September Club, or for BMM – our busy Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation programme, or for a meeting (yes there's business to be done but most committees also develop a social aspect), or to talk current affairs over a cuppa at 'Jews with Views', or to discuss the next book over a piece of home-made cake as part of our Welwyn Bookworms Group, or to explore Talmud (and life's big questions) in an accessible way, or for our carers' support group or bereavement support, or for a tots' service, or interactive family services, or a regular Shabbat morning service, or a special Shabbat morning service or BM, or for one of our other regular 'parallel' services upstairs, or for festival activities, or to sing in the choir, or for one of our other social activities or trips, or for High Holyday services, or for Cubs, or Scouts, or Beavers, or to meet with other babies, toddlers and their accompanying grown-ups perhaps at the Preschoolers' Kabbalat Shabbat on a Friday, or for an interfaith event or on a school trip to learn about Judaism, or to use the library, or to fix something, or build something or stuff something into an envelope, or in preparation for a residential or trip, or for support or a chat, or to organise collections for the homeless or participate in Mitzvah Day, or for a bigger social event or to watch a film in our improving new 'cinema space'.

Many come before the service on a Shabbat morning, to teach or practise in the last weeks leading up to a BM, or to get ready for that morning's service as a warden or service-leader or torah-reader, or as one of our security volunteers, or for a choir rehearsal, or for a cup of coffee and a biscuit while everything else is going on, or to prepare kiddush. Some go on trips together, or walks (for Tashlich on Rosh Hashanah, or with matzah at Pesach, or once a month just for a pleasant walk together in the surrounding countryside, or for our annual shabbat morning walking service), or for interfaith meetings at other places of worship or community centres, or to visit other members of our congregation, perhaps to drop off a New Year or Pesach 'goody bag'. Some of course generally don't come but still want to feel that they are connected to the community through regular communications and that we are here should the need arise.

At our Shabbat services in (Jan-Dec) 2018 we celebrated **5** (4 in 2017) Baby Blessings, with other Brit Milah or Baby Blessing ceremonies taking place in members' homes, **40** (31) B'nei/B'not Mitzvah, and **3** (3) Aufrufen and a number of special wedding anniversaries and birthdays, including a 2<sup>nd</sup> BM at 83. We conducted **4** (3) weddings. Sadly, there were **15** – (10) funerals as well as other bereavements, for example of members' parents, where the funeral was conducted under the auspices of another synagogue but in a number of such instances where we facilitated shiva prayers for own bereaved member and

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their family. We had just 1 (1) adult candidate for conversion who gained Jewish status through the Reform Beit Din, and was subsequently welcomed into our community.

Beyond the rabbinic work immediately within the congregation we both continue with our roles in the wider community, locally or in the Assembly of Reform Rabbis and Cantors UK, Leo Baeck College or even the international Jewish world. Both of us serve regularly on the Reform Beit Din, and attend monthly Assembly meetings.

As always, our thanks are due to the many people who contribute so much of their time and of themselves to the life of our congregation: the staff, the voluntary leadership and all those who participate in creating a community for each other, a community that goes from strength to strength and of which we can all be proud. This is in fact our last *Rabbis' report*... After a long wait, we are excited and relieved that in a few weeks Cantor Sarah Grabiner will be joining us so we look forward to an exciting Clergy report in 2019!

מִי שֶׁיִבְרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ הוּא יִבְרַךְ אֶת-כָּל-מִי שֶׁעוֹסְקִים בְּצַרְכֵי צְבוּר בְּאַמוּנָה.

May God who blessed our ancestors bless all those who devote themselves to the needs of the community in a true spirit.

**Rabbi Paul Freedman**

**Rabbi Celia Surget**