



The Leo Baeck Centre for Progressive Judaism

Annual Report

Year 2021 / 5781-5782

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President's Report

2021 was the second very difficult year for us, but we achieved many things to be proud of as well. Covid, with its regulations of mask wearing, QR codes and vaccination status checks, changed the way we operated. Some of these changes such as our online option and maintaining a degree of social distancing, are likely to stay with us.

During this period of lockdowns so many of our plans were cancelled or abandoned. A number of planned Beit Mitzvah were delayed. The past year was one filled with so many unexpected challenges. Rabbi Jonathan had to be flexible and creative on so many fronts. Much of what we did was due to his drive and energy.

Regrettably, we saw the passing of a number of our long-standing members. Our lives were richer for having had them among us. These include Esta Rose, Marj Bloom and Helga Duband, among others.

We have been most fortunate to receive a number of grants over the period of this report. The Fundraising Group has been successful at receiving a grant to upgrade our library. The \$2,500 was used to buy a computer, desk and chair.

We received a one-to-one grant of \$74,177 (including GST) to renovate the kitchen. We ran a telethon, used our High Holy Day appeal and planned a Cabaret fundraising event to raise the matched amount. Our Cabaret planned for October was postponed to early 2022 due to Covid restrictions to finalise the fundraising. We have been awarded a Federal Government grant of \$4,000 to support volunteers to learn about food safety. We have also been awarded a \$9,000 grant for a year of programming to celebrate and promote our new kitchen during 2022. We look forward to holding those events in the new year.

The final grant obtained was for the promotion of COVID vaccination in the community. The funds were used to purchase kippot, face masks and pens all bearing the message 'Proudly Vaccinated'. They arrived just before Chanukah. Many members have happily accepted them when they came to services and events.

A survey was conducted to assist Management to understand community views on a number of issues. Thanks to so many who offered support and assisted with information.

The Civic Service, was postponed due to the difficulty of operating under the Covid restrictions. There were a number of venturer scouts who attended as part of their Ideals visit.

The Annual Leo Baeck Lecture was presented by Professor Andrew Markus. He spoke about 'Lessons for the Progressive Jewish Community' that can be learned from information collected in the regular census.

The regular CSG training was held with members of the Management Committee and Security Group. This useful training was to understand the current thinking on how best to handle threats.

During this reporting period a number of hard working very supportive members stepped down from the Committee. These include Mannie Gross, Elisabeth Holdsworth, Jim Beck, Lisa Sylvan, and Gillian Lubansky. They have worked for the benefit of LBC over many years and we thank them most sincerely for all their work. We are fortunate to have new Committee members Jen Glasser, Pierre Harcourt and (returning) Alan Feldman join reappointed members Karen Silberberg,

Matthew Rose, Stephen Hacker, John Taft, Michael Polack, Deborah Ogawa and myself, Michael Taft. Mark Pryor agreed to continue as our treasurer advisor, which was welcome support.

This annual report is the last one that contains a report from Rabbi Jonathan. There will be formal farewells and an opportunity to thank him for his 20 years with LBC in the new year. The Management Committee have formed a Rabbi Search committee, and members will be alerted to the progress of the search. A note from this sub-committee follows.

Zoom continued to play an important part in our community. This has been keeping us connected during lockdowns. Online security concerns caused us to be sensitive to our processes for use.

The first in-person Beit Mitzvah of Toby Snyder was held during a lift in the Covid restrictions. The availability of Zoom created a marvellous opportunity for family from afar to join the service, so we had prayers read from London. During the period that we were permitted to hold services we had no kiddush, only offering kiddush wine and juice, and challah already cut so that it was not handled by members.

In May, Israeli dancing, Friday morning walks and the B'yachad choir resumed activities. The Sh'ma program resumed in person rather than online. Purim was also in the shul. The Community Seder was held in the hall. The earlier-mentioned delayed Civic Service was shared with a Bat Mitzvah which ensured a lively service and a number of venturer scouts.

Our caretaker Leon left us when Covid restrictions shut us down. Rabbi Jonathan found a new caretaker/gardener in Richard Ormsby once activities had picked back up. Richard had a busy time cleaning up after a severe storm hit Melbourne.

In June, Covid restrictions prevented anyone in the sanctuary other than rabbi, cantor and music director. The Zoom was run remotely and we had many members join us online weekly. We regularly had 30 screens.

We welcomed Brian Samuel co-Chair of the UPJ. He presented the Nir Tamid Award to Ruth Taft amid a warmly received congregation in the sanctuary and online.

We also had to bid farewell to Jess Bellamy from the Religion School. She was recruited as a Youth Coordinator in 2015. She took on a full-time job and was unable to continue in this role. Hannah Blount, formerly of Sydney, who comes from a Habonim background was her replacement.

We held a memorable service led by Albert Isaacs to mark the 50 years of services at Harp Road. Rabbi Jonathan read Torah. Members with long history at LBC were involved.

During the year, we made good progress on renovating the kitchen. There was also a working bee to empty the kitchen cupboards, and then re-stock them when the work was completed. It also resulted in a hard rubbish collection.

Tisha B'av was a very interesting evening. The discussion with Rabbi Gilad Kariv, a new Member of the Knesset, was a great insight into the possible developments in the new Israeli government.

The theme for the New Year 'From Prayer to Action' was adopted by the new Management Committee, and we have tried to make this visible in our themed Profiles and activities. Our magazine Profile produced a Climate Change themed edition, for example. It was anticipating the Glasgow Conference and the summer bushfire season.

Running services and finding aliyot in lockdown was very time consuming. Our Zoom techs had to learn both on and off-site control.

We appointed Ricci Ercegg as temporary administrative assistant. After some months Ricci stepped down and we appointed Aya Tamir Regev. We thank Ricci for her service, and welcome Aya warmly.

The High Holy Days were difficult this year. Only five people were allowed in the sanctuary: Rabbi Jonathan, Maurice Duband as Music Director, and three cantors - Dana Zeimer, Julian Duband and Laurence Splitter. Maurice, with the help of Mannie, created a CD of choral items that we used to support the cantors at the services. It worked amazingly well. There were lay readers who participated from home and, despite some technical issues, it worked well.

Unfortunately, we did have a few people who signed up via TryBooking who were not able to access the services on Zoom. During this period the usual collection of Mazon bags was difficult as Covid had restricted movement. We encouraged many people to donate to Mazon Australia as an alternative to the dropping of non-perishables for the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre.

The computers that drive Zoom have been relocated from the rear of the demountable wall in the shul hall into the sanctuary behind the children's bookshelf. All cables are now concealed.

The Shabbat in Sukkot had Zoom issues. This resulted in dropping the advertised talk from our member Andrew Kay who now lives in Israel.

Simchat Torah began with a discussion from Rabbi Jonathan's home during lockdown. It continued with dancing with the scrolls from the sanctuary. Members were online as we were in lockdown again.

Our new kitchen was used for the first time for the Beit Mitzvah of Elliot Fromm in November. It was the first Beit Mitzvah that was held in the sanctuary since the end of lockdown 6. Plans are underway to officially open the kitchen in March 2022, in conjunction with the postponed Cabaret afternoon.

Ayal Marek has accepted an invitation to join the Board of ARZA. The twinning program between the Leo Baeck Centre in Melbourne under the leadership of Ayal, with the support of Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black and the T'filat HaAdam congregation in Caesarea, Israel led by well-known educator Rabbi Ayala Samuels, is planned to start soon. We are the first community in Australia to be a part of this program.

The final event was the Chanukah BBQ. Covid restrictions were lifted and there was a good attendance of about 50 people in the courtyard with Rabbi Jonathan lighting the menorah.

Michael Taft

Rabbi's Report

As I write this Rabbi's report to the AGM, reviewing on 2021, I have inevitably been reflecting on the fact that it will be my last annual report, as I conclude 20 years of service (and services!) to the LBC Community.

2021 was a challenging year and a year of significant change for LBC, and I am confident that it has emerged from it stronger and more focused and better able to face the future, and continue to maintain a dynamic progressive Jewish community in the Eastern suburbs. This is particularly significant given the struggles that the other two nearby congregations have faced in 2021, and also the unfortunate upheavals that TBI has been going through. I want to thank and acknowledge especially Michael Taft who has reprised the role of President so ably and always kindly, and Deborah Ogawa who has put in countless hours and expertise as Vice-President in smoothing and resolving a wide variety of matters.

As a demographically aging community (Shirley Polack turned 100 in May, and several members are over 100 years old or will be 100 in 2022), we have continued to provide a 'full-service' model, though we continue to face increasing difficulties attracting sufficient young families and children, and religion school numbers ebb and flow. We started 2021 with about 15 students and expecting to start 2022 with only about 10 (as the older ones go through to BM group). I don't see a solution to this challenge, though we do seem to be collecting a few extra students and families in the year or two before their BM is due.

Covid affected the entire year, and we went through several lockdowns, but we did manage to move our online services from home broadcasts back into the shul, at least (and sometimes only) for the service leaders, meaning we could improve our singing and provide a more 'normal' service experience. People have appreciated the support offered.

I thought I'd look back to my early years here – at the AGM at the end of 2004 I reported: the adoption of our new Hebrew name, Shema Yisrael, and the buy-line 'The Centre for Progressive Judaism in the Eastern Suburbs', and that we had a great product in our dynamic progressive Judaism, and a warm and welcoming congregation with a wide variety of activities in the three fields of prayer, study and meeting. I noted the appointment of our first care coordinator and the excellent support she and the rest of our care group offer, as examples, as one congregant wrote to me, of really putting the prayers we say on Shabbat morning into practice. I fully agreed, of course – and still do - there is no point in praying fervently whilst remaining unresponsive to those with whom we share this world. I noted that 'We sometimes take for granted the magnificent musical standards that Maurice Duband and his team maintain for us, but to sit and listen to his masterful playing or some of the beautiful singing can be a sublime and uplifting experience. It is amazing to think that I could and would use exactly these same words today, 18 years on. Thank you so much, Maurice, for all that you give to LBC.

The following year I reported that 'I am coming to the end of my third year at LBC, and that I and my family felt pretty settled here in the congregation and in Melbourne. We had just started construction of our new, environmental home, and on the same theme, our community has continued its involvement with the new Jewish Ecological Coalition. We were planning our exciting sanctuary redevelopment – whose successful completion meant we no longer had to move from pillar to post every High Holy Days, and which we have been enjoying ever since.

Another passion was interfaith work, and I reported the establishment of The Jewish Christian Muslim Conference of Australia which was conceived, gestated and born at LBC, that good

progress has been made and that the second Jewish-Christian-Muslim conference took place in July with more participants from LBC than any other organisation. JCMA had received a \$50,000 grant for a pilot project to take interfaith understanding into Victorian schools, and I am pleased to report that the JCMA Conferences and Schools Project continue to operate all these years later. We introduced the annual Civic Service and also the annual Leo Baeck Lecture as part of the Kew Festival, to invite locals from the wider community into LBC, and by now we have had an impressive list of speakers and subjects.

On these two important issues of environment and interfaith, we have both increased general Jewish awareness and involvement, involved our own members in organisation and participation, and brought events and people into LBC. In 2021 we agreed to publish special editions of Profile, to address social and societal concerns, and the first of these was in April, fittingly putting forward a 'Melbourne Platform' of Progressive Judaism. I felt back in 2005 that there was one more general issue that we should be working on in more depth in the coming years, and that was indigenous justice and reconciliation. In many ways this has been the most challenging of all issues, perhaps because it has also been the most difficult for the wider Australian society to address. In August last year, however, we produced an issue on Aboriginal Awareness. And in November, to coincide with the opening of COP 26 in Glasgow, we produced a comprehensive Climate Change Edition (and we have just produced the latest for April 2022, addressing Refugee issues and coinciding with Pesakh).

Back in 2004, in discussing the redevelopment of the sanctuary, I pointed out that of course a building does not itself make a community. In the coming year, I wanted us to put particular attention into two areas – keeping the involvement of the post Beit Mitzvah age, and what used to be called 'Young Marrieds', and their pre-Sunday School aged children. But sadly, despite many ideas and attempts and much effort and energy in 2005 and subsequently, that is an area we have not made enough progress on, right into 2021, though the ReJewvenation project has had some modest success in engaging some members of our newer generations, and at the 2021 AGM we welcomed a number more of them as new members to the Committee.

In 2005 I reported that Marlis and Ruth were the efficient voices on the phone or the helpful faces in the office, and our Profile team is improving the quality of our communication to our membership month by month. Of course Marlis died in 2020, and Ruth has retired, but by 2021 Julie-Anne had the office ably back in hand, supported by our book-keeper Paul, which was an immense relief.

Back in 2004 I reflected that we were truly becoming a Centre for Judaism in the Eastern Suburbs, and concluded the 2004 report with '*Lo Alekha hamalakha ligmor - v'lo ata ben horin l'hibatiel mimena*' - It is not up to us to complete the tasks, but neither may we sit back and do nothing! And that is every bit as true now as it was then! Despite the challenges and the difficult times, we have consolidated our position as the Centre for Judaism in the Eastern Suburbs, and a proud and crucial foundation stone for Progressive Judaism in Australia.

So - much had changed by 2021 – including some things that we could barely have foreseen or planned for back in 2004/5 – but fundamentally much has also stayed the same. LBC is a proud, established, mature and still energetic and even more confident, leading community of Progressive Judaism in Australia and I wish it '*ad mea'h v'esrim* – to a hundred and twenty – at least!

Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black

Treasurer's Report

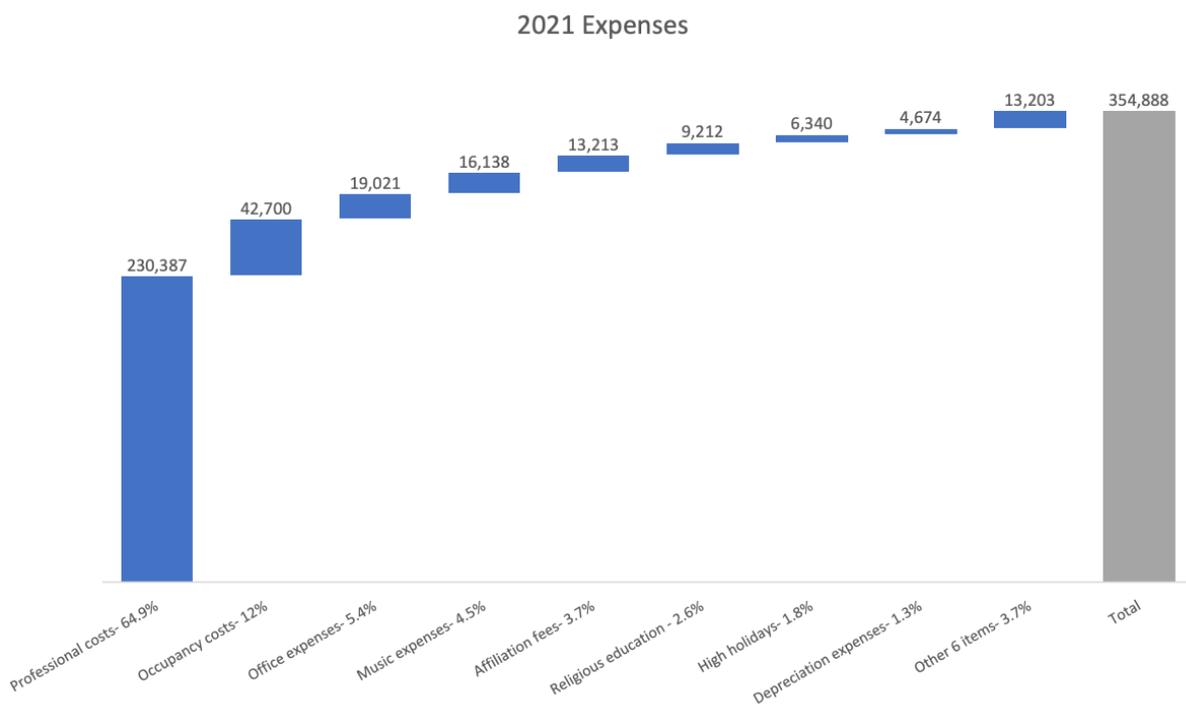
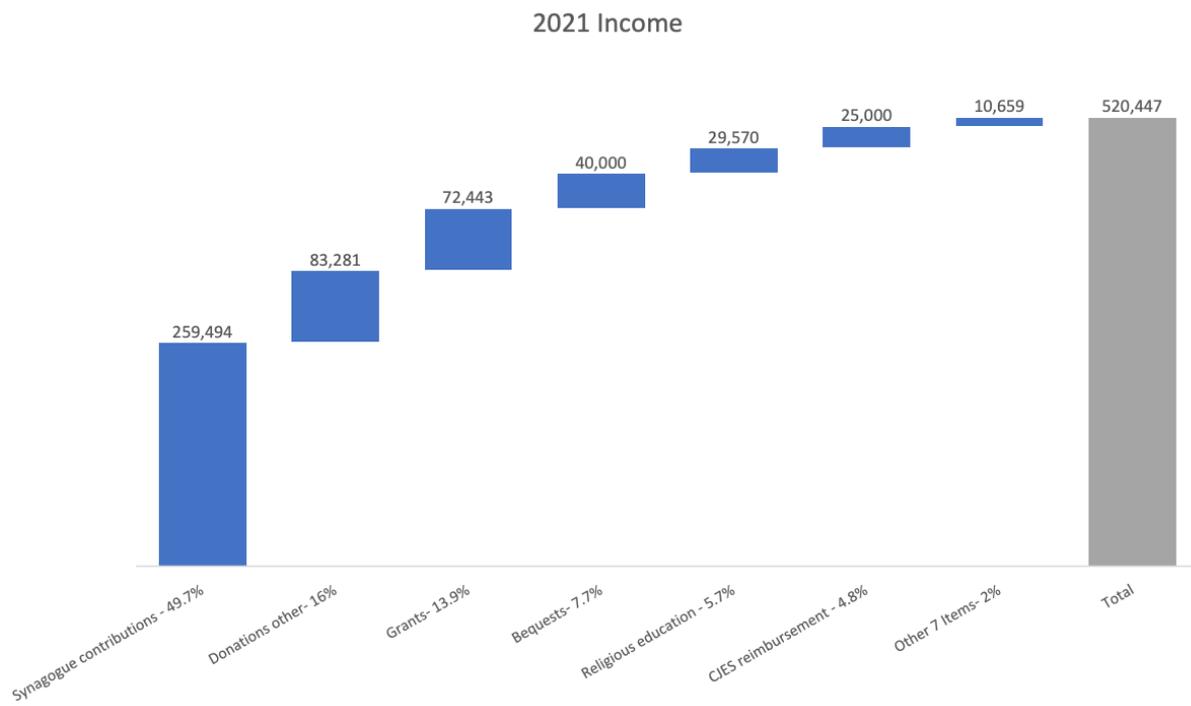
It is with pleasure that I present the Leo Baeck Centre's Financial Statements for year ending 31 December 2021.

The below charts provide guidance on the type of income and expenses that the Leo Baeck Centre has. Professional Costs and Occupancy costs represent 76.9% of the expenses with Membership fees representing 63.6% of income (excluding grants and bequests), though this is lower than previous years due to higher donations.

While a significant profit was achieved for the year, this was significantly impacted by donations and a grant for the kitchen as well as bequests. Without these, a loss would have been recorded for the year and challenges exist to achieve a break even or profit in future years. It should be noted that the cash position only improved by \$13,253 compared to last year.

We are most grateful and appreciative of all our donors, both large and small, for their unfailing generosity, understanding and support. These donations are crucial to allow funding for all the activities that have been run this year and we look forward to many in the future.

We would like to thank our President, and all the Office Bearers for the careful attention they always give to our finances and for the help that they have provided throughout the year.



Leo Baeck Centre For Progressive Judaism Inc.

Reg No. A0028284F

For the Period Ended 31 December 2021**Private Report on Surplus or Deficit**

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
Income		
Bequests	40,000	-
CJES reimbursement	25,000	25,000
Covid-19 stimulus	(50)	22,914
Donations other	83,281	23,827
Grants	72,443	-
High holiday receipts	20	534
House income	136	1,820
Interest income	950	1,863
Other revenue	2,682	5,819
Prayer book sales	531	1,235
Rabbinic income	6,390	990
Religious education	29,570	12,586
Synagogue contributions	259,494	276,448
Total Income	520,447	373,036
Less: Expenses		
Affiliation fees	13,213	11,692
Depreciation expenses	4,674	4,340
Doubtful debts expenses	-	3,705
Festivals	4,103	1,677
High holidays	6,340	5,471
House	2,384	8,553
Music expenses	16,138	12,109
Occupancy costs	42,700	37,919
Office expenses	19,021	19,917
Other expenses	1,899	420
Event expenses	258	108
Prayer book purchases	4,559	3,957
Professional costs	230,387	236,456
Religious education	9,212	10,297
Total Expenses	354,888	356,621
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	165,559	16,415

Leo Baeck Centre For Progressive Judaism Inc.

Reg No. A0028284F

Balance Sheet**As At 31 December 2021**

		2021	2020
	Note	\$	\$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	3	298,537	285,284
Trade and other receivables	4	39,626	3,517
Other assets	5	41	-
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		338,204	288,801
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	6	3,831,830	3,556,170
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		3,831,830	3,556,170
TOTAL ASSETS		4,170,034	3,844,971
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	7	25,087	13,692
Employee benefits	8	31,645	39,883
Other liabilities	9	-	13,749
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		56,732	67,324
Employee benefits	8	96	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		96	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES		56,828	67,324
NET ASSETS		4,113,206	3,777,647
EQUITY			
Reserves		2,210,473	2,040,473
Retained surplus		1,902,733	1,737,174
TOTAL EQUITY		4,113,206	3,777,647

Rabbi Search Sub-Committee Report

The Rabbi Search sub-committee was established in late 2021 to start a world-wide search for a progressive rabbi to join LBC in 2023. At present, the sub-committee is reaching out to international contacts and preparing material to profile the congregation to potential applicants. The sub-committee will inform members of its progress over the coming months. If you have any questions or ideas for the sub-committee, you can email them at recruitment@lbc.org.au.

Pierre Harcourt

Music Director's Report

Last year's music report was full of interesting details of how we survived the difficulties of maintaining our standard of musical excellence, through the severe operational restrictions that Covid rules presented to us: And it also contained the sad news of the retirement of Michelle Duband/Langer from our cantoral team, giving us the opportunity to thank her for her years of devoted service to LBC.

This year's music report is full of smiles, as we welcome back to our Congregation the lovely voice of Dana Zeimer, after a decade of absence, during which time she lived and worked in the musical hub of wonderful Sopranos in both Italy and Germany. Once properly learnt and never forgotten, Dana walked back into our team of cantors with a faultless memory of our repertoire. It was as if she had never been away at all. We are most fortunate to have her back with us.

High Holy Days music was much the same as last year. We were lucky to be able to have all the cantors in the synagogue and communication was smoother and easier. No choir of course, but the 'in depth' knowledge of the music shown by Laurence Splitter, Julian Duband and Dana Zeimer made the music a delight. Thank you, Cantors. When circumstances permit, it will be wonderful to be able to reconvene the Choir, to make our Services feel 'complete' again.

With Julian and Dana being able to cover most of our Services now, we are seeing a lot less of Vered Harel, Sharon Mattatia, Rhondda Hall and Galit Klas - but thank them for their cantoring before Dana's return, and for still being willing, when available, to come to LBC when needed.

It is indeed a delight to have members back in Synagogue for Services, and very satisfying to see and feel their reactions, and hear their voices, as they once again join, live, in the joy that music brings to our worship. May that long continue.

Maurice Duband
Director of Music

Lifecycle

Ritual



The group chair is Michael Taft. The members are Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black, Sharene Hambur, Albert Isaacs, Jon Taft, Maurice Duband.

While Covid had changed the running of the shul we still met regularly. Covid presented a number of issues that needed to be resolved eg services had to be maintained on Zoom when we were in

lockdown. Later, when regulations changed, we also returned to the sanctuary with changes to the service, with congregants as well as participants both in-person and online. Signs were placed in the building advising of no hand shaking, hugging or kissing. Masks were mandatory and vaccination certificates necessary for admission. No one other than the Rabbi or service leader and Cantor would be on the bima. The honours usually offered to open the ark, carry the scroll and dress the scroll were all set aside in order to minimize contact. Call ups (if in-person) went to the cantor stand so that we all kept a safe distance. The seating was staggered so that family groups could be together but different households were kept distant. During the several lockdowns, the community joined by Zoom only. Services are now being held on Zoom and also with physical presence (hybrid), and though still struggling with occasional technical challenges, the output services were of high audio and video quality and much appreciated.

Our High Holy Day Services were not shared with the other PJV congregations as in the previous year, as it was not considered beneficial to disrupt our by then well-established operations (the other congregations concluded likewise). Through the important Tishrei period, we continued to hold services on Zoom. The regulations only allowed 5 people in the sanctuary at one time. In our case that was Rabbi Jonathan, Music Director Maurice, and Cantors, Julian Duband, Dana Zeimer and Laurence Splitter, supplemented by recordings of the choir in places. This forced us to have the Zoom operators logging in to run the service remotely. Aliyot and lay leaders read parts from home. There were a few problems but overall, given the haste at which it was all put together, we were very pleased with the result – technically much better and more consistent than the previous year. Despite the fact that no one was in the sanctuary we still had beautiful flowers donated so that all looked as if there were members in the seats.

The service was trialled on YouTube although there was concern over privacy issues. We were able to get round the privacy issues by having participants register, but this caused its own challenges which we have not yet resolved. However, it produced an excellent image, which, if watching on a large TV in your lounge, felt, looked and sounded surprisingly much as if you were in shul. It was agreed that the music was wonderful. Cantors were great soloists with superb harmonies. Michelle Duband was missed.

This year the Cantors were asked to stand at the desk and sing along with the choir which was played from a CD so that the visual was still complete. On Kol Nidrei we had permission to use soloist Mischa Maisky in a video clip playing Kol Nidrei, and that has also been granted for 2022.

It was decided to do away with the zoom waiting room so that members instead use a password to go straight into the streaming. The waiting room previously caused people to be held up sometimes for up to 10 mins or more.

Instead of normal HHD tickets, a separate HHD edition of Profile was posted to members with information on how services would be held and how to connect. This was done as Covid regulations were changing constantly.

A couple of BMs were delayed, resulting in Torah portions being read out of sequence. There was debate about whether we continue to do this, especially given how many BMs are scheduled for 2022. Eventually the decision was to keep scheduled dates and do it online. Some chose to postpone for 12 months and read the prepared portion at that time. One BM led a small part of the service and one call-up online (we could call this BM Rishon). To accommodate the overseas family in the sanctuary it will be repeated in 12 months. The hope is to hold the service with family and friends, and we'll call this BM Sheni or 'completion of the BM year'.

Dana Zeimer, who has previously been a cantor has returned from Germany where she has been leading services for 6 years. Dana can read Torah and run services. This was noted as backup will be needed in 2022 and onward.

At Purim we read the technicolour Megillah. Parts were allocated to those who attended.

Seder was held in the shul hall. It was catered by Yafit from 12 Ovens and our new caretaker Richard and partner Carol waited on us and took care of the serving and clean up. It was well attended before we were thrust back into lockdown!

The Annual Yom HaAtzmaut dinner (under the HoS umbrella) was scheduled for a Turkish restaurant with guest speaker Sefi Shalam, and raised a variety of issues including ritual/kashrut ones, leading to a review and some clear rules for LBC kashrut at events whether internal or external.

Shavuot festival morning had no one attend other than those running the service. The service was almost cancelled. The problem is this midweek service follows the late night Tikkun, and Shavuot is often overlooked!

Netzer held a 'Sprout Service' at LBC in July, on the evening marking 50 years at Harp Road. There were a number of parents who were former Netzer members in attendance.

Albert Isaacs led the service the following morning, where he also reviewed the 50 years at Harp Road. The annual Civic service had been affected by Covid so the service was postponed from March to coincide with the LBC 50th anniversary. We had many scouts attend the service. This was arranged by Jerry Winston.

Rabbi Jonathan led a series of six "learn to read Torah" classes on Sunday mornings. This culminated in the participants each reading a section on Shabbat Nitzavim. The blessings were changed to accommodate gender neutrality, and different interpretations of God. Some of the participants changed the translation or even the gender of the text, with the rabbi's agreement. A long-standing friend of the congregation, who is not Jewish, also read. This raised some further discussion and two dates were chosen to discuss these issues and invite the participation of the wider membership.

Simchat Torah began at 6.30pm. That tied in with Religion school activities. It began with a kiddush to feed the children. This was followed by the service and festivities.

Discussion was held regarding planning services without Rabbi Jonathan when he is on long service leave in mid-2022 and eventually when he concludes his contract at the end of 2022.

During Sukkot we were again in lockdown. Erev Sukkot was on Zoom from the Rabbi's sukkah. The morning service was online from LBC and we used the artwork sukkah which was moved from the entrance to the bimah for the occasion.

Simchat Torah/Shmini Atzeret were held in the sanctuary though with fewer participants than usual.

By Chanukah we were back in circulation and held the community BBQ in the evening for the first time – this seemed to work well, and we lit the candles to conclude as evening fell, as opposed to the middle of the afternoon! Thanks to Jon Taft as always for providing and cooking the BBQ to conclude a challenging but full year of LBC Ritual!

Michael Taft

House of Study

The year began with hope that Covid-19 restrictions would be further relaxed, but as successive lockdowns occurred, the uncertainty of planning events in-person limited some intended activities. Thanks to the Rabbi's continued huge drive and input, and that of other LBC members operating the remote technology, when restrictions applied to personal attendance, some events were held totally online, and some as a "hybrid" of actual and online attendance.

Annual events

- The annual Kew Civic service was initially postponed, but ultimately not able to be held in 2021. Nevertheless, the opportunity for Venturer Scouts to attend a shabbat service, usually the Civic service, was offered by remote attendance on 2 October, with the Rabbi, Michael Taft, and members of House of Study remaining online to answer their questions.
- The Leo Baeck Lecture was held in March, notwithstanding cancellation of the Kew Festival. Professor Andrew Markus delivered the lecture on lessons for the Progressive Jewish community from recent surveys and census, with discussion of changing demographics in the Melbourne Jewish community. Attendance by some in-person and some online.
- The annual Yom Ha'Atzmaut dinner, organised by Albert Isaacs, was held at a Turkish restaurant in Brunswick, on 17 April, with Shaliach Sefi Shalam speaking on the history of Jews in Turkey and more recent relations between Turkey and Israel, and members who attended enjoyed meeting socially over plentiful Turkish food.
- Shavuot Tikkun was held on erev Shavuot, with attendance in-person and remotely. Talks on the theme "Healing of the Body; healing of the soul" were given by Rabbi Jonathan, Jon Taft, Susan Cohen and Albert Isaacs.

A wide variety of other events were held under the umbrella of the House of Study:

- In February, Paul Forgasz spoke through a Zoom session on Journeys through Jewish Spain. Leah Boulton spoke from Pathways Foundation on Beyond an ultra-orthodox life. HoS also sponsored Rena Lopata's poetry book launch.
- In April, in an online session, Linda Stern spoke on Jewish New York.

- In July there was a hybrid attempt to return to Chavurah lunch format, with Susan Cohen speaking. Further lockdowns delayed further attempts.
- Due to lockdown in August, an LBC Cinema event was held totally online, showing the film Bran Nue Dae, followed by discussion including the film's director, Graeme Isaac, participating from interstate.
- In October, again totally online, and in conjunction with the newly formed Israel Awareness group, Dr Ilana Snyder spoke on her personal journey to involvement with the New Israel Fund.
- In October, an online meeting was held to discuss the possibility of starting a new group to develop LBC-Aboriginal relationships. The meeting was well attended with considerable interest. A subsequent decision was made to continue to include topics related to Aboriginal culture and beliefs under the House of Study.
- In November/December, two sessions were held on Progressive Jewish Platforms, with Jerry Winston leading discussion of the historical development, and Rabbi Jonathan leading discussion of developing a current version.

Rabbi Jonathan also continued to conduct religious study programs, some of which came under the umbrella of HoS, including the series on Prepare to Read Torah.

House of Study group

In February 2021, Elisabeth Holdsworth who was then chair of the House of Study group, indicated her intention to resign, and at the March meeting was thanked for her contributions to HoS both as a member and more recently as Chair. Mannie Gross, a long-time member of HoS, as well as Board convenor, also resigned, and was also thanked by the group for his contributions.

Special thanks to Jerry Winston, who volunteered to become temporary Chair of the group for the following months, bringing his long experience and history of the HoS role, and who together with Rabbi Jonathan continued to promote opportunities for study and stimulation of knowledge of members despite Covid impediments. I took over as chair from August 2020.

Thanks also go to all members of the HoS group – Rabbi Jonathan, Jerry Winston, Lisa Sylvan, Linda Stern and David Rooseboom, as well as Jen Glaser for her involvement as Board convenor. All have contributed, despite the challenges posed by the covid pandemic, to continue to provide stimulating topics and events, to encourage learning and raise levels of knowledge amongst our members and community, on religion and observance, as well as our involvement and place in our wider community. Further members of the group would be welcome.

Susan Cohen

Chair (since August 2020)

Membership

The intermittent limitations placed on social activities throughout 2021 meant reduced activity for the Membership Group. However, on Sunday 28th February, we had a successful “New Members Welcome” morning coffee with lots of food, a friendly atmosphere and a good turn-up of new families and individuals, and long standing members to welcome them. We support the LBC Member Brunches, and family Chagim celebrations at LBC, at Sukkot and Chanukah. We hope to resume outreach function this year.

We negotiated a number of fee concessions for those members in financial distress, and thereby did not lose members for financial reasons. In the last year we welcomed 7 new “Full Family Members” and 11 “Single Members”. Some of these are already active on committees or involved in the various ways. Our total membership is 247 “Billing Units” including 91 Families, 103 Singles, 13 Country, 23 Concessions, 2 Honorary Life Members, 15 Young Adults working or students. Sadly we have had some members pass away, and a few resignations.

New members come to us for a variety of reasons. Some connect via friends or relatives who are already members, or may be themselves past members who chose to re-join. Some are new to Melbourne and seek us out, often from our website. Others have attended educational functions or life-cycle events. Many join to ensure their children’s Jewish education. LBC is promoted by stories in the Jewish press, frontage real estate boards, but word of mouth is the most important publicity. We follow up expressions of interest with information mail-outs, e:Profile, and calls.

We have a number of ongoing initiatives to increase membership. At High Holy Days we encourage those coming to Services as visitors to join and make a commitment. We are always reviewing membership categories and accepting reductions in certain cases to try to accommodate those in difficult circumstances. No one is turned away for financial reasons.

I would like to thank the Group - Kathy Deutsch, Karen Silberberg, Deborah Ogawa and Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black for their efforts, encouragement, wisdom and commitment to LBCs survival and prosperity.

Jon Taft

Youth Education

The Youth and Education Committee oversees the youth education program at LBC. The committee meets on a quarterly basis, chaired by Karl Charikar. Members include Zelema Levy, Tali Bernard, Jennifer Balint and Rachel Popelka-Filcoff. Jen Glaser is the Committee representative. Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black attends the meeting in his capacity as Rabbi and Team Leader/Educator.

The Youth and Education program includes the following:

Sh'ma Program

The Hebrew and Jewish studies program is divided into two sessions. The Hebrew component continues to have two streams (for the levels of ability); the Jewish Studies component has two (Grade 3/4 stream and Grade 5/6 stream).

Jessica Bellamy left the role of lead educator in mid-2021, and the educator roles were filled by Hannah Blount and Tommy Rosham. Jen Glasser worked with the educators on the curriculum and structure of classes. Maya Marek and Gali Marek continued working as young assistant teachers throughout 2021.

Throughout 2021, there was regular attendance of approximately 15 students. Due to continuing COVID restrictions, classes were held online for long periods, and in-person when schools resumed face-to-face learning. COVID safe requirements for staff and students were in line with those applied to schools. This has continued to be a challenge for the students.

Students received end of year reports, and a graduation certificate in December.

In usual years, the Chagim program complements the Sh'ma program, and includes children and community activities at Chanukah, Purim, Simchat Torah, Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur and Sukkot. Some of these chagim were offered as online activities except for Chanukah, which was a picnic.

A pizza shabbat dinner or families was held in the middle of the year, and an end of year Chanukah BBQ was held in December as COVID restrictions eased at those points.

Beit Mitzvah

There was a small group of Beit Mitzvah students in 2021, with three services held across the year. Classes continued to run on Monday nights (concurrently with Sh'ma classes).

Serious Sundays

A small group of young people aged 12-14 met each month with Rabbi Jonathan for a "Serious Sunday" class. The content for these classes was similar to the Btei Mitzvah and Sh'ma classes, but older participants meant they could progress at a faster pace. Several of the participants have organised Btei Mitzvah for 2022.

Karl Charikar

Care

The Care Group continued into its 18th year in 2021. The group has reduced to six volunteer LBC members plus Rabbi Jonathan, following the resignation of Ruth Berkowitz. We thank Ruth for her time and contributions to the group. Rena Lopata, our Care Coordinator, continued to assess client needs and to recommend the group's response. During the on-going Covid restrictions we continued to meet bi-monthly on Zoom to review issues affecting our community and the members to be contacted if they or their families needed assistance. With the restrictions, only phone calls or emails were permitted for most of the year. We continued to send out cards covering bereavement, 'get well' and other circumstances.

During 2021 we continued to organise volunteers from within the Care Group and the LBC community to regularly contact our 80+ year young members to check that they were coping under the restrictions.

We congratulate and thank all the Care Group volunteer members who continue to provide their time and effort to our LBC members in need. With special thanks to Rena for her continued tireless and exceptional work as our Care Coordinator.

Alan Feldman

Culture and Outreach

Arts

Due to COVID restrictions we have been unable to hold any exhibitions over the last two years. With restrictions eased, our committee has just held its first meeting and we hope to resume again within the next couple months, allowing time for an artist to prepare an exhibition.

Val Silberberg

Mitzvah Day

Mitzvah Day is always the third Sunday in November each year. It is a day where Jewish communities around the world set aside time to do something that benefits their communities.

After not being able to celebrate in person for Mitzvah Day 2020, we were excited to don our green Mitzvah Day shirts and hold both virtual and in-person Mitzvah Day events in 2021. LBC's Mitzvah Day activities were held on 21 November 2021. In the morning we had a virtual panel that discussed how to keep safe in a COVID world. The panel speakers were Vanessa Harvey – paramedic, Suzie Riess – paediatrician, Alexis Shub – obstetrician, and Tanya Warms - aged care home volunteer coordinator. They provided a wealth of good advice, tips for staying safe, and resources we could use if we needed some help. The panel was moderated by Jonathan Taft – an endocrinologist.



In the afternoon, we organised an in-person card making session and neighbourhood rubbish collection. The cards were sent to LBC's Committee of Management to wish them happy holidays and thank them for all of their work. With the litter pick up, we could show that Jewish people care about doing nice things in the broader community. To see some pictures of projects done around Australia, check out Mitzvah Day Australia's website: <https://mitzvahday.org.au/photos-2021/>

Deborah Ogawa



Fundraising

The Leo Baeck Centre re-started its Fundraising Group in late 2020. We enjoyed much success in our first year of operations in 2021. We thank the Fundraising Group members – Michael Taft, Tanya Warms, Victoria Gurvich, Vicki Brous, Ailsa Jean, Lisa Sylvan and Deborah Ogawa - for all of their efforts and the community – everyone! - for all of the donations of time, money and goods during the year.

The group's focus is split broadly into three areas – applying for grants, planning events and undertaking outreach. We had good success with grants. Grant amounts are quoted excluding GST of 10%, usually added on top for the award amount.

Grants Awarded in 2020, used in 2021:

- Multicultural Festivals & Events Grant (Victoria) awarded \$2,500 for IT equipment. LBC bought a camera and other equipment for our virtual broadcasting set up. We also created a short multicultural video about how different people think about doing a mitzvah, which was shown at Purim and Mitzvah Day in 2021.
- Small Grants (Bi-annual) Community Grants (Boroondara) awarded \$2,500 to upgrade our library. LBC purchased a desk, chair and computer.

Grants awarded in 2021:

Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund (Victoria) awarded \$67,434 in a matching grant to upgrade our electric wiring and renovate the kitchen. This was completed very successfully in late 2021, with small items fixed in early 2022. We look forward to many food-related events in the upcoming years! The project remained mostly on budget, with electrical work going slightly over budget primarily because we had to move the electrical box due to a change in current regulations, and the kitchen work went under budget primarily due to needing a smaller grease trap than originally considered. We were able to raise sufficient matching funds for the project from the community. We thank all donors for their contributions. A plaque will be created to acknowledge top donors. There were 12 households that were “Designers” @ \$1,000; 1 “Architects” @ \$5,000 and 2 “Builders” @ \$10,000.

Grants awarded in 2021 to use in 2022:

- 2021 Volunteer Grants (Australian Government Community Grants Hub) awarded \$4,000 for us to provide food handling training, including COVID-safe considerations, and buy items for the kitchen.
- CALD COVID-19 Small Grants Fund (Dept. of Health) for \$2,500 to promote COVID-19 vaccinations. LBC surveyed members and published these results (See [Profile Dec 2021-Jan 2022](#)), distributed “Proudly Vaccinated” kippot, masks and pens to promote the message, created and showed a short video of religion school kids speaking on their COVID-era concerns and experiences, hosted an online event during Mitzvah Day on living in a post-COVID world, among other activities.
- 2021-22 Annual Community Strengthening Grant (Boroondara) for \$9,100. Funding is to host a Grand Opening event to celebrate the newly renovated kitchen (held in conjunction with the Cabaret event on 6 March 2022), to promote the facility by holding a number of food-related sessions, and to purchase a marquee to use in the centre's outdoor space.
- Community Climate Change and Energy Action Program (Victoria) for \$6,800 matching grant to install solar panels.

Events that the Fundraising group hosted in 2021 included:

- Festival Food Series – Rita Erlich cooked and discussed foods for Purim (21 Feb) and Passover (22 March).
- Call-a-thon in June to raise matching funds for the kitchen renovation. It was great fun calling around to members for a catch up as well as asking for donations.

The Cabaret planned for October 2021, which was to be the final kitchen fundraising, was postponed to 6 March 2022.

For 2022, we hope to continue looking for grants, prepare our kitchen for hiring to bring in ancillary income, raise matching grants for the solar panels and create new interesting programming to support our fundraising efforts.

Deborah Ogawa



Israeli Awareness

An initiative to rejuvenate the Israel Awareness group was discussed in September 2021. The following preliminary summary of mission and activities was agreed:

The Israel Awareness Group aims to:

- be a bridge between LBC and Israel
- cultivate connections to Israel from within the LBC community

This will be undertaken through such activities as:

- collating and disseminating information to LBC members on activities related to Israel
- hosting a safe and respectful place for LBC members to learn and discuss topics related to Israel. The group intends to interact with different bodies in Israel and outside of Israel as speakers and sources of information to raise the awareness and knowledge about Israel within the LBC community.
- The group hopes that through its activities LBC members can cultivate deeper feelings of care and interest in Israel.
- Links were established with Rabbi Ayala Samuels the founding rabbi of the reform community in Caesarea - congregation "Tefilat HaAdam" to form a relationship with LBC as part of the twining program.

With the assistance of the relevant department from the World Zionist organization that has been running this program successfully with Canadian congregations, we have organised to take part in the Beit Haam program, where members of both congregation would meet for 7 sessions, once a month to view a short film on various aspects of Israeli society followed by group discussion. Three sessions have been held successfully to date. Good discussions were held following the screening with interesting insights from various members of both communities contributing to the reflections and analysis.

Library

We at the Zwinger Library continue to provide a service to our congregants in and outside of the community. The library holds ranges of books from Non-fiction, Fiction, Children's Fiction and has various CD's, all of which can be borrowed by patrons.

2021 continued to be a challenging year for everyone, however our library did prosper in many ways. We were lucky enough to receive a **Grant for Lifelong Learning**, from the **Boroondara Council** to put towards updating our cataloguing room. We acquired a new desk, drawers, Ergonomic chairs and a new computer. Also, we were able to buy new books to add to the ever-expanding library. Our cataloguing room looks less cluttered and is comfortable to use. Due to this **Grant**, the Zwinger Library was invited to attend a "**Valuing Cultural Diversity in our Libraries**" discussion panel by the Boroondara Library Service. This was to mark **Social Inclusion Week**. I attended and was able to relay to the audience and the other Libraries what our Library provided.

We are hoping to be able to advertise our website to the public domain for people to have look at and borrow from our library.

Our new library cataloguing system is proving easy to use and we currently have 1,640 items loaded into the catalogue. We are currently weeding out those books that are no longer relevant or very old to make room for new books. Those books we have removed will be **“Free to a good home”** in a box in the Synagogue foyer near our Book Display.

Thank you to Gillian Lubansky and Helen Wolfram who have continued to volunteer their support to me in The Zwinger Library at the Leo Baeck Centre.

Terri Nathan

Jewish Jam

The aim of Jewish Jam is to provide a platform by which members of the LBC congregation and others can enjoy making music together in a relaxed manner with no expectation of performance.

Other aims include:

1. Fundraise for LBC by asking for participants to make a donation each session
2. Provide another means by which members can engage with one another

This year our meetings have been interrupted many times by COVID restrictions but we have approx. 8 people each session. Some participants are members of B'Yachad, others are from other shuls eg Kehillat Nitzan.

We have raised only about \$100 over the last year in donations.

Continued thanks to Ruth Liebowitz, Julie Contole and Susan Donath for leading the participants.

Tanya Warmis

Walking Group

A group of walkers head off from LBC every Friday morning for a one hour walk. We do a range of different routes. An email is circulated and replied to during the week so that we know who is planning to come. The group usually numbers 7 or 8. New walkers are always very welcome.

Kathy Deutsch

Israeli Dancing

The Israeli dance group that met regularly on a Tuesday at 9.30am has not danced for two years now. The lock downs, and the changed work hours of our dance teacher Ariella has prevented us from commencing again.

Michael Taft & Tanya Warms

Deborah's Well

Happily, the period between March 2021 and March 2022 has been an active time for Deborah's Well, despite the challenges of Covid and meeting via Zoom. We have regularly had about 12 - 25 participants. The upside of Zoom is that it has allowed us to get some interesting speakers from abroad.

Some of the highlights have included a talk by Rita Erlich on 'Beyond the Recipes, What Cookbooks tell us about Community'; a talk on Danish protection of Jews during the Holocaust by Jenny Ginsberg; an examination of the American Political Scene by my friend Tom Moran, editor and opinion columnist of Newark's largest paper. We have had several speakers on Health Issues: last year Caroline Gurvitch spoke on coping with stress during Covid; we also had a discussion about how the highs and lows of how lockdowns had affected us.

Dr Pete Silberberg spoke to us early this year on his work with the Aboriginal community in the Outback and closer to his home in the Lismore community of NSW.

In the next few months we have a speaker from the US, Julie Burstein, who has written on Creativity and worked for National Public Radio, and has given some quite interesting Ted Talks. Kim Rubinstein, a lawyer and Law Professor who is running as an Independent candidate in Canberra will speak to us later in the year on politics.

I look forward to a time we can meet face to face at Val Silberberg's home again. We probably need more group discussions without a speaker.

We welcome new members.

Janet Bau

B'yachad

B'yachad (meaning 'together') is a group of about a dozen singers who meet fortnightly to sing in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, Russian and (occasionally) English. Through 2021 we mostly met on Zoom and occasionally outdoors, but are now back to meeting in the Kiddush Hall. We are most competently led by Susan Donath on the piano accordion.

Kathy Deutsch

Internal

Security

(Please note this refers to Physical Security of LBC rather than electronic security).

With no face-to-face activities or services for most of 2020, there was no need to monitor LBC except by our private monitoring company ART.

Sadly, in November 2020, we suffered a break-in through an office window. Luckily nothing was stolen, however a window was broken and other minor damage occurred. The police investigated and filed a report. It is possible that as few people were using the building that year, thieves took the opportunity to attempt a robbery.

As we resume face-to-face activities and services in 2021, we will likewise reconvene the Security team to provide Security cover. We will also endeavour to hold a training refresher with CSG and aim to recruit more members.

I wish to thank the following Security team members: Rob Kendall, Jack Cohen, Alan Harvey, David Rooseboom, Tony Kerron, Hugh Berryman-Brook, and Sue Rose.

Tanya Warms

House

The main activity of the House Committee this year has been the construction of the new kitchen and upgrade to the electrical switchboard. The project was made possible by a grant from the Victorian Government's Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund. LBC matched the grant funding. The old kitchen was in poor shape and no longer complied with regulatory requirements. Renewing the kitchen enables us to utilise it for our own activities as well as hiring out the hall to the broader community. The works involved stripping the space back to the base structure and upgrading services. We now have new appliances, new stainless steel benches and a more functional layout.

Thank you to Regina Bron and Deborah Ogawa for making the grant application and obtaining initial quotes for the building work. And to Rita Erlich for guiding the project with your professional expertise. We were fortunate to have builder Mark Will undertake the construction with great care.

Also part of the works was replacement of the original switchboard and associated works. Thank you to George Deutsch for coordinating several maintenance items over the year.

Michael Fink

IT & Communications

Our IT group has undertaken a number of tasks this year including:

- Maintenance on PCs involved in zoom/youtube broadcasts
- Administration of access to broadcast PCs via DWS
- Moved all Corporate data to Microsoft Teams/OneDrive in preparation for enabling fully remote work
- Upgraded Rabbi's and Office admin PCs with donated Solid State Disks and purchased memory (blocked due to lockdown)
- Installed the new Library PC
- Received go-ahead to upgrade internal networking equipment (not yet actioned)
- Moved LBC connection to 100/20Mbps connection for High Holy Days services

In addition, we have been involved in regular activity with Website and Trybooking to explore and manage remote ticketing. We collaborated with Aya to allow the Office to update the website etc and finally we have moved the phone lines over to an Internet-based service due to decommissioning of the old Telstra copper phone network (incomplete). Connection is now via iiNet BizPhone service.

Paul Rosham