



Trustees' Report

Annual General Meeting

2 December 2023

2023 has certainly been a busy and eventful year. And a historic one for York, where we have now appointed and have in post York's first resident Rabbi in over 800 years, and its first ever Progressive Rabbi. We continue to make our mark on both our local and the world's stage, hopefully showing that size does not matter, making our voices heard, and growing our membership and community.

It has always been my aim as Chair to ensure that YLJC should be an inclusive and welcoming community, where everyone can participate in those things of interest and/or meaningful to them and, hopefully, that widens as they get to know us and we offer more opportunities for learning and to get to know each other. For my part as Chair these past years, I have always said that as equally important as the religious side, YLJC aims to be your Jewish 'family' in York. We celebrate Shabbat and all festivals together – with an amazing attendance level for a community our size – and are increasing our offer of activities for all ages and interests. The Committee has spent the past year working hard and, to keep doing this, we need to all be proactive and to work together to build our community spirit and Jewish life in York, whilst continuing to keep everyone safe.

Our membership has once again increased and we currently have circa 100 members, including children and students, of whom circa 70 are active Full members and Friends. Our Vice Chair Shaan Bloch has also been our Membership Secretary and has been very efficiently contacting those regulars / members whose membership forms and / or fees may have fallen through the cracks and also correlating this with our Treasurer Miriam Hoffman, and encouraging new members too. We need membership to enable us to pay our way, but also to get to know better those we engage with and what services we can offer and provide together to better build our community. As Chair, 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 (and their families) through both good times and the more difficult ones. We have received many supportive contacts more recently, happily due to the publicity we have engendered with Rabbi Elisheva joining us but also now sadly due to the current horrendous Israeli / Palestinian conflict. We welcome these new Members and Friends to our community. I have also engaged with many at Liberal Judaism and the wider Progressive movement both within Yorkshire and nationally, who support us at York in so many ways.

Throughout this year's provision of services and events, we had strong levels of attendance and participation, so that we now hold twice monthly erev and morning Shabbat services. I would like to especially thank Sam Borin and Ruth Morris who regularly led our Shabbat evening services for a long period, as well as Howard Duckworth, our warden, who continued and expanded these, and now hosts them with Rabbi Elisheva.

For the first half of the year, our 'current' Student Rabbi Rafe Thurstance stayed on as our spiritual leader and educator. He started with us in September 2021, and agreed to stay on for a 2nd year to provide continuity for all. He consistently travelled up to York, whilst continuing his Rabbinic training at the Leo Baeck College in London, provided us with a stimulating and considered pastoral range of services, especially his Shabbat morning services and festivals, J101 discussions and our in-house conversion course (undertaken with Rabbi Danny Rich). Thanks, Rafe, for all your past work leading our community.

We had been advertising for a fully qualified Rabbi to join us as our resident York Rabbi for a while, and wonderfully Ben Rich, who has led our search and the appointment process, encouraged Rabbi Elisheva Salomo to come and meet us and the rest, so they say, is history (literally). Once she agreed to sign up as our resident Rabbi in York, Ben worked closely with her to agree terms and assist with visas, manage the complicated paperwork etc and he now supports her work and has helped publicise her joining us, and also leads our much-needed fundraising. Rabbi Elisheva joined us late summer in time to lead the High Holidays and is working for the first 6 months full time, and then will be half time as per the advertised post (and until we can afford to make it full time and our membership grows). Rabbi Elisheva, you are already making a difference by expanding what we do, encouraging all ages of our community to join in and join us, and inspiring and teaching us all. Thank you for joining us; we look forward to working with you. And a huge thanks to Ben for helping make it happen and for his ongoing support and work.

YLJC's activities this special year commenced last December with a very special Chanukah celebration. Organised in collaboration with North Yorkshire Police, we lit our Chanukah lights for the first time ever in Clifford's Tower, the first Jewish ceremony within its walls in over 800 years. The event was attended by over 70 guests from across the North of England, including from City of York Council, The Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell and English Heritage. The event was a watershed moment in York's history, and a symbol of the City's commitment to being a City of Sanctuary and Human Rights as we stood together with our fellow Yorkshire Jews and interfaith friends to light the Chanukah candles and sing the Ma'oz Tzur together.

We celebrated all the other festivals together, including a Purim service / megillah reading led by Sam Borin. We held a successful 'in person' Pesach community Seder led by Rafe. And continued that with Rabbi Elisheva leading our Rosh Hashanah Seder and a full suite of meaningful and inclusive High Holiday services and activities. The family highlight of Yom Kippur was our amazing children who acted out the Book of Jonah in such confident and characterful style. A joint Succah building with our Friends at the Meeting House was enjoyed by all, and was a lovely way to join together with our hosts there. A huge thanks to the whole Committee for everyone's work in preparing and making all of these and other events happen so seamlessly, and to Howard especially for always being there standing by the Rabbi's side throughout all services.

To re-concentrate on and engage with our children, Cheder is held on the 1st Shabbat of the month, and Rabbi Elisheva is now expanding our programme to reach out to all ages, including a short family service suitable for smaller children before Cheder, and reviewing our education and activities programme for all. We so enjoy involving our youngsters in our services and events, seeing them grow and develop, with Cheder teaching them Hebrew as well as the meaning behind much of what we do. Please contact Rabbi Elisheva if you have yet to sign your child(ren) up. She will continue to work with Beth Thorpe our 'Youth Champion' in bringing lots of family activities for you all to engage in.

And huge congratulations to Sam who recently celebrated his Bar Mitzvah, very much in his own style. In a difficult time in the wider world, he brought joy to his family and our community. We are so proud of him, and his commitment to a Jewish life and our LJ values. With another BM scheduled for next year, our community continues to inspire and thrive and we truly love that of our youth.

In a wider community perspective, we are proud to confirm that YLJC is now very much York's Jewish representative community and is the 'go to' Jewish faith contact within the City. This has been emphasised by the various events this year at which I and other members of the Committee have been delighted to represent YLJC. We continue to work with English Heritage and others regarding Clifford's Tower and the Eye of York area, and have spoken to schools and continue to help plan / be involved in events there (eg the recent Tracey Ann Oberman candle procession with Rabbi Elisheva, and our forthcoming Chanukah lighting), and with the Castle Museum where the Clifford's Tower commemoration was held this year (led by Sam Borin as Chair of the HMD Steering Group). Our relationship with York Minster has strengthened further over the year, especially with the Dean and Canons, and included my reading a lesson at York Minster's Carol Service and our annual involvement in the Holocaust Memorial 600 Candles event. I also represented YLJC at various events there together with the Civic Party and other faith leaders, including the Royal Maundy Service attended by the King and Queen in April and also at the Coronation Service on 7 May, where all faiths were actively included in the service and processions as per Westminster Abbey.

I have been working with Rabbi Elisheva to introduce her to our wider community, and we were officially welcomed by the Lord Mayor and Civic Leaders to the Mansion House in September, in recognition of her historic appointment and to emphasise their continued commitment to work with and support their Jewish community here. Likewise, meetings and relationships are ongoing with York Minster, the Archbishop of York, and our Interfaith friends of all religions. Sarah Hubbard has this year worked tirelessly as our representative at York Interfaith Group and we thank her for this important role, where we stand together with our Interfaith Friends in this City of Sanctuary. Especially important in recent times, she helped organise York Interfaith Group 'Prayers for Peace' event – where a small group of us as each Interfaith leads stood together with our Civic leaders, Police etc to pray for peace in the Middle East. Likewise, York Minster hosted a multi-faith Vigil for Peace in Israel and Gaza, where Miriam Hoffman represented us and spoke beautifully, and was attended by 1,100 people.

On a wider Yorkshire perspective, I have been working throughout the year with a team led by Laurence Saffer of LJRC to seek to engage those Jews declaring themselves Jewish in the census but not engaging. This included Leeds Sinai and Bradford synagogues, our fellow Progressive communities, with whom we intend to continue that relationship as part of the wider national progressive tie up. This culminated in an event called 'Beit Yorkshire' held in October in Leeds, Huddersfield and Bradford, and was well attended throughout by Civic dignitaries and faith leaders of

these cities, including the Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire. We were delighted that the Shabbat morning service at the Holocaust Memorial Centre North, based at Huddersfield University, was led by LJ CEO Rabbi Charley Baginsky and our Rabbi Elisheva, followed by lunch and talks and a tour of this important centre. The timing and location were especially poignant given the current crisis, and again an important interfaith event where we all stood together for peace, whilst remembering previous atrocities.

Social Action remains an important part of what we do, and this is so ably instigated and led by Jay Prosser. He attended the Mitzvah Day awards in March when we were nominated and is now offering to take our scroll down for the MST event in 2024, to commemorate their arrival 60 years ago. He also organised and led with Shannon a fantastic day of work for Mitzvah Day, where a team from YLJC gave themselves quite a workout digging up a new wildflower meadow for St Nick's Nature Centre in York. Thanks to all those involved – and please continue to work with Jay and his sub committee on the many initiatives being explored.

YLJC continues to fundraise for our 'Rabbi for York' fund to cover the costs of our part time Rabbi and her work. The recent joint talk between Tracey Ann Oberman and Rabbi Elisheva was well attended and raised some funds, although donations of all sizes are always needed. Ben Rich continues to lead on this and further major initiatives are being planned. A huge thank you for all donations already received. Please speak to Ben further if you can help in any way, large or small.

I wish to thank the YLJC Committee this year for their commitment and the huge amount of work they have done. In particular, there are always some who give so much and these people must be given especial thanks: Shaan Bloch as Vice Chair has also led on Security, reviewing our digital presence and taken on the Membership role. Howard Duckworth is our ever active Warden. Miriam Hoffman has taken over as Treasurer, although Ben Rich remains on our committee including his work above and also pro-actively fund raising and raising our profile in the wider UK Progressive Jewish community. Lauren McNeillage is our lovely efficient Secretary and sends all of our email messages to you all of our activities. Jay Prosser leads on all of our Social Action and Sarah Hubbard attends York Interfaith Group as our representative.

Not currently on the Committee as now so busy elsewhere too, a very special thanks to Sam Borin and Ruth Morris who led our Friday night Shabbat services and were knowledgeable lay readers and advisors to our community, and Ruth for all her work as editor of our community newsletter 'Jews on the Ouse'. If there is anyone who can now take over our newsletter, please let us know. Owen Power is our LJ Link Officer, our Facebook champion and our Board of Deputies representative - congratulations too for his Mitzvah Day Individual Award. And Sharon Tagger does an amazingly important role leading on many and varied school visits throughout the region as requests are received. Also a huge thanks to our 'Youth Champion' Beth Thorp who so wonderfully organises and encourages family events throughout the year. Beth continues to coordinate and disseminate information on youth activities for us, including LJ camps – a great asset to our team.

Of course, many others also work hard behind the scenes, and I thank you all for your service to our community.

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! 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

23 November 2023

York Liberal Jewish Community **Receipts and payments account**

Year ended 4 April 2023

	Unrestricted funds	Rabbinic fund (restricted)	Bursary fund (restricted)	Total funds	2022
Receipts					
General donations	3,087	400		3,487	16,193
High holy day appeal	480	-		480	950
Grant income		-		-	-
Interest	85	157		242	4
Membership fees	13,108	-		13,108	12,556
Total receipts	16,760	557		17,317	29,703
Payments					
Accountancy fees	474	-		474	480
Bank charges	78	-		78	16
Charitable contributions	90	-		90	250
Insurance - other	401	-		401	314
Service expenses	282	-		282	-
Rabbinic salary & expenses	9,559	-		9,559	3,759
Room booking	2,994	-		2,994	975
Cheder teachers	355	-		355	-
Subscriptions	3,034	-		3,034	2,207
Sundry expenses	245	-		245	5
Telephone	72	-		72	391
Total payments	17,584	-		17,584	8,397
Net receipts	(824)	557		(267)	21,306
Cash funds last year end	28,466	33,009	4,000	65,475	44,169
Cash funds this year end	27,642	33,566	4,000	65,208	65,475

Statement of assets and liabilities at 4 April 2023

Cash assets

Current account	6,482
Savings accounts	58,726
	<u>65,208</u>

Funds

General fund	27,642
Restricted funds	
Rabbinic Fund	33,566
Bursary fund	4,000
Total funds	<u>65,208</u>

Signed by a trustee on behalf of all the trustees

B RICH

Signed by an independent examiner P Silver-Myer, FCCA on 2 October 2023, 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 4 April 2023

PSM — FCCA
2nd October 2023.