



## **Wellington Progressive Jewish Congregation**

### **63rd Annual Report**

**1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022**

#### **Temple Sinai Values**

The Congregation is committed to the principles and practices of Progressive Judaism in which the Congregation avows the belief in one God, the unity of the Jewish people and the vital role of the State of Israel in modern Jewish life.

#### **Board of Management**

Jeremy Smith, Chair / Treasurer  
Jim Baltaxe  
Saskia Cameron  
Brian Johns  
Adam Levy, Deputy Chair  
Matthew Smith  
Carol Ratnam

#### **Staff**

Rabbi Esther Jilovsky, PhD  
Kathy Kerry, Temple Administrator  
Maureen MacLoughlin, Cleaner

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## Board and Non-Board Portfolios and Responsibilities

Board Chair & Deputy Chair	Jeremy Smith & Adam Levy
Administration*	Kathy Kerry
Education (Adult)	Carol Ratnam
Awards	Matthew Smith
Tot Shabbat & Beit Midrash	Saskia Cameron & Gillian Openstein**
Bequest Administration	Matthew Smith
Property	Matthew Smith, Jim Baltaxe, Kaye Clark**
Cleaning*	Maureen MacLoughlin
Communications	Adam Levy
Conversion	Rabbi Esther Jilovsky / Keith Bittle**
Relational Judaism	Matthew Smith
Employment	Jeremy Smith
External Relations, UPJ, Interfaith, DCM	Jeremy Smith, & Carol Ratnam Harvey Livschitz**, Dave Moskovitz** & Paul Blaschke**, Matthew Smith
Environment & Climate Action	Jim Baltaxe & Paul Blaschke**
Finance	Jeremy Smith
Financial Planning & Fundraising	Adam Levy
Governance, Policy & Planning	Adam Levy & Matthew Smith
Kesher	Keith Bittle** & Kathy Kerry
Library*	Sheena Hurn**
Membership	Kathy Kerry & Jeremy Smith
Ritual	Carol Ratnam
Security	Matthew Smith & Brian Johns
Youth & Young Adults	Matthew Smith

\* Non-Board responsibility

\*\* Non-Board member

## Message from the Chair

I am pleased to present the 63rd Annual Report for Temple Sinai for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

It is hard to believe we have had another year dominated by COVID. The resulting restrictions have had a massive impact on activities at the Temple. We had to again cancel several events and resort to online services and education. Despite the disruptions Zoom services and events were well attended.

Having put our strategy in place last year, the Board was focused on delivery and outcomes. The board was able to deliver on several of our projects during the year. A key outcome was the appointment of Rabbi Esther Jilovsky, who started as our Rabbi in November 2021. Again, COVID was the disrupter, locking our borders and preventing Rabbi Jilovsky from travelling to Wellington. As with Covid there was a pivot and we worked with a remote Rabbi focusing on online education classes, services, and one on one interactions. With the Rabbi's arrival only weeks away, we are looking forward to welcoming her to Wellington.

The other key project for 2021/22 was the installation of the new Temple roof and the removal of the asbestos in the ceiling. This project was led by Kaye Clark and Matthew Smith. As with any building project we had our challenges along the way but we got there in the end and Kaye managed to keep the cost down. The break in during the building work damaged the ceiling next to the Ark and this had to be replaced. This work made us realise the inside of the Temple was in desperate need of some love. We had the interior painted and it has made a big difference. Huge thanks are due to Kaye and Matthew for their efforts in what was a long and at times frustrating task - but ultimately with wonderful results: a new roof, and the old asbestos one gone and a bright clean interior.

The projects the Board plan on focusing on in the next year are

Our key plans are to:

- Increase member engagement / participation / commitment using Relational Judaism as the approach
- Understand the individual drivers to a Jewish Identity and use these to grow relationships and possible membership (our younger members are our future).
- Work with and support Rabbi Jilovsky

The Board welcomed Rabbi Jilovsky to join the group of hardworking committed volunteers. Saskia Cameron and Adam Levy have both decided to step down from the board, Adam after 4 years as a board member. I would like to thank them for their contributions to the congregation. I am pleased to say they have both kindly agreed to continue working on their respective committees supporting the congregation.

In the time the Temple was being repaired, we relocated to the Orot room at the WJCC where we were welcomed by the Board and members. The month or so of co-location worked very well and new relationships were formed and old relationships strengthened. With both congregations looking to the future, we have agreed to each put a committee together to work on the Future of the Wellington Jewish Community and see what ideas and options we can come up with.

As a congregation we have had to adapt to much change during the year, but it was great to see that we maintained good attendance for all our events and services regardless of whether they were on-line in person or at the WJCC. It is so rewarding to see our members support each other and the Temple.

During the year it was sad that three prominent members passed away and they will be missed. I do want to specifically remember Kelvin Ratnam z”l who was a pillar of our congregation for so many years. He was involved in every aspect of our congregation, and he spent so many years on the Board and time as the President. Kelvin continues to be missed each day.

I am sure this next year will be filled with opportunity, challenges, and reward. I am looking forward to working in person with Rabbi Jilovsky as she leads our congregation.

My phone is always on if you have suggestions or wish to share your views. The Board always welcomes suggestions, and we are open to people who want to help implement their ideas and recommendations.

I want to end with a few well-deserved messages of thanks. First, I want to thank all our incredible volunteers for everything they do every week, without whom we wouldn’t have a functioning community. Secondly, I want to thank our Administrator, Kathy Kerry, who has been a lynchpin in our communications and has continued to support the Board and congregation. Next, I want to thank our Board members, who often have a challenging and demanding task with the reward being the satisfaction of doing the job to the best of their ability.

A big thank you to my wife Alex for supporting me throughout the year.

Most importantly I want to thank you, our members, for your ongoing contributions, support and participation, without which we would not have this wonderful community.

The following report highlights some of the many activities over the past year. The contents of this report have been based on contributions from Board portfolio holders and non-Board members responsible for the various committees.

Jeremy Smith

Board Chair

## Finance

The Temple accounts were prepared for the second year by Bennett & Currie, the accounting firm we use. The accounts will be reviewed by Ajayan Thiruchelvam, a chartered accountant, who will produce an independent assurance review report which the Board found satisfactory and has accepted. We intend to undertake a similar review following this year's AGM.

Provisional financial statements are included with this report. The Board had budgeted for a deficit in 2020-22 of \$117,000, to cover the costs of the roof preplacement. This work was done during the year. We had budgeted the cost of a Rabbi from November.

We are pleased to report that the actual deficit came in at \$38,500. This was due to: some very generous donations from one member and several roof project donations from other members. We managed to get a donation from the RFT split over 3 years of \$25,000 to go towards the Rabbi's salary. With the rabbi working from Australia, we did not incur relocation costs in the financial year.

The 2022/23 budget has a deficit of \$79,000. This included the Rabbi's costs and the completion of the planned maintenance projects. It is more important than ever that we look for grants and additional funding during the year.

As Treasurer I am concerned that our members' contributions are less than expected, are not increasing and that 80% of our membership contributions are coming from 30% of our members. We have seen that WJCC is facing similar challenges. As Treasurer I will do all I can but I need the support of the members to help increase our income streams.

With very low interest rates the Board finally decided on an ethical investment fund and the \$233,000 we transferred to a Pathfinder Fund

Our reserves remain strong which has allowed us to have a period of investing in the building and the congregation. There continues to be a focus on fundraising and looking at ways of growing our income so the employment of our Rabbi will not have a significant impact on our reserves.

The budget for the 2022/23 year has factored in the completion of this round of building maintenance and the Rabbi's costs.

To conclude, a special thanks is due to the Trinity Group Accountant Anton Vermeulen, who helped manage Xero and provided endless support. Also a big thank you to Kathy who keeps the day to day operations running smoothly.

## Financial Planning and Fundraising

### Financial Planning

#### **Investment diversification strategy**

In June 2021, following extensive consultation with the congregation, Temple Sinai invested \$233,000 into the Pathfinder Ethical Growth Fund ([www.path.co.nz/managed-funds/ethical-](http://www.path.co.nz/managed-funds/ethical-)

[growth-fund](#)). Just the next month, the fund won the Mindful Money Ethical Investing Award for New Zealand's best new ethical fund (<https://mindfulmoney.nz/pages/23/awardsentry>)

The Fund initially performed well but has recently been hit by the global slump associated with pandemic-related supply chain disruptions and inflation. This was exacerbated by Russia's attack on Ukraine. The downturn - which affected all managed funds - has had a particular effect on our investment given we invested less than a year ago; the fund had little time to build up before the global slump hit. At time of writing, our investment is down 2.5%.

The investment was always a long-term proposition - we expected ups and downs. The congregation's funds remain overall very conservatively invested. We have \$807,000 in current accounts and bank term deposits remain. These deposits are returning around 1-2% per annum and with significant recent CPI increases in the current year, these are performing poorly in real terms also. At best term deposits will provide only a small return over CPI.

Long-term, the best avenue for growth beyond CPI rates remains diversified investment funds. We are of course very cautious right now, but we will monitor the overall investment situation for when an additional transfer from our term deposits to the Pathfinder fund might be warranted.

Alternatively, we might invest in a different fund to manage our risk. This will be a balance between the administrative and cost implications of managing multiple funds, against the risk-management benefits of diversifying.

## Fundraising

Fundraising in the last year was mainly focused on our re-roofing project.

We received a \$10,000 grant towards our asbestos-removal costs from the New Zealand Community Trust.

We also received support towards the roof from members of Temple Sinai, receiving a total of \$65,000 in donations.

In addition, we received \$25,000 from the Raye Freedman Trust towards our employment of a full-time rabbi, this payment is split over 3 years.

We are very grateful to all our contributors: the New Zealand Community Trust, the Raye Freedman Trust, and of course supportive members of our own Temple Sinai congregation.

## Governance, Policy and Planning

### Policy and Governance

Health and safety compliance for the Temple premises as a public place was previously identified and remains a high priority for the Board. The focus over the past year has been Government Covid restrictions and guidelines.

## Strategic Planning

The Board continues to review our strategic plan at our monthly meetings. The aim of the strategy is to invest in our future with the aim of increasing member engagement, focusing very much on our youth and younger families.

## Rabbi

Rabbi Esther Jilovsky commenced her role with the congregation on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Due to New Zealand's closed borders, she was unable to move to Wellington in October 2021 as planned, and so has been working remotely from Melbourne, Australia. We held a Zoom welcome for her with Rabbi Fred Morgan on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2021. She is scheduled to arrive in Wellington in June 2022.

During her first six months with Temple Sinai, Rabbi Jilovsky has focussed on providing Zoom-based educational, religious and pastoral care services to members. She has led services on Zoom, including regular Shabbat morning services, a joint Kabbalat Shabbat service with Beth Shalom and Sarah Livschitz joining from Jerusalem, and our Temple Purim celebration. She has supported service leaders, *darshanim/ot* and Torah readers in their preparation and planning.

Rabbi Jilovsky has offered an array of Adult Education classes via Zoom. From November 2021 until March 2022 she taught classes on Chanukah, Tu BiShvat, 100 Years of Bat Mitzvah, the Megillat Esther and the Pesach Haggadah. Sunday evenings have become the regular Adult Education timeslot. She created and teaches an Introduction to Judaism course which runs on Wednesday evenings, with eight students enrolled. This course fulfils the UPJ requirements towards conversion. She is the sponsoring rabbi for five students who are interested in conversion.

Rabbi Jilovsky has also taken over the Temple's Rosh Chodesh Women's group, which has met monthly over Zoom since December for study and prayer. Attendees include country members as well as members from Beth Shalom, in addition to Temple Sinai members. Rabbi Jilovsky has also provided great support for the Beit Midrash this year, including writing the curriculum, teaching online sessions in March and April, and supporting the teachers.

She has taken on the role of chairing the Ritual Committee, and supporting members leading in-person events which she could not attend due to being in Australia. Her thought-provoking weekly Divrei Torah and monthly Bulletin articles often invite praise from members.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming her to Wellington in June 2022.

## Bequests Management

The Bequests Management Committee (BMC) consists of Matthew Smith (Chair), Sam Segal, Prue Hyman and Rick Sahar and is responsible for administering and advising on bequests on behalf of the Board. There have been no new bequests this year for the BMC to



consider. The Bequest Register is available on request for members to view, please contact the office about this.

## Administration

Office Administration remains a key function in the effective operation of Temple Sinai. Temple Administrator Kathy Kerry is the main contact for incoming enquiries to the Temple, manages the day-to-day finances of the Temple, and provides administrative support to the Board and Board Chair. Monthly reports were provided to the Board on activities and tasks undertaken. Kathy is responsible for preparing and putting out the Weekly Notices on Fridays. She also attends to coordination of Temple activities and a myriad of other tasks that keep our Temple functioning.

Kathy continues as the essential point of phone and email contact for the Temple's Keshet support working closely with the Keshet team and keeping in contact with Care of the Aged community workers.

Kathy has worked closely with Rabbi Jilovsky helping her get to know our congregation and dealing with the challenges of remote working.

## Employment

The Employment Committee comprises Jeremy Smith (Chair), Sam Segal, Phillip Green and Kaye Clark.

The Temple has three regular employees, our administrator Kathy, Maureen our cleaner and Rabbi Esther. In February upon the recommendation from the Education Committee, the Board contracted Gillian Openstein as part-time coordinator for the revived Beit Midrash programme.

Temple Sinai remains a living wage employer in accordance with our values and principles.

## Property

It has been a very busy year for the property with the much-delayed roof renovations finally being undertaken along with subsequent necessary renovations to the interior of the building.

To have undertaken such extensive work amid the ongoing Covid pandemic with acute building material shortages and availability of building contractors, seems perhaps foolhardy in hindsight. It would have been near impossible if not for Kaye Clark's support and tireless efforts in driving the building programme, and her many connections and influence in the sector in securing contractors and materials. The Temple Board and members are indebted to Kaye for all her efforts and generosity in making this happen.

As is typical of a project of this nature, the extent of the work required far exceeded expectations impacting both the cost and duration. Damage to the ceiling caused by an intruder during the re-roofing and previous leaks necessitated the urgent replacement in two areas. Overall work undertaken included: scaffolding and envelope, removal of the asbestos

containing old roof cladding, battens, and other contaminated material and insulation, repairs to broken and rotten rafters and some weatherboards, recladding of the roof and repairs to the skylights, replacement of the ceiling in the dining room and bima area, repairs to cracks in the dome ceiling in the sanctuary and the plastering and painting of the interior walls, ceiling and woodwork (except for the kitchen, toilets and library). The only remaining item to complete is the installation of the gutters and downpipes which is due to be undertaken once a new contractor can be engaged.

The renovations have largely been funded out of the Temple reserves; consider it as forty years of deferred maintenance. To help fund the work the Board also secured a grant and received significant donations small and large from members through its building appeal.

A special note of thanks is due to Kaye Clark for her significant donation in the face of the significant cost escalations, the Temple Caterers support for the painting of the interior and all the members and friends of Temple Sinai who donated. Thanks is also due to suppliers and contractors who donated materials and contributed with labour including: Silbery Roofing, McKee Fehl Constructors and Mac's Painting. Thanks is extended to the WJCC congregation for hosting us during the roofing work and the warm welcome they extended. It was a rewarding experience. Lastly thanks to the Board members, Jim, Jeremy and Matthew for their part and all the Temple members and friends who helped at the working bees.

An event is being planned to celebrate our return to our freshly renovated premises and to thank all our donors and contributors.

There is further property work planned for the coming year, most urgent of which is dealing with the ongoing storm water drainage problem, painting of the exterior of the building and the boundary fencing that formed part of the deferred security upgrade work.

More regular maintenance of the surroundings is also needed, in particular clearing debris from collecting along the western side of the building to prevent damp problems. We have a choice of either bringing together a group of volunteers to do this on a monthly basis or hiring a gardening service. An appeal for volunteers will be coming out shortly.

On a final note, a focus of the incoming Board will be on the longer-term strategic vision and plan for Temple Sinai's property needs and investigating options for future colocation with the WJCC congregation.

## Safety and Security

The safety and security of our congregation continues to be a priority for the Board, especially in these challenging times of Covid and rising antisemitism globally and here in New Zealand, as seen during the Covid protests.

### Safety and Covid

The ongoing Covid pandemic continues to be a challenge for our congregation. Guided by Government Covid restrictions and guidelines for places of worship and considering members' expectations and preferences provided in a survey, the Board has taken the necessary precautions in helping to ensure our members' safety and health when participating in Temple services and events. The introduction of the Covid vaccine mandate

(since discontinued) and the ongoing use of face coverings for in-person services are just of the measures introduced.

After an extended period of online only services, it is great to be back in-person for services in the synagogue. But with the ongoing high Covid infections rates the Temple needs to maintain a cautionary approach and continue to provide access via online events and live streaming of services to members who are unable to attend in person.

## Security

In the context of elevated levels of antisemitism globally, and seen here in New Zealand too, Jewish communities in New Zealand remain in a state of elevated awareness and continue to take measures commensurate with the ongoing security concerns.

The Board, in conjunction with the Wellington Community Security Group (CSG), continues with the established community security measures and protocols at Temple services and wider Jewish community events. With the sad passing of Kelvin Ratnam z”l, our long serving CSG security coordinator, the role has been picked up by Matthew Smith supported by Brian Johns who is responsible for coordinating our Temple CSG volunteers. The Temple CSG are always in need of volunteers for security duty. If you are interested, please email the CSG at [security@sinai.org.nz](mailto:security@sinai.org.nz).

Aspects of the planned security infrastructure improvements at Temple Sinai have unfortunately been delayed in part due to the prioritising of the urgent roof replacement. The Board will be resuming efforts to complete some of the outstanding work this year. It is expected there will be a further round of funding from the Government’s Safer Communities Fund for faith and minority communities to address their ongoing security needs.

Temple members including Board and CSG members continue to participate in the Huis organised by the Police with representatives of Wellington’s minority faith communities. Members have also participated in training organised by Police as part of the national Safety of our Places of Worship initiative as part of the Government’s [Protecting Our Crowded Places Strategy](#). These events have been both informative and a rewarding opportunity for the Jewish community to interact with members of other minority faith communities. If you are interested in participating in future events, please email Matthew Smith at [security@sinai.org.nz](mailto:security@sinai.org.nz).

## Communications

### The Bulletin

Sue Boyde continues to do a fantastic job in editing and compiling the Bulletin. I know we all enjoy catching up on the news from the community. Production of the Bulletin involves a large team of volunteers – the editor, contributors, proof readers, a mail-out group, a printer, our webmaster for the online version, and Kathy. We are as ever very grateful for the team’s efforts.

## Weekly Notices

The weekly notices play an important role in keeping Temple members informed particularly through the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The change in frequency to notices coming out on Friday only has been working well. Incremental improvements to the format will be considered going forward. Our weekly notices continue to be an effective communication tool.

## Website

Work on the new Temple website and content is complete and a final review of the content and images is in progress with the plan to launch the new site in the next couple of weeks. Thanks to Candace Smith and Myra Mortlock for their ongoing work on this project.

## Social Media

The Temple Sinai Facebook group has continued to grow with 178 current members (it remains a closed group). Our very active group admins Emma Levy and Myra Mortlock actively vet people wishing to join the group, and frequently post notices and items of interest on the group page, as do many of the group members. If you are a Facebook user, do join the group and participate.

## External Relations

### Union for Progressive Judaism

Temple Sinai is an active member of our regional union, the Union for Progressive Judaism, or UPJ. The UPJ is based in Melbourne and serves Australia, Asia and New Zealand. This past year David Knoll and Brian Samuel have continued as Co-Presidents. Rabbi Fred Morgan has devoted significant time to the congregation in attending Ritual Committee meetings, running Zoom education programmes for all the NZ UPJ communities, and generally assisting as requested. With the appointment of Rabbi Jilovsky, Rabbi Fred Morgan will focus on supporting and assisting Rabbi Jilovsky.

The UPJ under the leadership of David and Brian is placing an emphasis on leadership support and training for its affiliate congregations. Temple Sinai, through the Board, has been engaged in this and leaders in our community will attend upcoming online training workshops.

Paul Blaschke has continued in his role as the 'New Zealand Ambassador' of the UPJ. In this capacity he continues to liaise with New Zealand congregations and communicate between them and the UPJ (see the separate Kiwi PJ report).

### Wellington Jewish Community Centre (WJCC)

Over the last year we held a joint Board meeting with the WJCC Board. At the meeting we discussed and agreed to re-activating the joint event calendar, continuing to have a combined security approach, running joint adult and children education programmes and planning for another Wellington based Limmud event next year if feasible.

WJCC welcomed us into their building whilst we were replacing the Temple roof. The temporary relocation worked very well, and we had an opportunity to share kiddush together. Our collective experience during the re-location has opened up the opportunity to explore ways of working together in the future. We would like to thank the WJCC Rabbi and Board for the use of the Orot room and their warm welcome.

Temple Sinai and WJCC continued to collaborate on the usual community events along with other Wellington Jewish Community organisations, the NZ Holocaust Centre and the Israeli Embassy. Events included were Chanukah in the Park, UN Holocaust Remembrance Day and the annual Jewish Community picnic.

## Embassy of Israel

Temple Sinai has continued to work with the Israeli Embassy on a number of events and functions. Ambassador Ran Yaakoby has remained a strong supporter of the Temple and the wider Jewish community.

Unfortunately Temple Sinai was unable to host Yom HaZikaron with the Embassy this year, due to our building being closed but Temple members attended a small ceremony at the Embassy and Harvey Livschitz received a memorial gift in remembrance of his brother who served in Israel.

## Kiwi PJ

“Kiwi PJ” is an informal network of Progressive-oriented congregations and groups living in various parts of New Zealand. It includes the three current UPJ-affiliated congregations as well as groups and individuals in other parts of the country. Kiwi PJ aims to keep each other informed of what’s going on in our part of the Jewish world, to support each other where possible, and to liaise between our groups and the wider UPJ movement. Paul Blaschke, Jeremy Smith, Matthew Smith, Carol Ratnam, Harvey Livschitz, are the Temple Sinai members most involved in Kiwi PJ. Kelvin Ratnam z”l was also a very involved member.

We have now carried out those roles for six years. This year, like last, was COVID-dominated and we only held three Zoom meetings. But there were some very welcome key developments. Firstly the appointment of two rabbis, Rabbi Esther at Temple Sinai and Rabbi Dean Shapiro (part-time) at Beth Shalom. We were so pleased that the Waikato Jewish Association has taken further steps towards affiliation with the UPJ. We were also very pleased that the growing Canterbury Hebrew Congregation, whose representatives have been active in KiwiPJ, has revised its constitution and its membership is now open to all Jews, regardless of affiliation, level of observance, or intermarriage. We have seen and supported the potential for sharing education and ritual resources, especially on-line. We look forward to further contact and mutual support with all congregations and groups over the next year.

*Blaschke, Kiwi PJ Coordinator and UPJ New Zealand Ambassador*

## DCM

This past year has been one of ongoing change and challenges for DCM. There has been sustained high demand for DCM services along with enormous challenges to delivering these services under Covid conditions. A year in and the DCM Director Stephen Turnock, supported by the DCM staff and Board, has faced up to these challenges and has started to

implement strategic changes across the organisation to better align and equip it to meet the demands of the changing environment and nature of services the DCM is contracted and responsible for delivering.

Closer to home, last December marked the passing of an era for the DCM when long standing Board member Temple's David Zwartz resigned after serving as an independent member since 2005. David has always believed in the importance of interfaith representation at DCM in bringing other perspectives to DCM's governance. David's valuable and long-standing contribution to the DCM Board and the organisation was recognised at the DCM AGM in December in some moving addresses.

DCM continues to rely on and appreciate the support and donations it receives for Temple Sinai along with other community organisations.

*Matthew Smith DCM Board member*

## Wellington Interfaith Council (WIFC)

The WIFC's usual bounty of activities this past year have proceeded despite the challenges posed by the ongoing Covid restrictions including:

- Tu B'shvat
- The annual Passover function at St Peter's garden room, 'Passover, a Jewish and Christian and Perspective'
- Christchurch Royal Commission of Inquiry discussions
- Matariki
- Working together for sustainability event with the Abrahamic Council
- Discussion with the Commission for Human Rights
- Blessing of the trollies
- Talk at Scots College
- Police Ethnic and National Pacific Partnership
- End of year food distribution
- Race Unity speech competition at Police HQ

Antisemitism is rife in the world and New Zealand, one way to fight this is to let people know **who we are**, that's the essence of what interfaith is about.

It would be great to get some new hands onboard with interfaith, especially for someone of pre-retirement age. If you are interested email Harvey [Harveylivschitz@gmail.com](mailto:Harveylivschitz@gmail.com) . You can also find the WIFC activities and events on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/wellingtoninterfaith>

*Harvey Livschitz, Temple Sinai representative on the WIFC*

## Wellington Abrahamic Council

Like many other organisations, the last year has been severely impacted by the ongoing pandemic. The Abrahamic Council has continued to meet on a monthly basis in a mix of face to face and virtually, and the relationships between the council members and the religious strands they represent continue to be very strong. Council members continue to enjoy strong fellowship and learning about each others' religious views, as well as learning about our own religions through the eyes of others.

We held two public events during the year: A Climate Change workshop, and a Peacenic. The Climate Change Workshop was held at Victoria University in June and was attended by roughly 55 participants who spent all day discussing principles, strategies, and action plans for ourselves personally, our places of worship, and wider society. [The results of the workshop](#) are available on the Abrahamic website and make interesting reading. Our annual Peacenic (picnic for peace) was held in February on a rainy Sunday. Despite dodging raindrops, we all made new friends and enjoyed conversations and food with other Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Several Council members attended a [weekend retreat at Kopua Monastery](#) near Norsewood. We were able to observe the practice of the monks, which included religious services at 4am, to which we were warmly welcomed. It provided great insight into a different, and much quieter way of life. These services reinforced how much Christianity draws from Judaism, and how we share many important principles and practices, although of course there are some very important contrasts and very different emphases.

Our monthly “Sharing our Scriptures” continued to meet in a mix of virtual and face-to-face, in which we explore different themes from the perspective of text snippets from the Tanakh, the New Testament, and the Qur’an. These small and informal discussions held in people’s homes are lovely, and open to anyone who would like to attend. If you’re interested, please contact Dave Moskovitz, [dave@abrahamic.nz](mailto:dave@abrahamic.nz)

We have plans for a number of meetings coming up this year, including an Abrahamic meditation day which will be run by JoEllen Duckor, a session on Diversity in our Religions, a meeting on Social Media and Mental Health, and more. Check out our web site at <https://abrahamic.nz/> or contact Dave if you’re interested in learning more.

The Wellington Abrahamic Council is a member of the Christchurch Call Advisory Network, and Dave Moskovitz has been representing the Council in that group. The Network was created by the governments of France and New Zealand in the wake of the Christchurch terror attacks on 15 March 2019, and our purpose is to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content on line. The Network comprises around 50 civil society organisations and the Call itself is supported by a significant number of the large tech platforms like Meta (Facebook), Microsoft, Amazon, Google etc. It is slow progress and a tricky balancing act, but we are working to prevent online harm whilst ensuring that freedom of expression is maintained.

An exciting development this year is that our local member Canon Jenny Chalmers (Anglican) has been elected to the position of Vice-Chair of the International Council of Christians and Jews, of which the Wellington Abrahamic Council is a member. It’s great to have a Kiwi voice in this highly respected international organisation.

*Dave Moskovitz, WAC Co-chair*

## Education and Youth Education

The Education Committee is chaired by Gillian Openstein, and includes Rabbi Esther Jilovsky, Michael Kay, Myra Mortlock and Carol Ratnam.

## Adult Education

With the appointment of Rabbi Esther Jilovsky we have settled on Sunday evenings as a regular time slot for Adult Education. Sessions on the festivals of Chanukah, Purim and Pesach have been held on zoom because of Covid-19 and immigration restrictions. Rabbi Jilovsky has started sessions on Pirkei Avot. Attendance to these classes is open to all members on a casual basis.

Introduction to Judaism classes are held every Wednesday for those interested in joining the Jewish faith, as well as those looking for a more in-depth understanding of Judaism. Partners are welcome. Anyone wishing to join this class must discuss with the Rabbi in the first instance. Introduction to Judaism is a yearlong course and as such enrolment takes place at the beginning of each year.

## Shabbat Morning Study Group

The 9.00am Shabbat study session runs every week. The Zoom option continues even with in-person services to allow country members and members unable to get to the Temple to participate. The discussion topics revolve around the weekly parasha bringing new and challenging perspectives to us. This year's focus included:

- Rabbi Jonathan Sack's writings on "The Ethics of the Fathers"
- Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg "Reflections on the Book of Leviticus"
- "Social Justice For a Commentaries"

Special thanks to Keith Bittle for running these sessions and for handling technical issues.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83273085447?pwd=d0NLb0FRRG43THdRK25taHFTTVkrUT09>

## Beit Midrash, Tot Shabbat and Kids' Shabbat

Temple Sinai restarted the Beit Midrash this year and the first session was a chocolate Seder held in March 2021. The Beit Midrash is for children aged 5 to 11 and focuses on teaching Judaism through fun crafts and activities. Beit Midrash meets on the third Sunday of every month for an hour.

The curriculum used in 2021, was provided by Max and Shannon Einsohn (Australia-based Jewish educators) with the financial support of a Temple Sinai member. The Temple Sinai Board is very grateful for this contribution, which provided structure and knowledge.

Since January 2022, Rabbi Esther Jilovsky has provided the curriculum for the Beit Midrash, which focuses on prayers, blessings and understanding Jewish festivals in a fun and creative way. Rabbi Jilovsky ran an online Beit Midrash via Zoom in March and April, as the Omicron outbreak and the building work at Temple Sinai meant it wasn't possible to meet in person.

Gillian Openstein ran and coordinated the Beit Midrash program before commencing maternity leave in March 2022. While she is on leave, parents of Beit Midrash students have volunteered to run and assist with running the Beit Midrash.

We would also like to acknowledge the wonderful assistance of Betty Watkins in the Beit Midrash program, particularly regarding the success of the art and craft activities.



For more information about the Beit Midrash please contact: [office@sinai.org.nz](mailto:office@sinai.org.nz)

Tot Shabbat continues for children under the age of 5 and their families, once a month. Tot Shabbat is a Shabbat service designed for both pre-schoolers and those children that are younger to introduce them to the prayers used at services. During the service an age-appropriate story is shared, looking at concepts of Jewish faith and festivals.

Rabbi Jilovsky ran an online Tot Shabbat via Zoom in April.

A special thanks to Fred Albert for his work with the Tot Shabbat program this year and for his support in running the program with Saskia Cameron.

*Saskia Cameron & Gillian Openstein*

## Other Educational Activities for Children

Moriah Kindergarten (2-5 year olds) and Orot (5-10 year olds after school care program) continue to run at the Wellington Jewish Community Centre (80 Webb Street). Orot continues to grow in numbers and runs Wednesday an after school program. For more information [office@wjcc.org.nz](mailto:office@wjcc.org.nz)

Moriah Kindergarten is an award winning and public run Kindergarten with places available for children aged two till 5. For more information [www.moriahkindergarten.org.nz](http://www.moriahkindergarten.org.nz) phone 04 384 7585.

## Youth and Habonim Dror

Our Temple youth continue to be engaged in the Habonim Dror programmes and camps.

In January 2022, Holly Leighton-McPhee returned from a gap year in Israel. Holly is based in Wellington and is excited to run Habonim Dror Wellington for children aged 7 and up. For more information email her on [habowellington@gmail.com](mailto:habowellington@gmail.com)

Lilly Leighton-McPhee is based in Auckland and is the Senior leader in running National Habonim summer and winter camps. Junior Habo is for ages 4 to 9-year-olds and seniors for 10 to 13-year-olds. For more information you can contact Lilly on (June 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>) [Juniorwintercamp@HABO.org.nz](mailto:Juniorwintercamp@HABO.org.nz) or (10<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> July) [Seniorwintercamp@HABO.org.nz](mailto:Seniorwintercamp@HABO.org.nz)

## Ritual

In the past year the Ritual committee has been chaired by Harvey Livschitz, Sam Segal, and Rabbi Esther Jilovsky. The members of the committee are Rabbi Esther Jilovsky, Abi Buchhalter, Dave Moskovitz, David Esterman (part of the year), Harvey Livschitz, Sam Segal, and Carol Ratnam. Until the appointment for Rabbi Jilovsky, rabbinic support was generously provided by Rabbi Fred Morgan. We are most grateful for his attendance at meetings and providing support to the Committee.

The running of services this year has been majorly impacted by renovations at the Temple, and by Covid-19. We are most grateful to the Board of Management of the Wellington Jewish Community Centre for providing us with a venue on their premises for several

months. Special thanks to the WJCC Acting Chair Daniel Rosenbaum, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Tal for their warm welcome. For several months the whole Jewish community in Wellington was housed under one roof sharing events, kiddushim, shiurim, and security.

We have also had a couple of periods of on-line services. A new category of service support has been developed called an e-shammas. The role of the e-shammas is to make sure all the text from the Mishkan T'filah and Torah are able to be read by the congregation, and technical requirements of the Zoom run smoothly. Grateful thanks go to David Esterman, Dave Moskovitz, Brian Johns, Navina Clemerson, Matthew Smith, Sam Segal, and Simon Sher for stepping up to be on the e-shammas team. Special thanks to Dave Moskovitz for developing the training resources.

Kabbalat Shabbat still continues although not always once a month. One of the highlights was a Kabbalat Shabbat linking Sarah Livschitz and fellow rabbinic students in Jerusalem with Beth Shalom and with Rabbi Jilovsky in Melbourne on March 4.

Some of the normally regular bi-monthly musical Kabbalat Shabbat were able to be held. These musical Kabbalat Shabbat are run by a fluid collection of musicians called *The Kab Shab Crew*, led by Sue Esterman

In November 2021 we held a "Meet the Rabbi" event with Rabbi Fred Morgan introducing Rabbi Jilovsky to the congregation. There was an opportunity for a question and answer session.

## Services and Chagim

### Contemplative services

Contemplative services run by Fred Albert, JoEllen Duckor and Dave Moskovitz have continued by Zoom through the year. The contemplative services are held on the second Saturday of every month from 9.00 -10.00am.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84966968085?pwd=ZzZySm5LcXljTGxaaWtiOGNaZmIDUT09>

### Ma'ariv Service

Keith Bittle runs a regular Ma'ariv service on Tuesday evenings from 5.30pm -6.00pm. The Zoom service attracts people from as far as Auckland. When in-person services start the Zoom option will continue.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83273085447?pwd=d0NLb0FRRG43THdRK25taHFTTVkrUT09>

### Chagim

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were held online. Special thanks to Lissa Chong for organising and contacting the list of people with honours, and roles to play in services.

This year we did not hold Tashlich during the High Holy Days. We held a Reverse Tashlich (beach cleanup) in November. More information on what reverse taschlich aims to achieve can be found on <https://www.repairthesea.org/reverse-tashlich>

Chanukah: The community Chanukah event did not take place due to Covid-19 restrictions. As an alternative the Israeli Embassy provided eight days of free movies. Starting on 28 Nov, through 5 Dec. On the last day a movie for kids was screened. WJCC held a sausage

sizzle or similar for small kids at Central Park. A well-attended community event at Lulu bar was held for adults.

We could not have Chanukah in the Temple as it was closed due to repairs. Rabbi Jilovsky ran a 3-part series on Chanukah and it was the focus of the Rosh Chodesh group. The congregation was also encouraged to hold Chanukah Habayit in their own homes, if they felt comfortable with that.

A Tu B'Shevat Seder was organised by Harvey Livschitz at St Peters in the garden, which was well attended. The interfaith community was invited to the Seder. The service was led by Hilary Phillips.

Both Purim and Pesach were held online. Mona Williams provided her magic as the storyteller, Rabbi Jilovsky and Dave Moskovitz led the service and read the Megillah along with Sam Segal. Mishloach Manot, including gluten free Hamantaschen were prepared and distributed by Betty Watkins, Keith Bittle, Simon and Vicki Sher, and Carol Ratnam.

We did not hold an in-person Seder at the Temple this year. However, Rabbi Jilovsky did the Second Night Seder on-line using a beautiful set of slides she created. We also held a well-attended Pesach/Shabbat morning service.

The much-anticipated return to in-person services will be on 21 May, closely followed with the baby naming service for Olive Livschitz on 28 May - led by her aunt and rabbinic student Sarah.

## Membership and Community Engagement

### Membership

The membership committee is coordinated by Kathy Kerry and supported by the Board.

We were pleased to welcome Evan Dubisky, Melissa Melnick, Kerry Lambert, Yuval Zalk-Neale and John & Gail Thomason as new members of the congregation. We celebrated the bar-mitzvah of Eugene Giraud; it was great that his father was the chazzan. There was a baby naming for Micah Openstein.

During the year we mourned the passing of 3 of our members; Kelvin Ratnam, Paul Seideman and Peter Halsted. They and their contributions to Temple Sinai and the wider Jewish community will be sorely missed.

All new membership applications are vetted by our UPJ Consulting Rabbi. Temple's long-standing tradition of a welcoming new members' service has continued.

### Conversion

There have been no conversions at Temple Sinai over the past year. Rabbi Esther will be restarting Temple Sinai's conversion programme.

## Awards

Kelvin Ratnam sadly passed away before he was able to receive the Vatik award presented by the UPJ (he was informed of his nomination). The Vatik award is solely for past presidents of congregations, and affiliate organisations who have continued to give excellent service and make a valuable contribution to their community and the wider community. Kelvin for his many years of service on the board and as a past president of Temple Sinai is a worthy recipient of the Vatik award. There will be a service and the presentation of the award to Carol Ratnam on the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at Temple Sinai.

## Kesher

This year being the 2<sup>nd</sup> year our communities are coping with Covid-19 and Omicron, life has certainly changed. Mask wearing, hand sanitising, social distancing has been mandated and I am sure there is “battle” fatigue, even among our members who need it the most.

Despite gaps, we do try to contact all members via emails and telephone calls at least twice a year – at Pesach and Rosh Hashanah. Although Kesher appears to be ‘low key’ the contact made with each member of Temple Sinai is still one of its core values.

Once Rabbi Jilovsky is with us in person, it will be wonderful to work with her as we plan for 2022-2023.

A big thanks to our Kesher coordinators and volunteers for their work and to Keith Bittle for leading Kesher again this year. A special “thank you” to Kathy for usually being the first face and voice of Kesher at Temple Sinai and also thank you to Trisha Jeffares for sending out all those beautiful cards.

*Keith Bittle, Kesher Lead*

## Relational Judaism

The Temple Relational Judaism initiative as part of community engagement has been a slow burn over the past year. Rabbi Esther has joined the initiative and has been putting in practice relational meetings in her numerous conversations with members as part of her introducing herself to the community. Temple Sinai is grateful for the continued support from Judi and Larry in Australia as part of the UPJ’s commitment to supporting the Relational Judaism approach across its affiliates. If you are interested in being involved as part of the team, please contact Matthew [mathu.smith@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:mathu.smith@yahoo.co.nz)

## Regional Members (Manawatu-Whanganui)

Despite their distance from Wellington, regional Manawatu-Whanganui members have regularly contributed to services by preparing drashot, either to be read on their behalf or by giving them in person. They have also led 3 services, one of which was Eugene Giraud’s bar mitzvah. Eugene showed great confidence as he led the service, read from Torah and presented his drashah. It was an impressive effort.

Beit Midrash, comprising both Hebrew and Jewish studies, is happening in both Palmerston North and Whanganui. Leon Ben Baruk is teaching Bar Mitzvah preparation with a Whanganui family. Helen Chong has been teaching four children aged from 6 to 10 in Palmerston North. Two of these children returned to the USA in April. Another family has arrived in Palmerston North and their children may start learning as well.

The Jewish community in both areas is larger than the Temple Sinai membership. Some people are affiliated to other congregations while others, especially the Israeli families, are secular Jews. Helen participated in the Relational Judaism initiative and has started holding discussions with some of those who are unaffiliated.

*Helen Chong (for Manawatu-Whanganui)*

## Environment and Climate Action

As suggested by scripture, minhag and personal values, we know that many Temple Sinai members treasure our precious natural environment and are concerned to see it maintained. Many are particularly concerned by the global threat of the current climate crisis. Here's a selection of actions taken by Temple members individually and collectively in the last year, not including much other activity undertaken by individuals in their professional or personal lives.

During High Holy Days, even while in their own homes, members contributed to the third Carless High Holy Days Challenge/Appeal, donating to match the amount of money saved through not driving to services. Half of the money raised was donated to the youth climate organisation Gen Zero ([www.generationzero.org](http://www.generationzero.org)). In November a small group took part in a world-wide "Reverse Tashlich" beach cleanup on the Wellington South Coast. In the same month, individual members made submissions on government's draft Emissions Reduction Plan to reduce greenhouse gases. Recently a small Earth Day gathering at Midland Park and Parliament attracted nearly a full Temple Sinai minyan.

Temple members have also taken action as part of interfaith activities. In June several members took part in a well-attended, action-oriented workshop "Climate Emergency: Jews, Christians, and Muslims Working Together for Sustainability". Dave Moskovitz was an organiser and the MC, and Sarah Livschitz and Paul Blaschke were speakers. Since mid-2021 Paul Blaschke was the Jewish representative on an Interfaith Climate Change Working Group of the Religious Diversity Centre. The group developed a statement to the government urging national climate crisis ambition and action, which was endorsed by more than 40 national religious leaders and Interfaith groups and publicly presented to the Minister of Climate Change.

Most recently, a few members met to think further about Temple-based environment and climate action. Many potential actions - whether individual, ritual-based, group or communal activities - came up. We know there are many members who want to see us, as progressive Jews, doing these sorts of things. The objective is to have a range of activities for all ages, interests and levels of involvement, with the encouragement of the Board. A meeting at Temple Sinai is planned for June, open to any interested members, to broaden the group and identify things that people are most interested in.

*Paul Blaschke*

## Library

The library has been rather neglected during the last 8-9 months due mainly to Temple Sinai being closed and inaccessible-Covid lockdowns, building maintenance e.g. roof repairs and inside painting etc.

However once Temple Sinai is back to normal I will continue with sorting and cataloguing the backlog of books. One of the main tasks this year will be removing books that are 'elderly', out of date etc. (to make space for new books). Those books still in good condition will be freely available in the foyer for members to take (although donations to Temple Sinai are always gratefully received!)

Several individual members have been generous in donating not only second hand books in good condition but also a number of new books. The Jewish Quarterly has also been renewed for another year. This is an excellent publication "investigating complex and pressing matters of politics, religion, history and culture" and is recommended reading. This publication is now available for borrowing - the usual two month borrowing time will apply.

Following discussion with Rabbi Jilovsky it has also been decided that those students who are on the 'Introduction to Judaism' course and who live in the Wellington area can borrow books from the library (but please contact Sheena before accessing the library for the first time).

*Sheena Hurn, Temple Librarian*