

# Edgware & Hendon Reform Synagogue

## ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR END 31 DECEMBER 2023

118 STONEGROVE, EDGWARE, MIDDX, HA8 8AB  
REGISTERED CHARITY NO 1172458

A constituent of Reform Judaism

SENIOR RABBI:	RABBI MARK GOLDSMITH
RABBI:	RABBI DEBBIE YOUNG-SOMERS RABBI TANYA SAKHNOVICH CANTOR TAMARA WOLFSON
PRESIDENT:	RICHARD HARRIS



Edgware & Hendon  
Reform Synagogue  
ק"ק לדור ודור

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

You will be pleased to know that Council and Honorary Officers have been working extremely well together and addressed successfully the challenges and issues that we have running a synagogue this size. 2023 has been a busy and successful year and whilst we are always sad when existing members pass away, we are delighted when new members join and indeed our membership numbers have ultimately remained stable during the year. Our aim is to grow our membership so that more people can enjoy the many and varied services, both with a big S and small s, that we provide.

We have tried to bring down the average age of council members. With age comes knowledge and experience, we must recognise that we are trying to build a younger and energetic community, whilst not forgetting our more experienced members, and we wanted council to reflect that ethos.

Our dedicated Programmes and Administration teams are always available to our members, and we were delighted when in January 2023 a new role was created and filled. The Membership Engagement Lead, Debbie Drapkin, got her feet under the table very quickly and during the course of the year has been able to work with our members to help them to arrange and organise many successful events which has brought the community together and has certainly got more people involved with activities.

We said goodbye this year to our Community Director, Perry Newton, and we wish him all the best for the future. The administration team led by Martine have covered this role I would like to thank everyone for digging in and getting the work done.

It is wonderful at times during the week and weekends to see so many children being around the building. The Stay & Play event every Friday is now packed out and the events we had for Purim and Chanukah were wonderful and fantastically attended. I have heard people say, "who knew we had this many children as members here". Rabbi Tanya Sakhnovich became a full-time member of our clergy team and with Cantor Tamara due to start in January 2024 we now have the dream team that we set out to have when our Emeritus Rabbis retired and after we were devastated by the loss of Rabbi Kraft z"l. Our Clergy team are making things happen around the synagogue and rarely a day passes without some sort of learning, worship or hands on event happening. The induction of Rabbi Tanya late in 2023 was a wonderful event with a packed synagogue celebrating our latest arrival.

As one of the largest Reform Communities in the country we have been interested and involved in the proposed new Movement for Progressive Judaism during the year. A successful forum was held during the year where our members were given the opportunity to question and discuss with representatives of both the Reform and Liberal movement the opportunities and concerns that will no doubt arise whilst these talks take place.

The 2023 AGM was well attended, helped by a lovely Israeli style breakfast before the meeting.

We were all shocked by the events of 7 October in Israel and EHRS and the Clergy Team ensured that we as a community could do whatever we could to support our members who were deeply troubled by the events. We held some community get togethers and had Zoom links with progressive rabbis and many others in Israel explaining to us what was happening and how people were dealing with the issue in Israel. It has also been a worrying time for Jews in the United Kingdom and we as a community have been helping each other with those challenges. On 12 October, EHRS was contacted by the Board of Deputies of British Jews who needed help in providing support the next day for a number of Australian Israelis, mostly young families and the elderly, who that evening were being flown out of Israel by the Australian High Commission. EHRS immediately mobilised, acquiring food for up to 200 people, ensuring there were toys for children and space for JAMI trauma counsellors to provide quiet support to those in need.

Coordinating closely with the Board, EHRS provided a welcoming and secure space for those from the flight to relax, eat, talk, and play. It would not have been possible to provide this support without the help of our security team, rabbis, and Council Members - and I would also like to thank the Board of Deputies and JAMI for their work in helping these vulnerable families.

Our security team has certainly stepped up since those events and the volunteers have been incredibly supportive of the core security team. On all weekends we now have a full complement of security volunteers but as ever, more help is always needed so if you think you can help, please contact the office.

Council agreed during the year that the main project for 2024 would be the refurbishment of the outside of the whole synagogue site and building, including the car park and front area. The wall at the front of the building is at the point of collapse and after much deliberation it was decided that a complete refurbishment of the outside of the synagogue would be preferable to spending money on a short-term fix. Investment has not been made on the outside of the building for nearly 30 years and we look forward to experiencing a much more usable outside space and seeing a new and pleasant experience when looking at the synagogue from the road.

Finally, I would like to thank Members, Council and Honorary Officers, and all the team at EHRS for their support during the year. Without that support my task would have been impossible.

**Jeremy Harrod**

## RABBIS' REPORT:

This was the year that we were able to complete the EHRS clergy team. Rabbi Tanya Sakhnovich joined Rabbi Mark Goldsmith and Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers and became a permanent member of the team during 2023. The community celebrated her induction as EHRS's Rabbi in November. During the year we were part of the group which worked together to find an ordained Cantor to join us. They would take over the role of Music Director as well as adding their skills to the clergy team in general. Cantor Tamara Wolfson was the most suitable candidate for EHRS and she joined us from Alyth Synagogue in January 2024. Rabbi Mark took a 3 month Sabbatical dedicated to completing the renewal of the Movement for Reform Judaism Machzor. Rabbi Debbie also took a 3 month Sabbatical and was able to dedicate substantial time to study. Both are very grateful to Rabbi Tanya and all of the members of the Synagogue who made this possible. Alongside our Friday night and Saturday morning services we have brought the community the choice of parallel services on most Shabbatot. This year these have included joining our Hakol B'Seder experimental music service with Cantor Dimitri Karpenko in Moscow, our regular outdoor Shabbat B'Yaar (in the forest) services, Shabbat Shirah Friday nights bringing contemporary Reform Jewish music to Erev Shabbat, and the third year of our Bark Mitzvah, celebrating our pets on the New Year for Animals at the start of Elul, and more.

We worked with EHRS member Natasha Davidov to complete the Sefer Torah in memory of our dear Rabbi Neil Kraft z"l with a set of beautiful bespoke Rimomim depicting the diversity of the Jewish community. The festivals and fasts of the year were as creative as ever. We held a Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration based on lullabies in a time of trauma. On Yom HaShoah Rabbi Tanya worked with Debbie Drapkin and Rabbi Steven Katz to help us to understand the history of our Sobeslav scroll from Bohemia. On Tu'B'Shevat Rabbi Debbie and Rabbi Tanya ran a seder honouring our volunteers. Purim brought the return of the EHRS Purim Spiel and a very large, intergenerational, congregation showing that the era of Covid based reluctance to come in person was truly over. Our Pesach communal Seder was also back to pre-Covid numbers. On Yom HaAtzmaut Rabbi Debbie worked with Nurit Heath to create a seder specially for Israel's 75th birthday. We brought four other local communities to join us at EHRS for a very successful Tikkun Leyl Shavuot and, alongside our Shavuot morning service, were delighted to be part of the family Shavuot carnival. This followed a special Shabbat morning and community gathering for the coronation of King Charles III. The High Holy Days were full of choices and tradition with very well attended family services and classes throughout. Sukkot was a full programme including film shows, Young Adults dinner, an Israeli breakfast and a fruit tasting. Simchat Torah was, of course, overshadowed by the terrible events of 7 October in Israel. Though we

were celebrating Torah fulsomely, the tragic news was beginning to break by the end of the service. In the week after, we hosted a packed community forum with Rabbi Yael Vurgan from the Gaza envelope and Anna Kislanski, CEO of the Israel Movement for Reform Judaism. We also showed hospitality to Israelis that Shabbat. Since that time EHRS has been deeply involved with the trauma of Israel and Gaza, ensuring that we are supporting the families of hostages taken by Hamas. Child of EHRS members, Jake Marlow z"l, was murdered in the attacks. We held candle lighting on every night of Chanukah as our community had a strong need to be sure to come together. We taught Shiurim throughout the year on Shabbat Mornings, and classes on weekday evenings, including Rabbi Tanya's Pale of Settlement course, and Rabbi Debbie led our Cornerstone Class. Rabbi Mark and Rabbi Tanya taught a year round Talmud Class. All of us participated in Schmooze with the Rabbis and the Bar and Bat Mitzvah classes. We led sessions and onegei Shabbat at our year round youth schemes and Rabbi Mark was a leader on our teenagers' trip to Cordoba. Rabbi Tanya innovated with Phil Dave to create a series of Podcasts which are on the EHRS website, called 'Pondering Jews.' We ensured that there was Israel education, working especially with partners at the Leo Baeck Center in Haifa and the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism. Rabbi Debbie's Cookalongs remained popular including Rabbi Mark's 'Quick and Dirty Challah Making' session. We led a session called 'Good Mourning' learning about death and bereavement and Jewish ways to help. To continue our aim to educate about Jewish diversity we worked with Marian Cohen to create Oud and Food to celebrate our Baghdadi and Iranian members. Rabbi Debbie worked with a group towards a very moving adult Bat Mitzvah ceremony which was celebrated in November. Rabbi Debbie continued her group for young adults, 'Beer & Shiur'. Rabbi Tanya started a course with Mike Walton for our teenagers called Facing History, which will culminate in a learning trip to Berlin. We greatly enjoyed working with Sarah Koster and Marian ohen at Kuddle up Shabbat, Shabbat Stay & Play, and the Shabbat Club.

Our Rabbis ensure that EHRS is valued in the Jewish community beyond our gates. Rabbi Mark is a volunteer trustee & leader in EcoJudaism and the Shores Trust for Jewish continuity. He attended & presented workshops at the World Union for Progressive Judaism Conference in Jerusalem. He and Rabbi Debbie wrote regularly in the Jewish News. Rabbi Debbie was a regular contributor on Radio London and Radio 2's 'Pause for Thought' and represented Reform Judaism at the Conference of the Union of Jewish Students and the Commonwealth Service. Rabbi Tanya is Co-ordinator of Community Placements at Leo Baeck College and all of our rabbis teach at the college. She is also a trustee of EcoJudaism and leads the EHRS Eco-Action group. All of our Rabbis are substantially involved in the work of the Movement for Reform Judaism and have been ensuring that EHRS is part of the work of creation of the New Progressive Jewish Movement.



## SERVICES:

The Services Committee is responsible for the planning and operation of all Synagogue services in conjunction with the Rabbis, Wardens and Council. The Committee meets quarterly and receives reports from the Senior Rabbi and the Senior Warden on recent and forthcoming services. Although the Education Committee manages Children's and Youth Services, the Committee has input into the timing and format of these services.

Following Covid, attendances at all services have gradually increased, although still not to pre-Covid levels. We have maintained the live streaming and online services for those unable to attend in person.

During the year we held approximately 300 Shabbat and festival services. Our Friday afternoon Kuddle Up Shabbat and afternoon services for our younger members and their families remain popular and attendances have increased. We have continued to hold B'nei Mitzvah classes on Friday afternoons, resulting in our Friday night services becoming more popular with families. The tote bags available in our main services with age-appropriate activities and books to keep our younger members occupied, remain popular. We have continued to offer a variety of alternative services, including various musical services, attended both in person and online, a monthly lay led Hebrew only traditional Shabbat service, and outdoor services on different themes and at various venues. We continue to hold regular Sunday morning Shacharit service. We are seeking to actively develop new alternative services that may appeal to members to encourage community engagement. We continue to assist the Rabbis in leading Shiva prayers for mourners.

We are grateful to Rabbi Mark and Rabbi Debbie for their continued guidance and enthusiasm for all our services, and we were delighted to welcome Rabbi Tanya Sakhnovich to the clerical team.

The Services Committee expresses its thanks to all those people, too numerous to mention individually, who have assisted in maintaining the spirituality and organisation of all our services.

When planning our services, the Committee have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on Public Benefit, and in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. EHRS is committed to enabling as many people as possible to pray in our Synagogue and we welcome new members as well as visitors, including those of different faiths, and through our broadcast services, we are able to reach a wider audience both within the UK and worldwide. The Services Committee believes that thereby we maintain our Public Benefit commitment.

**HIGH HOLY DAYS:** With Rabbi Tanya joining the team permanently, there was no need for any further additional support. This year saw us offer once again the same options as before, both online and in person, with small variations to the previous programme which worked

very well. However, we are pleased to say how nice it was to see services that were at some points nearly at full capacity. This was due to the reorganising of the services and no longer having an early service on Rosh Hashanah, but two 10:00am services side by side (the intention being that this would assist member's lunch arrangements and encourage them to stay until the end of the service). This worked very well and was lovely for those leading as well as those attending. Even more encouraging was the increasing numbers attending all the Children's services which continue to grow from strength to strength. This was also the first time that we were led by Nina our Cantorial soloist at our Selichot service, which was delightful and well received.

We also used for the final time the current HHD Machzor (the new one was used on Yom Kippur in the Upper Synagogue), in preparation to be used permanently in 2024 - you can sponsor a book if you would like.

We also introduced the membership card replacing the usual tickets, which could then be used throughout the rest of the year and was well received by the community and the security team.

As the majority of HHD's fell on weekends, this presented us with the logistical nightmare of not having a weekend between Yom Kippur and Sukkot to prepare the Sukkah (Tuesday to Friday afternoon). However, with sterling work by our regular families who help out, plus Orot, we managed to decorate and make it look as welcoming as ever, where events were held every day.

Overall, a very successful HHD programme, which now sets up the way forward to provide a great spiritual and entertaining experience for the community.



## YOUTH & EDUCATION:

This was our first year as a combined Youth and Education staff team & committee. The collaboration since merging has been the cornerstone of numerous, successful events.

**NAGILA:** Nagila used the academic year to explore the cycle of Jewish festivals, and also enjoyed learning about different cultures. We organised a number of visitors to help the children learn about their world. These included the local librarian, our Barnet Oral Health expert who introduced a daily tooth brushing programme, and a visit from the farm, where the children were able to get up close with the animals.

We have participated in a variety of 'charity days' across the year. In the Summer we came in to nursery in our PJs for the Book Trust's Pyjamarama Day! In November we participated in Mitzvah Day. We also participated in Just ONE Tree day and the parents fundraising efforts raised enough to plant a further 22 trees to contribute to global reforestation.

Nagila is open to members and non-members alike of all faiths and provides a warm introduction for many young families to EHRS.

**YOUNG FAMILIES:** 2023 saw new young families join EHRS, as well as a huge rise in engagement for members and non-members coming to our events, services and activities. We have over 400 families on the young families mailing list. Friday's Shabbat Stay & Play sells out weekly, with over 100 children, parents and grandparents enjoying the activities. The Sing & Sensory class is very popular and it's wonderful to see our youngest members enjoy their first taster of Jewish songs and EHRS. Many non-members attend and this group has led to some joining the synagogue.

The Youth & Education team continues to work together to provide creative Festival events attended by Orot and our young families. Both Purim and Chanukah saw sell out events. HHD services for families grew in attendance from last year. We launched a new 0-2 interactive sensory service for Rosh Hashanah that was very popular and will be repeated next year. Many non members choose to attend our Family services and celebrate Jewish New Year at EHRS.

In January, we officially launched the Senitt Sensory room. It is being used by our Sensory class and children's groups, as well as by Nagila Nursery and Orot. Around the creation of the room, we are working on our SEND strategy, and have held a talk (open to everyone) and started a support group for EHRS member parents. The room is also available to book for families in and outside our community and beyond. Family camping returned in July, trying out a new campsite at Wellington Country Park. We were joined by 12 families, members and non for an incredible Shabbaton. We also held a Let's talk Autism & ADHD event in June.



**OROT & BBM:** Orot is dubbed the 'Happy Cheder' because of the positive feedback we receive; "It is such a delight picking up my children from cheder and finding that every week they have such a fulfilling experience. It really is a very special synagogue to be (newish) members of." This year we welcomed Trishns Malam, our new administrator and an important member of our team, and has helped us significantly enhance the quality of our communication.

We take pride in our inclusive environment for children with diverse learning or special educational needs. We engaged a SEND specialist to elevate our teacher's capabilities, to help ensure every child's sense of accomplishment and positive experience. She noted the children's sense of security and happiness and the nurturing support from teachers.

The B'nei Mitzvah programme is immensely enriched by our clergy's integral role in teaching, allowing them to forge connections with each student. Complimenting this is our mentoring programme encouraging older youth to guide and support their younger peers approaching their own Bar/Bat mitzvah.

For teens post B'nei Mitzvah, we introduced the 'Facing History' programme, currently engaging twelve teens in bi-weekly Sunday sessions

**UNIFORMED GROUPS:** As well as weekly meetings at the shul, where our young people have fun, play games and earn badges, this year we have run our annual Winter and Summer residentials and have introduced a new residential experience, narrowboat camp. Outdoor activities are at the heart of what we do, so our young people have had the opportunity to take part in a wide range of activities such as climbing, air rifle shooting and hiking.

**YOUTH:** Schemes have grown a huge amount over 2023 with 5 in total. Starting the year with an average of 45 children per day, to the Summer averaging 55 children, and over 100 total. Our Pesach scheme incorporated a children's service to be part of the scheme day that was well attended.



The October scheme was in the fall out of the 7 October Israel attacks. This led to us giving out free places to Israelis who had fled their country. Our support of Israelis was well received by the parents. During this time we also upped our security presence at scheme. Weekly Drop Zone club continues to be enjoyed and well attended.

In February we started a Football club that ran until the summer. It had 12 to 14 attendees coming weekly for training sessions.

Working with Streetwise, they brought in their Maccabi leadership programme to run sport activities during various schemes. Norwood helped to run SEN training for our madrachim and did a great job. We also worked with Jami to run mindfulness sessions.

Our oldest hadracha cohort graduated in May and many went onto lead at various schemes or work during Orot. We have a new cohort of 15 coming through and we ran a fun weekend social with them in November.



## STONEGROVE LIFE:

A beacon of lifelong learning and vibrant entertainment, the newly rebranded Stonegrove Life Committee has become the talk of EHRS with a brilliant array of events that cater for every curiosity and passion.

This year our members have dived into the depths of wisdom with our monthly Talmud class led by Rabbi Mark, where he brings ancient texts alive. Members have welcomed the new moon with Rosh Chodesh celebrations led by Rabbi Debbie and Rabbi Tanya. Many members have started their Shabbat with a spark of insight at our breakfast shiurim, and immersed themselves in thought provoking study sessions and discussions that left them inspired and moved.

Stonegrove Life offered all our adult members the opportunities throughout the year to learn, grow and celebrate the joy of Jewish life together.



Our Together Groups continue to bring our community together, person by person, to get to know others who share the same interests. Our groups include cycling, music, rambling, bridge, cooking, reading, singing, art, sport and so many more. Explore the EHRS website for our amazing array of Together Groups, Podcasts, clergy's thoughts, programmes & events. Some highlights this year have been:

- Mitzvah Day tea party for which EHRS were nominated for an award by Norwood & Mitzvah Day
- Podcast series on Jews and World's Politics led by Rabbi Tanya and Phil Dave
- Rabbi Kraft's Memorial Book Club led by Debra Barnes and Margot Coleman
- The Singing Circle led by Lawrence Cohen
- Stonegrove Serenade led by Anna Flash and amazing team of volunteers
- Oud and Food celebration of Mizrahi Jewry
- Charity Supper Quiz for Comfort Cases UK
- Desert Island Texts to introduce Rabbi Tanya

## MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS:

Marketing & Communications continues to be a vital facility during the year. With so much happening, there are more leaflets, brochures, posters and social media posts to produce, as well as keeping members up to date with the weekly community email 'Our Week Ahead' and our bi-monthly magazine 'LeDor VaDor'. The readership of OWA has increased over the year especially since the events of 7 October, where we feel our members want to be more involved and immersed in their community and be up to date with what we have to offer them.

From external adverts placed in LeDor VaDor Pesach and Rosh Hashanah editions, by various affiliated organisations and personal adverts, a total of £4212 was raised.

Our High Holy Day Booklet produced for those who want to join in person or online from home helps to enhance the High Holy Days for everyone. This has proved to be an important marketing material, and continues to be popular and beneficial during the High Holy Days. Together with our informative website, which is updated daily and shows our offerings throughout the year, these multiple communications are key to enhancing our members and visitors experience of EHRS.

## COMMUNITY CARE:

Community Care and Wellbeing offer members support, advice and advocacy through difficult times in their lives. We offer practical and emotional support often when people are at their most vulnerable.

Our strong community networks allow us to work in partnership with external organisations.

There were 70 member deaths in the community during 2023 and an additional 37 families were affected by the deaths of non-member relatives. Surviving relatives were offered telephone support during 2023. Demand remained high from the bereaved for support and we have three bereavement social groups run by members for different age groups.

Following the introduction of the community circles during the pandemic these have mainly ceased although some members have stayed in touch with members they were calling, mainly as they are isolated members of our community and they have built a strong connection.

Other calls have been absorbed into Telenet.

Community Care encourages friendships to help reduce loneliness and promote active inclusion in our community and the wider local community through the monthly lunch club that has continued to grow in popularity. We have approximately 25 regular attendees and welcome up to a further 10 additional visitors. We have a team of lunch club volunteers who assist.

The EHRS Memory Way Café provides a regular social gathering for people living with dementia and their family carers. The Café is popular with contact from both members & non-members in the local area and regularly hosts between 6-8 couples monthly and we operate an entertainment and activity programme. We have two regular volunteers who assist.

We have 411 members over the age of 85 and Telenet calls are made by volunteers who provide invaluable feedback on each call. Telenet is a vital outreach initiative that has allowed EHRS to get to know its membership and their needs and any concerns are followed up by Community Care staff.

During 2023 we were fortunate to continue having increased contact from members wishing to volunteer.

## WITHIN EHRS:

**NEW OPTIONS:** We cater for the retired and semi-retired (60 plus). The Bridge afternoons were still popular, attracting about 40 people each week for an enjoyable & social afternoon. Over half the people attending are non-EHRS members. The monthly light-hearted discussions, 'Schmoozing with the Rabbis', were now only held in person not on Zoom, with 18-20 people attending. All our Rabbis contributed, each in their own individual style, to make it lively & popular. We arranged another Community Weekend Away which was held in May. This time we stayed Northampton, with 28 members attending, for another very successful informal and social weekend.



**NOT THE WOMENS GUILD:** This group continues to welcome women of all ages who belong to EHRS. The group is informal and programmes are decided democratically. It holds meetings about once a month in the afternoon at EHRS. Events last year included outings to theatre, local restaurants, a talk by our latest Rabbi to introduce herself, and a visit to Kenwood. Socials often based around festivals. Our Summer party provided enough food to feed all the group, Rabbis and the entire office staff! The mixture of cultural and social activities suit the group and hope to continue in the same way.

**TZEDAKAH GROUP:** Each year a small group of people choose from among the various charities that approach us during the year for help and decide which charities will best suit our community in our annual appeal. These are put out to you all in the High Holy Days Appeal. We are delighted to inform the community that we raised just over £25,000 in our appeal last September for our chosen charities: Royal Free Charity, Raphael Counselling Service, Jnetics, Camp Simcha, Moishe House, Oasis of Peace, React and the Karen Morris Memorial Trust. This was especially generous given the events of 7 October, when our thoughts turned to giving to charities elsewhere.

### Pirkei Avot 5:13:

*A person who gives charity, and wants others to give, is pious.*

**KIDDUSH:** Numbers attending services may well be still less than pre-covid, but hasn't stopped the congregation staying post service and enjoying a nice kiddush meeting up with and chatting with friends and family alike, or new members or guests attending a celebration.

Whilst as with everything else, prices have increased, but we have kept this to a minimum and tried to be supportive to those putting on a kiddush. We had the usual B'nei Mitzvah's, Aufruf's, baby blessings, significant birthdays and anniversaries, as well as honouring those chosen as Chatan's/Challah's at Simchat Torah.

We also had the pleasure of holding a special kiddush welcoming Rabbi Tanya at her inauguration in November attended by over 350, it was a really lovely occasion and everyone who was there left with great memories.



## SECURITY:

In August 2023 Josh Kettle invited EHRS Chair Jeremy Harrod along with 4 other security members to a meeting at CST HQ in Hendon where a tour of the facilities was given, and a current overview and the needs for the Synagogue to have better overall security especially volunteer inclusion. Upskilling a new group of volunteers was discussed and agreed.

The following month, a presentation was given to some 50 members about current threats and how they can be of support. Immediately after the event of 7 October, the volunteer approach accelerated and added to the already motivated team, and 6 volunteers have carried out security every Saturday & Sunday since. Various groups have been set up to encompass the building infrastructure, management, and volunteer support, and 12 members attended a CST Level 1 training course whilst 3 members completed a 7-week CST Level 2 training course.

New equipment has been agreed to be purchased with trauma training diarised, a new security room is being developed, and we have created an admin support team. IT to capture email threats has been developed, and new safety drills are being designed, with new call sign and operational procedures being implemented.

Work continues on all aspects to better improve the overall security for the community.

## MEMBERSHIP:

The function of the membership committee is to actively encourage new members whilst also looking after our existing membership. 2023 benefited from Debbie Drapkin, the membership engagement officer who started at the beginning of the year.

The main focus for 2023 was engaging with existing members through together groups and festival activities. Some of the new Together Groups formed include; cycling beginners bridge, football, foraging, interfaith, juke box gold, opera appreciation, rambling, TV Addicts and whisky club. Another major project was a review and the selection of a replacement for Dorot, the membership database and synagogue management system, with ShulCloud which will be implemented during 2024.



The membership statistics as at 31/12/2023 are below. It is encouraging to see an increase in the number of members in the last year:

Families - 1,864

Adults - 2,722

Children under 21 - 504

Affiliates (burial rights elsewhere) - 24

Associates (non-Jewish with EHRS Jewish partner) - 22

Number of Cornerstone Members (new) - 6

Number of EHRS Friends (new) (Non-Jewish without EHRS Jewish partner) - 0

## ASSOCIATED GROUPS:

**JACS:** 38 events were held during the year, plus an AGM and Chanukah party. A varied programme consisted of talks and music. Highlights included History of Jewish London, The Jewish Military contribution to this Country, London at War and between the Wars, History of people buried at Willesden's Jewish Cemetery, We Believe in Israel plus other Israel events. As well as Jewish life in Ukraine and Belarus, the top 10 Presidents of the USA, English Heritage with highlights of architecture in various Synagogues. These talks were most informative and educational and helped to enhance the attendances, which varied between 17 and 45.

## BEYOND EHRS:

**ISRAEL:** In October, the community gathered at a 'Our Solidary with Israel' event following the events on 7 October, the event was widely attended by synagogue members, who were addressed by Rabbi Yael Vurgan - Rabbi of the Gaza envelope Kibbutzim, & Anna Kislanski, CEO of The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism. In November, we held an event which featured conversation with graduates of the Leo Baeck High School in Haifa dealing with young adults' experiences of the Israel-Gaza conflict. Earlier in the year, the synagogue ran a 'Hot Topic - The State of Israel' debate with the CEO of the Israel Religious Action Center, Orli Erez-Likhovski, and Rabbi Lea Mühlstein, chair of 'Arzenu', on the topic of protest in Israel. These activities furthered charitable objectives to the advancement of education for public benefit, during the events.



**CULTURE & HERITAGE:** Our 'Oud & Food' event in June saw a celebration of the music, history and cuisine of Mizrahi Jews. We also began a podcast series in 2023 entitled 'Jews and the World Politics'; past episodes are made available via the synagogue's website.

**INTERFAITH:** In November, the Edgware service of remembrance was co-led by a member of EHRS' clergy team alongside local Christian and Buddhist clergy.

**SOCIAL ACTION GROUP:** In November, EHRS supported Mitzvah Day with activities which included a shared cooking event with members of Shri Swaminarayan Mandir (Neasden Hindu Temple), following a visit of EHRS members to the temple to mark Annakut Day - Hindu New Year. EHRS advanced its charitable objectives of education for the benefit of the public with its Yom HaZikaron Commemoration & Yom HaAtzmaut Celebrations event, which included a seder (service) co-produced between a member of the community and a member of the clergy team. This event celebrated Israel's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of creation.

Throughout the year, the synagogue continued with its homeless shelter, through its partnership with Together in Barnet; providing emergency accommodation to rough sleepers. This supports the charity's commitment to providing services within its borough of operation (London Borough of Barnet), benefiting members of the public - who needn't be members of the synagogue.



## JEWISH AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS:

**AJEX:** Edgware AJEX and District Branch held a few meetings during 2023, although many of our members are increasingly finding it hard to get out. We held 2 remembrance services, one at EHRS and the other at Edgware United. Our members are always happy to meet with the youngsters at EHRS to tell our stories and bring along our memorabilia. On 12 November the branch held our annual Remembrance Service at the Edgware War Memorial under the auspices of the Royal British Legion. The following Sunday we attended the AJEX National Parade. There was a small contingent from EHRS - it is appreciated that you attend each year to honour those who fought and died in two world wars and other conflicts.

**JEWISH JOINT BURIAL SOCIETY:** 2023 was a year of consolidation for the JJBS. There have been changes to the governance structure which has resulted in a smaller executive board and another committee for chairs of the synagogues. Janet Brand represents EHRS on this chairs committee which meets three times a year to raise questions about the running of the society, and to hear progress reports.

This year was even more busy for burials than during Covid, and there were still large numbers of stone settings hanging over from the pandemic.

The Woodland Cemetery is increasing in popularity, although somewhat strangely for a larger synagogue, EHRS is not taking this up as a regular thing. The society held a bulb planting day in the October half-term which was well attended, and the site is now a beautiful, peaceful nature setting.

**MRJ:** 2023 has been the most momentous year since our Movement's inception in 1942. The announcement in April 2023 by Reform and Liberal Judaism of the proposed creation of a new Progressive Movement is probably the most significant development in the history of Anglo Jewry since the Second World War. The initial and continuing response from our communities and congregants has been overwhelmingly positive. However, we have spent, and continue to spend, considerable time visiting communities, holding forums, hearing from different voices, and answering important questions. What we know is that listening enhances learning and leads to better decisions and outcomes. We are delighted that EHRS has been an active participant in the process towards becoming one Progressive Movement. One of our first community forums was with EHRS and has been subsequently followed up with a further community meeting with our CEO, Rabbi Josh Levy, to ensure your questions or concerns are heard and answered. To learn more about the creation of a single Progressive Movement and the process and work being undertaken to achieve this, please visit [www.pathtoprogressivejudaism.org.uk](http://www.pathtoprogressivejudaism.org.uk), titled Path to Progressive Judaism.

Your past president, Keith Price is a member of the Advisory Group which has been set up to guide us through the unification process. Also, your past chair, Janet Brand, and Tony Seymour, are part of the Advisory Group's working parties on Membership and Governance, respectively.

The recognition that Progressive Judaism represents nearly one third of synagogue affiliated Jews, with over 80 synagogues nationally, has dramatically changed how we are viewed by government, political parties, other faiths, the media, and importantly the wider Jewish community and communal organisations.

With Rabbi Josh Levy's appointment as MRJ CEO, and our working in partnership with Liberal Judaism's CEO, Rabbi Charley Baginsky, we have seen our ability to jointly respond to the issues of the day and present our Progressive voice and values in the Jewish community

and British society. We have had an unprecedented level of coverage and inclusion in the conversations around the challenging matters of the Israel Hamas War, anti-Zionism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and extremism. Equally, we have been a strong and positive voice in promoting the living of a vibrant Jewish life, encouraging community cohesion, and continuing interfaith dialogue. What is clear is our values and insights are relevant and resonate, and this can only benefit our synagogues and help underpin their presence and role. MRJ truly values EHRS's ongoing involvement and support as we move towards the creation of a single Progressive Movement. We will continue to communicate with you on progress and timings and update the Path to Progressive Judaism website regularly.

**Paul Langsford, Chair, Movement for Reform Judaism**

**BOARD OF DEPUTIES:** The Board of Deputies of British Jews (the BoD) is the voice of British Jewry: a cross communal, democratic grassroots organisation. EHRS has 5 elected representatives on the BoD, supported through a voluntary donation from the EHRS membership. Tony Seymour sits on the BoD's Finance and Organisation division and EHRS member David Mendoza-Wolfson is the Board's Senior Vice President and chairs its International Division. EHRS's deputies work to ensure our synagogue members' views are being heard by local, national and international decision-makers.

Forty-eight hours after the 7 October massacre a Board of Deputies and JLC joint vigil was held outside Downing Street attended by 5,000 people. The Board, together with other organisations, also held a vigil in Manchester city centre. An estimated 15,000 people gathered in Trafalgar Square on 22 October to call for the release of the hostages. The Board, along with other organisations, held emergency briefings for the community on all aspects of the crisis.

We met the BBC Director General and his team focusing discussion on the BBC description of Hamas and reporting of the conflict.

Following 7 October, we compiled a resource for Jewish employees to help navigate workplace issues. The Board also compiled a resource for parents of children in non-Jewish schools, and teachers in non-Jewish schools. The Board arranged twice-weekly vigils outside Parliament for the community. These continue.

Senior Vice President David Mendoza-Wolfson spoke at the Human Rights Council on behalf of the community about Jewish life in the UK.

The Jewish Living Experience Exhibition which educates children and adults about the Jewish way of life, travelled the country. Around 4,400 people viewed the exhibition. Ahead of the coronation of King Charles III, the Board of Deputies were invited to petition him – an honour accorded to only a few selected organisations. In response to a campaign by the Board of Deputies and We Believe in Israel, Spotify removed violent, extremist content from the platform.

At a landmark Board of Deputies event in London, 300 people heard Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby speak of his commitment to fighting antisemitism. We honoured eleven Chevra Kadisha (Jewish burial society) organisations at a special event in Parliament recognising their efforts during the pandemic. President Marie van der Zyl hosted an interfaith seder for members of all the UK's major faith groups. Following our campaign against BDS movement, in 2023 the Government introduced legislation to prevent public bodies from boycotting Israeli goods.

**TRUSTEES OF THE EDGWARE & HENDON  
REFORM SYNAGOGUE  
ELECTED TO THE BOARD OF EHRS  
1 OCTOBER 2023**

- Mr R Brand
- Mrs D Bryk
- Mr K Darvill
- Mr N Flash
- Mrs S Garson
- Mr J Harrod
- Mr A Hirsh
- Mr B Konyn
- Mr R Koster
- Mr K Maddison
- Mr N Mailer
- Mr D Mendoza-Wolfson
- Mr D Mitchell
- Mr M Lerman
- Mr E Sander
- Mrs J Sigalov
- Mr D Stiassny
- Mr B Trainis
- Mr M Weber
- Mr G Wittenberg
- Mr A Woolstone

**Signed by:**  
**J Harrod - Trustee & Chairman**  
**M Weber - Trustee & Honorary Secretary**









Edgware & Hendon  
Reform Synagogue  
ק"ק לדור ודור