



Woodford Liberal Synagogue

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קידם בית תיקווא



BetTikvah

Joint Statement from the members of the Woodford Liberal Synagogue and Bet Tikvah Merger Project Management Committee ('MPMC')

As members of both Woodford Liberal Synagogue ('WLS') and Bet Tikvah ('BT') are aware, the councils of both communities have been given a mandate by their respective members to explore the possibility of a merger. As a consequence, the Merger Project Management Committee ('MPMC') was created.

The MPMC has had initial meetings and is now meeting monthly to review progress towards the merger. The purpose of this statement, issued by the MPMC, is to provide members with information as to how these discussions are progressing. Following each meeting, the MPMC intends sending further statements summarising developments.

The MPMC has created a number of small sub-committees comprised of members from both communities to discuss how we could possibly harmonise the main functions of the two synagogues should the merger proceed. It is not the intention of this statement to disseminate the minutiae of every discussion of each sub-committee. However, the MPMC is acutely aware that the membership of both synagogues will expect and require to be consulted and informed as to the progress being made in these discussions, which will, of course, be reported to each council on a regular basis. If and when negotiations are at a more advanced stage and BEFORE any merger resolution is put separately to the members of WLS and BT, each synagogue will hold at least one further closed meeting of its members, perhaps in the Autumn of 2015. At such meetings, each synagogue's members of the MPMC and those serving on the merger sub-committees will report, answer questions and promote discussion on key issues.

It is still 'early days' but we believe members would find it useful to read the table below, which sets out the current position in respect of each of the merger sub-committees.

If the two synagogues are to merge successfully, the MPMC believes that the first step is to bring the communities closer together by meeting socially and sharing community events. So, what steps have we made/are we making in this regard?

1. On 2 June 2015, Danny Rich, the Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism, addressed members of both communities at BT. Having met both chairs, Jonny Hurst and Stewart Spivack, earlier in the evening, Danny spoke widely on the subjects of inclusivity, respect and compromise, all of which are key issues in any merger discussions. Danny's address was followed by a Q and A session and refreshments. For those who did not attend, the mood was optimistic and convivial and the MPMC believes that the evening has helped to lay strong foundations for further discussions. Thanks go to BT for hosting and David Gold for acting as the MC, as well as Danny Rich for sparing his time and sharing his thoughts with us all.

2. The MPMC recognises that Woodford's vibrant cheder is one of its strengths. So, from September 2015, the synagogues will have one cheder, which will be run from Woodford. The reason for this is that Woodford's cheder has grown year on year for the last 8 years (with around 30 children currently on the cheder/Kabbalat Torah register). In contrast, Bet Tikvah only currently has two children who regularly attend its cheder.

3. WLS will be hosting a Ladies Quiz for members of both communities on Tuesday 14th July.

4. A Simchat Torah service for both communities will take place on 11/12 October 2015, when we will honour two members of each community.

5. We will be holding joint Shabbat Services on 18 July 2015 at WLS and 8 August 2015 at BT and hope that many members from both communities will be able to attend.

The table below shows the sub-committee membership and progress:

Sub-committee	WLS member(s)	BT member(s)	Latest position
Burial and Cremation	Jonny Hurst	Stewart Spivack	Brief, initial discussions have taken place. A longer meeting is planned in June/July between Stewart and Jonny to explore a plan to harmonise the Burial and Cremation Schemes of WLS and BT if the merger proceeds. The early indications are that this will be achievable.

Education (WLS New Generations Committee)	Di Kamall Sharon Pinhas Emma Sandler Josh Newham Emma James Marco Lieberskind	Michelle Marks We are waiting for confirmation of the second member	Because a merger of the chadarim is happening from September 2015, instead of forming another merger sub-committee, two members of BT have been invited to join WLS' New Generations Committee, whose remit includes WLS's cheder.
Events, Membership	David Gold Jenny Sclaire Ruth Harris Sue Powell	Paula Sumray Helen Freedman Jackie Morrison	2 June: Danny Rich/Social at BT. 14 July: Ladies Quiz at WLS.
PR	Merle Muswell Simon Rothstein	David Forbes Judith Konzon	This group will start work in the autumn to bring together synagogue publications and share information about progress with the wider community.
Finance	Tina Gold Mel Millenbach	Ashley Marks Sidney Sanders Rob Konzon	The Finance group have had a number of meetings and have been asked to submit their first update to the MPMC July meeting.
Legal	Jonny Hurst Ben Fryer	Shirley Forbes John Morrison	A meeting is taking place on 17 June to make progress on the contents of the possible constitution.
Membership Data Group	Warran Rolnis Adrian Samuels	Stewart Spivack Ashley Marks	A joint initiative is taking place to collate the postcodes of the members of both WLS and BT and to reflect this data on a map. This may help to inform us as to the optimum location should the merger proceed.
Property	Ian Wynch Edward Taub Ivor Kirstein	John Morrison Zachary Forbes	Valuations of both buildings are to be obtained. Real estate agents are then to be instructed to look for premises in the London Borough of Redbridge.

Rites and Practices	Hilton Ellis Jan Ellis Ben Glassman Alice Wilcock	Gary Freedman Sidney Sanders Michelle Marks Elliott Porte	A meeting took place on 1 June when matters of the religious practices and principles of both shuls were discussed. A further meeting is scheduled for 3 August to make progress on the issues discussed. While there are, as expected, some areas of difference which will need further consideration, the MPMC is pleased to report that there is considerable common ground.
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We hope you will appreciate the extensive work which has already been put into exploring the merger of our two communities. We would like to take this opportunity of thanking members of all the merger sub-committees for their ongoing commitment and effort to this project.

Finally, the MPMC recognises that talk of possible changes will, for some members, cause anxiety. The ultimate decision as to whether or not the merger proceeds will, of course, remain solely with the members of both communities. It is a complicated process and, consequently, it is fair to say that neither outcome is more or less likely at this stage. Should members have any particular queries or concerns, please do email or telephone your synagogue's current chair.

WLS: Jonny Hurst chair@woodfordliberal.org.uk 07973 361479

BT: Stewart Spivack stewart.spivack@gmail.com 07806 536243

Shalom and warm regards,

Shirley Forbes, Jonny Hurst, Bob Kamall, Elliot Porte, Stewart Spivack and Richard Stevens

The Merger Project Management Committee

10 June 2015