R&P AGM Report

Summary

Our work this year has been mainly focused on consolidating the work of forming a new minchag. The biggest demands have been the services that take place offsite and required a lot of innovation last year. Last year's High Holy Day services and communal Seder both went well but (inevitably) provided unexpected problems. We felt we learnt the lessons of the past and enjoyed much more fulsome praise about both services this year. This seems very encouraging for the future but we hope to do even better next year – which will see us in a new venue for the High Holy Days (again!) – Sinclair House.

Festival and Shabbat Services

Other festivals have also been positively received. Of particular note were Purim, with a brilliant spiel written by our head teacher, and our Tu B'shevat seder, which inspired several members to think (and act) more about recycling in the Shul.

Perhaps the biggest success of the past year has been a gradual increase in attendance on Shabbat mornings. We now regularly attract a congregation of about 40.

By contrast Friday night attendance has declined and we are to try some new ideas to boost numbers. We have already begun one idea – Come Shabbat with Me – holding Friday night meals in members' homes instead of the Shul one Friday on alternate months. Other ideas are currently being discussed and new suggestions are welcome.

Other big projects of the past year have been the trial and feedback on the draft new LJ Siddur, and new guidance for families holding a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at the Shul.

Our Committee and team

By far the most important part of this report, though, is to provide thanks where it is due. The biggest influences in our services are of course our Rabbis, supported by our administrators, and they are responsible in the largest measure for making our services the special events they are. But services involve a huge number of volunteers and we wanted to ensure your contributions are publicly acknowledged: the choir who make all the difference to the spiritual meaning of our services, everyone who has brought food and laboured in the kitchen to provide a Kiddush (especially to our new coordinator Jacqui Morrison), the ever reliable volunteers who help set up and clear up after the bigger services, our lay leaders for their diligence and care, our hosts for Friday night meals for welcoming the community into their homes, those organising our inclusive services, tots' services and rosh chodesh group (especially to Mich Sampson for her starring role in each), our committed and essential security team, and everyone who has welcomed newcomers, supported a member or provided help in a way which no one saw but contributed to making our services the joyful and meaningful celebrations they are at least twice a week.

Finally we would like to thank our committee. Apart from ourselves and both Rabbis, the Committee this year comprised Alice Wilcock, Simon Bencher, Gary Freedman, Sharon Law, Caroline Charles, Phil Aston, Fiona Hulbert and June Bradbury (who was a very esteemed member until recently but has now moved on to work on other matters within the Shul). Our thanks to you all for giving up your evenings to attend meetings and volunteering to organise our activities.

Elliott Porte and Ben Glassman – Co Chairs