

# Cheltenham Hebrew Congregation

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## **Trustees Report 1 March 2020 – 29 February 2021**

Cheltenham Hebrew Congregation achieved its objectives to the benefit of both Cheltenham Hebrew Congregation and the wider community as members adapted to online community life during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Community Life**

Our religious activities, marking Shabbat and the Jewish Festivals and Holidays continued as far as possible. Services were held pre Shabbat and before Festivals as appropriate for an Orthodox community when online.

The erev Shabbat services were led by Allan Sanis, Senior Warden, Leonard Bazar and Alan Silverston. They have been especially appreciated by members living some distance from Cheltenham who would not generally be able to attend Synagogue services in person.

Our Yom Tovim services led by Rabbi Vecht-Wolf were warm and intimate in spite of distancing. Great care was taken to make the Synagogue as Covid secure as possible and an enclosure of clear screens for Rabbi Claude added extra protection. We were permitted by the Government to blow the shofar but not handle arba minim as a community for Succot.

Torah studies continued monthly led by Jessica Shapiro in friendly seminar style sessions.

Rabbi Mark Daniels Rabbi led an interesting series of lectures and during an especially memorable one introduced us to key concepts in eschatology. Rabbi Claude Vecht-Wolf shared his study sessions on Torah and Jewish history with us on a regular basis.

A Music Evening, held before the first lockdown, at the Chairman's home, gave the opportunity to enjoy a great range of music, listening, singing and playing. Other social events included 'Tea and Poetry' where discussion was stimulated by different interpretations of the poems. Thank you Lea Elliott and Jessica Shapiro for your input into this.

Quizzes have become a regular with multiple question setters, co-ordinated by Christine Dyer, contributing to each game leading to a diverse set of questions.

'Coffee and Chat' sessions provided a space without an agenda to update, share opinions and place ourselves and the world in a healthier place.

### **With the Wider Community**

#### **Education**

Elkan Levy gave a fascinating lecture on 'The Pre-Expulsion Jewish Community in England', rich in detail and anecdote, noting evidence of trading between Cornwall and Israel by the 13<sup>th</sup> century. University of Gloucestershire students in particular were invited to this talk.

The Chairman visited schools and hosted in the Synagogue before lockdown helping each group fulfil their wishes and RE syllabus. Since lockdown, sessions have taken place on line, groups have

included little Beaver Scouts in Cardiff, Gloucestershire University students, children of primary and secondary ages with learning difficulties as well as mainstream schools.

### **SACRE**

The Chairman attended all SACRE meetings as their Jewish representative, currently online, and continue to support teachers with their planning and delivery of classes.

Following their request, the Chairman also contributed to Herefordshire's 'A guide to people and places: supporting RE and experiencing faith in Herefordshire Schools'.

### **Inter-Faith Week**

CHC marked Inter-Faith week by an erev Shabbat Open Service online during which aspects of the service were explained in English. This was particularly appreciated by guests who told us they also loved the traditional prayers and psalms in Hebrew.,

We also participated in the Inter-Faith online event with the University of Gloucestershire and Cheltenham Borough Council focussed on the question "How do you keep the faith in the middle of a global pandemic?" A short film was made featuring Mr and Mrs Silverston and Miss Fisher especially for this Inter-Faith occasion.

Abigail Fisher, Associate Chaplain to the University of Gloucestershire continued in her active role there, being of support to all students.

### **Cheltenham's Act of Remembrance for Holocaust Memorial Day 2021**

Moving and memorable, Cheltenham's Act of Remembrance, led by Dame Janet Trotter and planned by CHC together with Three Counties Liberal Community and Cheltenham Borough Council, drew attention to current and local crime as well as the atrocities of the Holocaust and other genocides. The Chairman chaired the planning group; Simon and Sandra Burne took charge of the technology and ensured the webinar proceeded smoothly. A wider audience than usual was possible by this webinar format and the recording has since been viewed many times on the CBC website.

### **Heritage Open Days**

Participation this year in National Heritage and B'nai B'rith Open Days involved our film 'Mike and Phil visit Cheltenham Synagogue' reaching our visitors rather than them visiting us. RE teachers and Inter-Faith organisers contacted us wishing to make the film available for their classes and groups. We are thankful for the financial support of Cheltenham Heritage Open Days that made this possible.

### **Cheltenham Zero-Climate Action Partnership**

Allan Sanis attended this meeting on our behalf which is working towards a net zero carbon Cheltenham by 2030.

### **Hamper Scamper Scheme**

We were very pleased to support our local CCP (Caring for Communities and People) seasonal appeal with generous donations of money and food items from our members.

## **Security**

As part of ongoing security, regular contact was maintained with Gloucestershire Constabulary, including their Special Branch. Advice and support was also received from the Security Community Trust.

The Chairman attended all Gloucestershire Hate Crime and Incident Strategic Group meetings the also represented Cheltenham Hebrew Congregation at County Prevent Board meetings.

## **Buildings and Maintenance**

Following the five years Architect's Report substantial repair and redecoration was made to our Grade 2\* Listed Synagogue including the walls, roof, guttering, lantern and toilets.

The Chairman concluded: "Many thanks to all who have contributed to our community during a difficult year, all our Board Members, especially those willing to take on special responsibilities, Allan Sanis: Senior Warden Jessica Shapiro: Treasurer, Steve Cohen: Assistant Treasurer, Abigail Fisher: Secretary, Christine Dyer: Minutes Secretary as well as Penny Pepper: Accounts Examiner and Alan Silverston: Buildings and Maintenance and Security Officer.

Also continuing to work on our behalf, our thanks to Leonard Bazar our Board of Deputies Representative.

I am confident that together we will meet the challenges ahead and look forward to doing so."

**CHELTENHAM HEBREW CONGREGATION**  
**INCOME & EXPENDITURE - YEAR TO FEBRUARY 28 2021**

2020	INCOME	Note	2021
	Contributions		
8,920	Members Subscriptions	(1)	9,658
65	Friends and Associates Subscriptions	(2)	108
<u>8,985</u>	Total Contributions		<u>9,766</u>
	Donations		
2,290	Donations	(3)	2,042
190	Donation for B.O.D		235
<u>2,480</u>	Total Donations		<u>2,277</u>
<u>11,465</u>	Total Contributions & Donations		<u>12,043</u>
	Other Income		
289	Bank Interest	(4)	399
129	Reading Group		21
78	Rent from No. 44 Elm Street		78
655	Donation from School Visits		163
2,514	Gift Aid & tax Repaid	(5)	7,741
2,994	Grants		0
12	Books Sold		0
32	Sale of Cards		0
230	Jewish Studies	(6)	0
1,289	Congregation Events	(7)	24
<u>8,222</u>			<u>8,426</u>
<b>19,687</b>	<b>TOTAL CONGREGATION INCOME</b>		<b>20,469</b>
	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
	Property : Synagogue & Elm Street		
731	Lighting, Heating, Water for the Synagogue		241
3,795	Synagogue Maintenance	(8)	32,356
846	Cleaning		590
46	Rates - Elm Street		47
66	Elm Street Maintenance		401
3,166	Insurance	(9)	2,960
<u>8,650</u>			<u>36,595</u>
	Other Expenses		
200	Representations & Donations to B.O.D		0
180	Fees to Rabbinate		185
222	Rabbi's Visits		0
2,523	Fees and Expenses for High Holy Days Ceremony		2,604
105	Postage & Stationery		38
80	Printing & Photocopying		14
467	Sundry Expenses	(10)	675
<u>3,777</u>			<u>3,516</u>
<b>12,427</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>		<b>40,111</b>
<u>7,260</u>	<b>EXCESS / (DEFICIT) OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE</b>		<u><b>-19,642</b></u>