



Trustees' Report
Annual General Meeting
4 December 2021

This has been a difficult and strange year. As equally important as the religious side, YLJC aims to be your Jewish 'family' in York. And Covid has restricted how we can get together. But we have thrived despite the restrictions and maintained our community and supported each other as best we could. But now it's time to get back together (Covid permitting), to re-engage and build back better. We need to all become proactive and work together to rebuild our community spirit and Jewish life in York, whilst still keeping everyone safe.

Much has changed since our last report in 2020 and we have worked together through the challenges. We currently have circa 100 members, including 20 children. Since I stepped up from being Vice Chair and took over from Shannon Kirshner as Chair in May 2021, I have had the pleasure of speaking to various people of all ages and interests wanting to engage with and potentially join us, as well as of course to many of our regular members through both good times and the more difficult ones. I have also engaged with many at Liberal Judaism, who wholeheartedly support us at York in so many ways.

Throughout this past year's provision of online services and events, we have had strong levels of attendance and participation. For much of the year and especially important during the Covid-19 lockdown where many had limited external contact, we increased our Shabbat services from twice a month to once a week, alternating Friday nights and Saturday mornings, over the online platform Zoom. These have now returned to fortnightly services as our world reopened and people resumed their normal busy lifestyles. And we have also (and will continue to do so) advertised the availability of other online offerings by our sister Liberal Judaism communities to provide a fuller range of talks, education opportunities and so much more.

For most of the last year, we have been so lucky to have Student Rabbi Gabriel Kanter – Webber as our spiritual leader and educator. He and his family have been with us intermittently over a number of years and we missed seeing them in person. Although most of this was online, Gabriel provided us with a stimulating and considered pastoral range of services, the highlights being his Shabbat morning services and J101 discussions. He also provided joyous celebration of all our festivals, ranging from the more serious High Holidays to a fun Passover family friendly Seder, and led all the other festivals throughout the year as they were celebrated, reaching out to all ages and interests as best we could.

We at last decided to hold some outside Shabbat services over the summer as Government restrictions were loosened, and held two wonderful 'Services in the Park' thanks to the hospitality of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation at Homestead Park in York. The first in July 2021 coincided with our 7th birthday celebration and was led by our outgoing Student Rabbi Gabriel, with assistance from our new incoming Student Rabbi Rafe Thurstance. It was a very emotional live service with everyone praying and singing together 'in person' for the first time in a very long time. The second, in August 2021, was a triple celebration: our family friendly service was led by guitar playing senior LJ Rabbi Aaron Goldstein of Ark Synagogue, who came up to welcome into our community three longstanding members who had passed the Beit Din (via his support and tutorage) – Yasmin King, Ahmed Mousa and our membership secretary Brian Berry.

We were wonderfully supported by Liberal Judaism over the recent High Holidays and enjoyed a full range of services over zoom. We had planned an 'in person' Erev Rosh Hashanah Seder, but with rising Covid levels there were concerns and so we got together online with plenty of representative foods and readings. We were honoured to have our Rosh Hashanah service led by LJ CEO Rabbi Charley Baginsky, which she undertook in her usual joyous way, and we shared a lovely inclusive service with lots of mitzvot shared with Peterborough LJ community. For Yom Kippur, we were kindly invited by South London Liberal Community to join them by zoom for all their services throughout Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur, which were beautifully led by their Rabbi, Nathan Godleman. Many thanks to LJ, Peterborough and SSLC – it was lovely to be with you and to share these most important spiritual days with your communities, proving that sometimes distance is no prohibitor to getting together with those who share our values and Jewish lives.

Also in September, we were proud to promote YLJC and York as a home to modern Liberal Jewry and Interfaith relationships through helping to host the Worldwide launch of the film *'Getting Away With Murder(s)'*, made by Yorkshire born Filmmaker David Wilkinson. This helped publicise the potential for an improved monument to those who died at Clifford's Tower in 1190 as part of the draft proposals for a wider contemplative space being proposed for the site. Shannon has continued throughout the pandemic to lead discussions on our behalf on the Clifford's Tower area redevelopment proposals with English Heritage and My Castle Gateway. She is working with them to make York's Jewish history more widely known, including more educational material about the life of York's Medieval Jews and the context of the massacre in 1190, with hopefully an improved memorial space at the base of the tower that would remember the lives lost in 1190 and subsequently because of racism and xenophobia.

In October 2019, we officially launched our 'Rabbi for York Fund', aiming to raise £100,000 to enable us to hire a part-time ordained Rabbi on a 3-year contract (increasingly required due to the scarcity of available Student Rabbis). To date we have raised circa £80,000 but so far have not secured interest from any suitable candidate. If we are able to hire a part-time Rabbi, we would be able to offer an increasing number of Shabbat services and celebrate festivals and hold other events and have more pastoral and educational support locally, which would be particularly helpful for the Cheder children as they approach bar and bat mitzvah age, as well as provide more direct support for all lifestyle events, including weddings and conversions. Our aim by appointing someone for a three year period, is to give them the opportunity to grow the community over this time and identify additional sources of funding, so – at the end of this initial period - we will hope to be able to make a more permanent commitment and possibly even extend the hours. Thank you to the generous donors who are helping us to make this dream a reality, but we still have some way to go to make this dream a reality. However, we believe that securing the correct candidate that is the right 'fit' for our community is more important than filling the post, so in the meantime we welcome Student Rabbi Rafe Thurstance to lead us for the 2021/22 academic year.

Unfortunately, a casualty of Covid and the overabundance of online learning for children during lockdown meant that our Cheder was put 'on hold'. Believing very firmly that our children are our future, now is the time to re-establish this and make learning and Jewish life fun for all ages. We are reaching out to all parents to enrol their children into our monthly Cheder class, which will be led by Student Rabbi Rafe and a new young teacher who are currently working together to prepare a programme of fun but educational activities for the year, which will take place before and during the monthly Shabbat morning service. Sam Borin and Ruth Morris are also proposing a new Tots group for our little ones. Hopefully both will start imminently, but only if there is demand, so please tell us asap if you are interested.

As devastating as coronavirus has been, it has also brought Liberal Judaism congregations together in a way that has been unprecedented. Many meetings, conferences and events are livestreamed for free, and other events have been made available to us, such as Hebrew lessons and educational sessions. All can be attended from the comfort of our homes, without the need for long-distance travel, which has enabled greater participation, and many such events will continue in this way. Much as we would encourage you to attend our and others' events in the future 'in person', we appreciate that there will continue to be a role for online participation and we are investing in new technology accordingly.

I wish to thank the YLJC Committee this year for their commitment and the work they have done in such uncertain times. In particular, there are always some who give so much and these people must be given especial thanks: Shannon Kirshner has been a fantastic Chair and I have been honoured to support her in her expansive work where she always seeks to care for all members of our community, and she remains with us helping to publicise all our offerings amongst other work. Shaan Bloch has stepped up to work as Vice Chair in her usual efficient and pro-active way, and Howard Duckworth is now our Warden. Ben Rich remains our Treasurer but as always does so much more, including pro-actively fund raising and raising our profile in the wider UK Progressive Jewish community. Brian Berry is now our membership secretary and Board of Deputies representative. Karli Grazman and Tina Anderson ensured that YLJC remained an active participant of York Interfaith Group throughout the pandemic (with YIG members attending our annual Interfaith service, currently by zoom). And of course, a very special thanks to Sam Borin and Ruth Morris who continue to regularly lead all of our Friday night Shabbat services and so much more as knowledgeable lay readers and advisors to our community (Ruth is also editor of our community newsletter 'Jews on the Ouse'), so they were deserving recipients of a 'Chair's Award' at the last Liberal Judaism Conference. My thanks also to Chloe Wigston Smith, Jay Prosser, Orly Askew and Katrina Blackmore who have stepped down during the year, and a huge welcome to Owen Power, our new Facebook champion and LJ Link Officer. Of course, many others have also worked hard behind the scenes, and I thank them too for their service.

We must also thank all of our Members, Associates and Friends for your invaluable support and for making us the unique and inclusive community that we are today. Please continue to join in with our many services and activities; suggestions and volunteers will always be welcomed!

And in this time of new beginnings, we would also like to welcome new members onto the Committee. Please let me know if you would like to be involved and if you have a special interest or skill or if you have new ideas – you will receive the support you need. There is no better way to get to know people, to make new friends and to feel an integral part of the community of YLJC, than to join in and contribute to the work we all do for each other.

Finally, we say a huge thank you to the NLPS Trust for their continuing financial support and to all the Rabbis and staff at Liberal Judaism, and my colleagues at the other LJ Communities, for their leadership, advice and support, especially during this past year.

Lilian Coulson
Chair
York Liberal Jewish Community

5 November 2021

York Liberal Jewish Community Receipts and payments account

Year ended 4 April 2021

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	2020
Receipts				
General donations	9,864	17,550	27,414	7,549
Grant income		-	-	1,973
Interest	2	4	6	12
Membership fees	12,078	-	12,078	11,652
Total receipts	21,944	17,554	39,498	21,186
Payments				
Accountancy fees	840	-	840	
Ark design & build	-	-	-	985
Charitable contributions	645	-	645	378
Cheder teachers	-	-	-	480
Insurance - other	127	-	127	130
Newsletter	99	-	99	255
Postage	-	-	-	29
Rabbinic expenses	158	-	158	2,851
Rabbinic salary	6,500	-	6,500	4,185
Room booking	-	-	-	5,663
Staff training & welfare	254	-	254	
Service expenses		-	-	512
Subscriptions	1,283	-	1,283	150
Sundry expenses	-	-	-	206
Telephone	72	-	72	72
Total payments	9,978	-	9,978	15,896
Net receipts/(payments)	11,966	17,554	29,520	5,290
Cash funds last year end	10,205	4,444	14,649	9,359
Cash funds this year end	22,171	21,998	44,169	14,649

Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Cash assets

Current account	10,115
Savings account	34,054
	<u>44,169</u>

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf
of all the trustees

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Signed by one or two trustees on behalf
of all the trustees

Signed by an Independent Examiner: M J
Simon FCA, FCCA on 4th August 2021 who
has reviewed the above account and confirms
that it accurately represents the financial
transactions of the York Liberal Jewish
Community for the year ended 4th April 2021

