COMMUNITY UPDATE – REPORT FOR NEMS AGM OCTOBER 2021

Since the last AGM NEMS continues to deal with a range of unique and difficult challenges, which as a community we have faced together. As we are all aware the pandemic is not over, but from lockdown to emerging into slightly more normal times, NEMS has continued to provide a range of services to our community.

Zoom enabled us to stay in touch with our members. Monthly talks were planned and provided, with different and interesting speakers by Guy including 3 zoom talks from Israel. Invites were extended to friends and family of member’s and we even had attendees from Australia joining us online. Jeremy Solomons put together quizzes for us, ably assisted by Charlie as technical supervisor on PowerPoint! Piano sessions were given by the talented Jason Rose, taking live requests from community members and guests via the NEMS Facebook page. Punch and Judy joined us via Zoom on Purim and we all celebrated from our own sofas.

NEMS wanted to ensure that members felt valued and personally included, so Chag related food deliveries continued, including Sara’s Sharpstone’s mother Angela’s delicious cheesecake and our special Purim parcels.

Lockdown was tough on the kids, and fun youth sessions were run by Micky Kashman to include cooking via Zoom.

Behind the scenes Janet Kogan was in touch with many members on behalf of Welfare, checking in on them, which was appreciated more than ever by those who were shielding or choosing to go out less.

Rabbi Zahavit continued her Thursday evening service/study sessions until relatively recently when fortnightly Covid-friendly Shabbat services were up and running at our now-established home upstairs at SWESRS, where places can be booked via the Shul office. This was hugely important as those with a yahrzeit had the ability to say kaddish even if they were unable to attend in person.

As we all emerged back in to more social surroundings, the NEMS tea party held outside at SWESRS was a welcome back for many and it was wonderful to see so many people face to face, rather than on a Zoom call.

RH and YK services were held back at Clore Tikva run by John Simon and Mark Carter with additional input from Helen Kaymer, Rafi Ben-Shir and Ed Niman and wardened by Shim Forman. Despite wearing masks and following Covid protocol, it felt almost normal to be back together in our familiar High Holy Day surroundings.

Not being deterred by Covid, the Ben-Shirs celebrated being honoured at Simchat Torah via Zoom and Zahavit hosted an enjoyable evening where we all sang their praises.

Our links with Essex K and the Joint Jewish Burial Society are still covered by Sara Sharpstone, and Guy Sasson and Eyal Myers regularly attend the Masorti Chairs meeting giving us the opportunity to share ideas within the wider Masoriti Community. Leigh Kogan has stood down as our representative after many years, for the Board of Deputies; an important role as it gives us a voice regarding national events. We thank him for attending all the meetings and bringing back to us information to learn how the BOD are looking after our communities. Frances Niman is now our current representative and wish her every success.

Sue Geist has done sterling work for us on a freelance basis, creating publicity materials for all our events and ensuring that we reach out not only to our community but to the wider Jewish Community. She constantly updates our Facebook and website (nemsynagogue.co.uk). Both Jacqui and Sue update our newsletter which is easy for members to read on their mobiles when they are on the go and means that we can keep you updated on a weekly basis.

The NEMS Executive have been in discussion about calendar events for the coming year and will be publicising dates and events as soon as they have been confirmed. We are working on in-person events that have been successful in the past, such as the popular supper quiz in Spring 2022 and another afternoon tea party. Events will be put on both in the Ilford area and also in the Southend area to accommodate members who are not local to the SWESRS building. We are always on the look out for different events, so if there is anything you would like to see (such as Jewish walks of London, day excursions etc) then please do let us know and we will look in to it.

All of this is provided as part of your membership, but sadly it has taken its toll on our finances as we have not been able to fundraise due to the pandemic. Even though we had no services for a while, our costs increased as we still had to pay SWESRS, Rabbi Zahavit, Sue Geist & increased Masorti Judaism & JJBS fees (the latter of which NEMS have fully incorporated within existing fees over the past 2 years). Wanting to be mindful of the financial toll that Covid has had on many families, NEMS has not raised Shul fees for two years, however the Executive have taken the decision to implement a small increase of 50 pence per person per month, so £6 per person per year, effective from January 2022.

Communication will be sent out reminding members paying by direct debit to amend their regular payments and for anyone struggling, we continue to have the caveat that those enduring financial hardship should contact the Shul office in confidence.

Finally, our continued thanks to those who have worked tirelessly over the past year to provide time and support in running the Shul, most of them on a voluntary basis:

Executive Guy, Ric, Shim, Dan, Jeremy, Eyal and Yvonne

Trustees Ed, Renee, Spencer and Shim

Religious lay leaders, Mark John, Rose and Shim for his three-minute droshas and everyone who has generously given up their time to contribute to services.

Rabbi Zahavit for her patience, wisdom, wit and kindness to us all.

Sara for provision of food and goody bags.

Eyal for security.

Nick for legal advice and patience

Jacqui and Sue for keeping us all in contact, and up to date whilst being very patient will all the last-minute changes which kept being thrown at them

Ruth for her accounting skills and keeping the shul books on an even keel.

Thank you.