

Minutes of Alyth General Meeting to Approve Subscriptions

Sunday 13 December 2020 (online)

<p>1. Welcome from the President. Jon Epstein (JE)</p>	<p>President, Jon Epstein welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JE noted that as we are still in the midst of a global pandemic, we have had to meet online again. - Additional words of welcome from the President: JE noted that we are blessed to have an outstanding Clergy Team who lead and support the community and who continue to deliver a range of services, learning, programmes and activities that, despite the times we are living in, are consistently excellent and continue to connect us. The Alyth 'Torah Tour', driving past members' houses, seeing our Clergy leading the Friday Night service together, deliveries of cake and Chanukah gifts, Baby Den and excellent sermons, to name a few. - JE thanked Rabbi Josh for his leadership and all the members of the team for the quality and breadth of all that they do. He also thanked Adam Martin for the quality and consistency of our technology delivery. <p>General information about online meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JE reminded members that "Zoom house rules" should be adhered to. - Questions will be taken on each agenda item, using the chat function to flag the question. Members will be unmuted to ask their question. - JE further noted that there will be voting during the meeting. Only those members who are registered are able to vote. - He reminded the meeting that in order to be quorate, we need 25 congregants present and able to vote. Resolutions will be passed by a simple majority. - Adam Martin (AM) explained the voting process and that following the vote on the onscreen resolution, the results will be posted on the screen. <p>Governance compliance for this meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JE went on to note that the meeting has been called under the auspices of the Articles of Association of the Incorporated Charitable Company. - He explained that the meeting will be asked to vote to ratify the amendments to the Articles to allow for Co-Chairs and to hold meetings online. - The main purpose of this meeting was to vote on the proposed resolution to confirm the subscriptions for 2021. - To approve the subscriptions, Congregants need to be aware of the financial position of the synagogue. Co-Chairs - Noeleen Cohen (NC) and Russell Baum (RB) will give the finance report and an update on the building project, leadership development and governance. - JE noted that there were no apologies given ahead of the meeting. - The minutes from the last Annual Budget General Meeting were approved at the AGM in June - JE declared that the meeting was quorate.
<p>2. Dvar Torah</p>	<p>Cantor Tamara Wolfson gave a D'var Torah.</p>

3. Principal Rabbis' Report

Rabbi Josh (JL) updated the community on what has been happening over the past 9 months, sharing some of the innovations and how the Clergy, Staff and Lay Leadership have continued to respond and operate in the context of pandemic.

- JL noted that it has been a source of joy and pride to lead the community, and an inspiring and dedicated Clergy and Staff Team. He praised the resilience and patience of the community during these extraordinary circumstances but cautioned that we should not however come away from the meeting today without recognising how tough it has been on all of our wellbeing. Living a Jewish life on Zoom has been extremely difficult. We must recognise that the Jewish loss is acute.
- We do not often speak about Alyth as a place of work, an employer and manager of a staff and a professional team. Alyth as an organisation. There are the obvious challenges of technology, such as leading services from an empty room. As well as not having the personal cues and interactions, it is technologically challenging.
- Alongside this there are the organizational challenges which are less public. Moving the entire staff team to working from home in March and the resultant IT issues of slow home broadband, accessing the Alyth server remotely. JL noted that over the past few years, we have built an intentional team and professional culture that needs clarity of structure and clarity of culture to be successful. It is harder to maintain this culture and be innovative when we are apart.
- JL said that we should not take for granted what has happened over the last nine months. When we didn't know what was going to happen next, Alyth has been a point of stability, a tent peg in our lives. None of the weekly or regular learning sessions have been missed; all prepared and planned to our expected high standard. Our Youth & Education provision has been redesigned and delivered solely online. We have applied the same high standard to service planning throughout. Since March, the Clergy have taken 30 young people through bar or bat mitzvah (mostly on Zoom and a few in person), providing extra amounts of Clergy care as the rules have changed around us.
- Since August, we have run small, socially distanced activities when we were allowed. These include running small in-person services, hadracha training and young family activities, and even squeezing in a wedding. This has involved entirely re-thinking the way the building works.
- JL noted that we have had to reframe and prioritise so much of our work. For example, Zoom has been a challenging medium of engagement for young families. A lot of thought has gone into continued engagement with them, and paid tribute to Rabbi Hannah for her extraordinary work in this area, and to the hard work of his Clergy colleagues.
- He also noted that the High Holy Days were rich and thoughtful with a diverse programme. He noted that at one point on Yom Kippur over 4,000 individual computers joined Alyth for some part of the day, connecting families from across the world.
- JL thanked the hundreds of members who sent messages and support over the HHD's and apologised wholeheartedly for not being able to respond individually to these messages.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He noted the joy of being able to deliver Chanukah gifts to every child and the over 1400 handwritten cards that were sent by the Clergy to every family in the community. The cards are a small token of the Clergy Team's personal connection and appreciation of the community. - JL paid tribute to those who are still making calls, volunteering, and answering the careline and making deliveries. It is a testament to the amount of concern and care in our community. - Complexity lies ahead. The journey to reopening is likely to be a long one. We must continue to be patient as we navigate this road together. JL noted his role as a representative of Reform Judaism on the Places of Worship Task Force, at Public Health England briefings and community roundtables. The return to normality is expected to take some time. The pace of return is reliant on the majority of us being vaccinated; with the expectation that this will not be until early Summer '21, with some social distancing measures still in place. - JL thanked the lay leadership for the dedication and selflessness shown at this challenging time. - He concluded by thanking the community for taking this seriously and asking the community to continue to be patient and look after one another.
<p>4. Finance Report. NC RB</p>	<p>NC and RB presented a report on the finances of the Synagogue over the past year. A summary of the report available on request. Please email Adam for a copy. adam@alyth.org.uk</p> <p><u>Questions:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GS noted under item 5 on the JJBS that the fee is going up by 2% on their fee of £50 (to £52). The reserves of the JJBS have increased from £9m (2009) to £24m in 2019. Whilst this is an extraordinary increase, GS what was going to be done with these funds. They are not supporting their members (the synagogues) with building loans for eg. Three questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Why is there a need to increase the fee annually? ii. Why pay if unable to collect them from their own members. iii. Why are the JJBS sitting on such large reserves that is not necessary as their charges cover their costs. <p>Can we set up a task force with other communities to work together to address these issues with the JJBS.</p> <p>NC noted that we continue to be challenged by the intransigence of the JJBS leadership. She said that Alyth is reviewing the collection of non-member payments and are in discussion with the JJBS. There is little progress on changing the view of the JJBS as to the use of their large reserves!</p> 2. SA asked why there is an additional levy on single people vs. a family who often has more than one member contributing to the cost of the household. RB noted that how we describe "Family" is not always binary as households have a range of members within who may not all contribute to the subscription. 3. GH asked if the revised scheme involves complete rebuilding of the Leo Baeck wing and was included in the planning for the larger scheme; and if the scheme would be shared with the community. NC confirmed that the rebuild of the Leo Baeck wing was included in the revised scheme and said that the plans would be shared with the community in the new year at a meeting of congregants to ask for the green light for the project.

<p>5. To approve the subscriptions</p>	<p>JE thanked NC & RB for their report and community updates.</p> <p>JE moved to the next item of business which is: To confirm the recommendation from the Trustees that the Synagogue Annual Subscription for 2021 be increased between £26 and £34 depending on the tax status of the Single Member. This represents an increase of 2%.</p> <p><u>Resolution:</u> To approve the recommendation from the Trustees to increase the annual subscription by 2%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The resolution was proposed by: Robert Weiner - Seconded by: Selina Gellert <p>An online vote was taken: The subscription increase of 2% for 2021 was approved. [For: 47 Against: 0 Abstentions: 3]</p>
<p>6. AOB</p>	<p>JE noted items of AOB that have been brought to his attention:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At the AGM in June 2020, the Trustees asked those Congregants present, to approve in principle, the amendments to the Charitable Company's Articles of Association, as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) To allow the appointment of Co-chairs. (ii) To confirm the current Trustee Board and the new Co-Chairs (Russell Baum and Noeleen Cohen) from the date of the AGM to the next Annual Meeting of Congregants in 2021. (iii) To allow the Annual Meeting of Congregants of the charitable company to be held online, in exceptional circumstances, where it is difficult to meet in person. <p>JE reminded Congregants that the changes to the Articles must be approved by Congregants, but at the time of the meeting the Articles did not allow for a meeting of Congregants to be held online. This required that all the members of the old charity (who are the same group of individuals as the Congregants) be asked to consider and approve the proposed amendments to the Articles.</p> <p>At the Meeting, Congregants voted in favour of the amendments to the Articles. In order to confirm formally the vote taken in June, please could Congregants confirm that they are willing to ratify of these changes.</p> <p><u>Resolution:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The resolution was proposed by: Gary Lipman - Seconded by: Gideon Davis <p>An online vote was taken: The vote was passed. JE noted amendments to the Articles of Association have been ratified. [For: 56 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0]</p> 2. JE noted that the second item of AOB was an update on Reform Judaism. The Co-Chairs attended the Reform Judaism Leadership Meeting at the end of November at which a number of updates were given. This update is attached to the Co-Chairs Report that is available from the office.

<p>7. Closing Prayer: Rabbi Hannah Kingston</p>	<p>Recognising the challenging times that we are living in and the extraordinary gift of this community, Rabbi Hannah was asked to give a closing prayer.</p>
<p>8. Close and Thanks</p>	<p>JE thanked NC and RB, and Rabbi Josh and AM for all their work in preparation and delivery of the meeting.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 12h21</p>

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