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 ALONIM

עלונים

Magazine of the Bristol & West
Progressive Jewish Congregation

Summer
Issue



ALONIM Contributions & Editorial Policy.

The editorial policy is to encourage contributions from all Synagogue members and ALONIM readers, concerning any aspects of communal and Jewish life, including cultural and communal reviews, information concerning synagogue activities, letters and feedback, and articles of Jewish cultural and religious interest. Typically, contributions of approximately 350 words are preferred.

The editor will NOT print anonymous or unattributed articles. Contributors are asked to be aware of the need to protect the copyright of others. Opinions expressed in ALONIM do not necessarily reflect those of the synagogue Council or the Editors.

Contributions and communications can be sent directly to the Editor at alonim@bjwc.org. For postal contributions please contact the editor on 07989 974133. Copy date deadline for submissions is notified below. Submissions after this date cannot be guaranteed to appear in the next issue. If you are intending to send in unsolicited material please let the editor know ahead of the deadline.

Front cover photograph:

Cheder close up!

Photographer: Tom Walmsley



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liberal Judaism

REFORM JUDAISM

ALONIM copy date deadline

| Issue | Date |
|--------|-------------|
| Autumn | 31st August |

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Aleinu l'shabei-ach laadon hakol,

lateit g'dulah l'yotzeir b'reishit –

shehu asanu l'shomrei haadamah,

v'hu samanu lishlichei haTorah;

shehu sam chayeinu itam,

v'goraleinu im kol haolam.

Vaanachnu korim,

umishtachavim, umodim

lifnei melech malchei ham'lachim:

HaKadosh, baruch hu.

עלינו לשבוע לאדון הכל,
לתת גדולה ליוצר בראשית,
שהוא עשנו לשומרי האדמה,
והוא שמנו לשליחי התורה,
שהוא שם חיינו אתם,
וגרלנו עם כל העולם.

ואנחנו כורעים
ומשתחוים ומודים
לפני מלך מלכי המלכים,
הקדוש ברוך הוא.

Our calling is to praise the Living Source. Our duty is to make known the greatness of the One Creator, who trusts us to be guardians of the earth and messengers of Torah; who gives us a destiny shared with all human beings, and who binds our lives to theirs. And so we bend, bow, and give thanks before the Blessed One whose realm is unfathomable, whose sovereignty over all makes all life holy and precious.

A green Aleinu in the new American reform machzor Mishkan HaNefesh machzor, Mishkan HaNefesh, by Rabbi Shelly Marde
Provided by Davide Irons-Scelsi

Editorial

Sam Waite



I'm sat here writing this editorial on a cold, rainy day in June wondering when summer will decide to rear its head - hopefully in time for Deanfield which is approaching very fast and, phenomenally, has sold out!

This edition of Alonim is another varied delight for you to sink your teeth into, with contributions from people right across our community and beyond.

Following the awful events in Poway which resulted in the murder of Lori Gilbert-Kaye during a Shabbat service, the Muslim community here in Bristol sent our Jewish community a letter of solidarity which you can read inside.

At Pesach we welcomed Hilel Salomon all the way from Argentina to our community. Hilel has written a lovely account of our seder for us. Sadly, by the time we go to print he will have gone home but we send him our best wishes.

This edition has multifaith offerings

from Kalsoom Bashir who writes about Ramadan, Emily Short who gives us an insight into the Summer Solstice and Anthony Acton writes about a recent "Scriptural Reasoning" event that took place at Bath mosque.

Following his recent Barmitzvah, Josh Walmsley gives us an account of the nine months of study and preparation which led up to his special day and Shay Spencer-Hutchings writes for Alonim again about being Jewish in a Christian school.

There's lots of exciting things going on at BWPJC now. As previously mentioned Deanfield is approaching, we have a Bristol Pride themed movie evening as well as having a presence again at this year's Pride march on 13th July. As well as this, Jewish West is launching on 14th August, 7pm at The Khan downstairs of Falafel King in Cotham. Jewish West is a united venture between BWPJC and Park Row Synagogue for Jews in the West of England and South Wales who want to come together and socialise. The inaugural event will be a chance to meet, eat and drink whilst being entertained by live music in a relaxed, neutral environment.

Have a fantastic summer!

Membership news

Sheila Brill

membership@bwpjc.org



A huge thank you to Vicki Collinson and Martine Hawley for organising the community seder.

We have lots of mazeltovs in this issue:

To Josh Walmsley on being Bar Mitzvah. To Allan Schiller on being awarded the British Empire Medal for services to music and charity. To the Motz Family on the birth of their new baby. We'd love a photo!

Mazeltov also to Davide Irons-Scelsi, Rosie Brown and Nathan Gregory on their new jobs. You know what I'm going to ask, don't you? Anyone up for writing about their working life, even though it's a new one?

The gathering of news for this column has been a last minute business and it has been written post-proof read by David Jewell. I promised him there would be no spelling, grammatical or semantical errors and, certainly no extraneous hyphens.

We'd like to welcome Erica Canela as a new Friend. We're also delighted that Donovan Hawley and Sam Waite are now full members of BWPJC.



Erica Canela

Sadly we must offer condolences to several people in the community:

To Jane Hewison on the death of her mother, Hella Hewison. To Sheila Yeger on the death of her aunt, Yetta Pottok. To the Marks family on the death of Norman's son, Matthew. To Yvonne Crawford-Palmer on the death of her brother Ian Crawford.

We wish you all long life.

Soon our membership pack will be fully digital but I have to confess that I have made no more progress on the Welcome Pack. On reflection, I now realise I need someone to help me, so if you're up for a bit of collaboration on this, please get in touch.

Update from the Chair



Jane Clark

The amazing Bath phenomenon

Having heard that the first Friday night service in Bath attracted forty people despite the snow, I went along to the second. I counted 67 people there, but I have to admit that my counting would not have passed muster as careful. The point is that something wonderful happened, and it was popular. There were a few people like me, not from the Bath area, but we were very much in a minority. Obviously it is my intention as Chair to support this activity. It is also my intention to try to learn how they found so many people when we struggle to get ten on a Friday night at Bannerman Road. Can we repeat this success in Bristol, or even elsewhere, such as in Newport? All ideas welcome.

The next building project

This will not be quite so major as recent projects, but the classrooms upstairs need to be redecorated. Hati, our head of Cheder, this month obtained Council agreement to price up redecoration works and

put a proposal to the next Council meeting. I'm afraid it's a case of the more we upgrade parts of the building, the more the other parts start to look tired.

Deanfield

After a quiet weekend last year, the Deanfield weekend is now full with around ninety people going. There may be some cancellations. Please get in touch with Daren or Philippa Gordon by leaving a message for them on the synagogue voicemail if you'd like to go on to the waiting list.

The environment

Environmental pollution and global warming have pushed other, more divisive issues off the headlines recently. In general, people who chuck data around to push a point have a way of making me suspicious. There is no shortage of people willing to sow doubt to serve their own nefarious ends. In fairness, there are also issues with the global warming story. The path to knowledge usually resembles a maze with dead ends.

It was always clear to me that if industrial pollution was going to cause an environmental catastrophe, by the time we knew for sure it would be too late to undo the

alleged damage. Fortunately I was wrong. We do know for sure that increasing the amount of carbon dioxide in the air warms the planet, but it's not quite too late to do anything about it. The classic deniers' claim that carbon dioxide concentration follows global warming rather than causing it, has been thoroughly debunked. Global warming is real, and we humans are causing it, or at the very least, making it worse.

So much for the world. What about us? Is this an opportunity for *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, which is a core mitzvah of Liberal Judaism? Should we be looking at our own building? Clearly, we could put solar panels on the roof, but is there any point? What else could we do? This item was on the Council agenda in May. Council acknowledged that there might be opportunities, small and large, but the individual Council members are maxed out running the shul and contributing to such matters as religious education in the area. If you want to call a meeting and formulate a plan of action, which makes scientific, engineering, economic and ecological sense, why not volunteer?

Space counts

Rabbi Monique Mayer



Some of you have been somewhat bemused by what appears to be your rabbi's obsession with the arrangement of chairs in the synagogue. After all, doesn't the rabbi have better things to do than think about the furniture before a service?

Believe me when I say that I would rather not be focussing on the distribution of objects in our sacred space. But I would disagree with someone who says that my time could be "better" spent supporting people before the service or checking in with our lovely cheder teachers and children. Because I firmly believe that *everything* that happens in the Synagogue is a reflection of how we support each other.

Adjusting the focus

It may seem like a small thing, but by shifting the congregation toward the corner (instead of the front of the building), the Ark and the *sifrei Torah* (*Torah* scrolls) become the primary focus, a reflection of the fact that *Torah* and the teachings of

Judaism take centre stage and are at the heart of all we do. Putting the rows into semi-circles (roughly) has the benefit of making the space cosier and less formal, shifting it away from feeling like a performance or lecture hall (yes, in this rabbi's humble opinion). From a physical standpoint, everyone is able to see the scroll and the ark, without craning their neck. Most importantly, the worship space becomes more welcoming: when someone enters, they can slide into a chair easily instead of being greeted by stares from people facing them as they enter. This matters when someone has to nip out of the service temporarily for any number of personal reasons: their dignity and modesty is preserved. And, for purely practical reasons, when we turn the seats toward the ark, we are able to accommodate more people in worship.

An inclusive space

One of the bigger challenges we face in a small community is finding supportive and effective ways to enhance inclusion given limited facilities and finances. Inclusion refers to an individual's experience within an organisation/workplace and in wider society and reflects the extent to which they feel valued

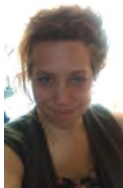
and included. Inclusion is connected with the Jewish value of *kavod* – honour – honouring each and every person in our community because all of us are made in the image of the Divine. Whereas adaptive thinking looks at a space and sets things up as they always have been – altering the arrangement only if the situation requires it, inclusive thinking takes as given that people with a range of needs may show up and plans accordingly. An adaptive mindset asks as an afterthought “what do we do now to accommodate?”; an inclusive mindset asks in advance, “how can we plan our space to maximise the experience for anyone who comes in?”. I am proud that thanks to the work of a number of people, we have unisex toilets, including a fully accessible toilet with a hoist. That's a good first step. The issue around access to the first floor has been explored in depth and has its own complicated set of issues that are difficult to resolve.

The challenges we continue to face are in worship services and event planning. For worship, one of the simplest ways to make the seating more inclusive is always to set up the chairs and aisles to enable access to the toilets and exits, including fire exits for both temporarily able bodied as well as

those using wheelchairs and walkers. And, of course, an inclusive mindset extends beyond how we arrange chairs; it takes into consideration the various needs of members whenever we look to plan a service or programme.

As we look forward to upcoming *bnai mitzvah*, High Holy Days, and plan various events in the community, let us start by asking the question, “how can we – on both a practical and a personal level – ensure that we honour and meet the diversity of needs in our community, and move toward a true ethos of inclusion?”

Reflections on the draft Siddur: Siddur Shirah Chadashah



Nicky Spencer-Hutchings

I was asked a while ago to write my thoughts on the new Siddur and I have put it off as I felt I hadn't used it enough to comment on the liturgy with any confidence. However, as I sat in synagogue yesterday as Rabbi Monique took her service from the new Siddur, I realised that I did want to reflect on the first draft after all. From my

first sightings of the Siddur I was really happy to see the feminised Hebrew and alternative blessings using language that is much closer to how I experience the divine. However as someone who has been a regular service attender at our Liberal synagogue for nearly 20 years, the lack of familiarity and flow caused a bit of discomobulation for me and I didn't feel I could experience the service quite so deeply as a result.

I realised yesterday that this was shifting. I was beginning to relax into this new way of engaging in adapted yet familiar prayers and as such was able to feel the spiritual energy and potential of this new language. My belief is that as a religion, our liturgy is our fuel to help us to engage healthily in the day to day challenges and as such it is so crucial that this liturgy is reflective of the world we are living in and the people whom it serves. In particular, the people whose voices haven't historically been heard or whose lives haven't been reflected. However familiar and comforting and still relevant our beloved Siddur Lev Chadash is, times are changing and Jews are changing and we need to have a prayer book that can talk to us all. If this causes me a bit of discomfort for a bit then it's a small price to pay, in my view.

The overwhelming feeling it gave me yesterday was absolute gratitude to the courageous and learned rabbis, Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah and Rabbi Leah Muhlstein, who have been the drivers of this project. It is such an admirable first huge step getting this beautiful first draft together and being used in synagogues. It takes a lot of courage, integrity and resilience to be those leaders in such a project. They stand with others both from the liberal and other progressive traditions in each generation who take this mantle and offer us access to Judaism in deeper, different and, in my view, more meaningful ways.

Similarly, I also feel gratitude to the elders in each generation within progressive communities that recognise the need for change and embrace it even when it is not familiar or comfortable. Our communities are full of these people. We Jews are creatures of habit, ritual and tradition, who hear the stories and voices of our ancestors so strongly it is as if they were still sitting alongside us in synagogue but as progressive Jews we understand the importance of creating a 'new song' that incorporates the old and the new whilst staying relevant and alive for future generations.

Cheder goes out and about

Daren Gordon

Zip-wiring through obstacle courses. Drinking hot chocolate from the bonfire. And making friends with two ducklings. Cheder went 'out and about' again on 30th March. Previously, we've been bouncing at a trampoline park, clip n' climbing up walls and exploring the local mosque. This time, we went to the Walsmleys (a cheder family), for some outdoor education in their wild garden. There were no screens (mobile, Ipad or otherwise), and for a sun-blessed morning, cheder went 'off grid'.

We were joined by three Jewish families who are not synagogue members, which is wonderful. Almost 50 people attended. It was a great opportunity to build a community spirit.

The activities were led by Tom Walmsey, who is a full time (brilliant!) outdoor educator. We learnt how we can look after nature and how nature can look after us. Just from those few hours outside, my mind, body and spirit felt at ease. When I asked the kids how they felt afterwards, they said: "relaxed", "chilled" and "happy".

I am so grateful to Lynn, Tom, Josh and Sol for welcoming cheder to their home. I'll let the pictures tell the rest of the story.



A Pesach visitor

Hilel Salomon



Who would have thought that one day, an Argentinian teenager could casually attend to a Passover seder in Bristol, UK? Quite a random idea, but one I have fulfilled all thanks to the lovely Bristol & West Progressive Jewish Congregation. Honestly, I had no idea about what to expect back then, but they have surprised me for good. Now I'm so grateful for having run into this opportunity, in which I've learnt a lot, spending a cheery evening and receiving that heart-warming feeling when I needed it the most. In return, I'm here writing down these words to describe and share how I experienced Passover with this open community.

To begin with, in order to sign up for the dinner, a couple of weeks before I had received in a link a Google form to fill it in, to confirm my attendance. I found this quite remarkable as it's a more efficient and complete system, in contrast to the one of my community. There was some other information that I was asked for in that form. For example, the people I was going to attend with (in my case, alone) and whether I wanted to volunteer with the staff. Also, the payment method offered was quite flexible, the

prices were reasonable and young children had free entrance. Another aspect to complete was the type of menu/diet specifying any allergies or diet preference such as vegetarian or vegan dishes. After finishing it, I sent the form and started looking forward to the seder.

And the holy night arrived I thought I was ready for anything. I arrived to the same synagogue I'd visited before, but the atmosphere was completely different. The place was crowded and embellished with some festive decorations. In the main hall, they arranged a large set of tables in a 'U' shape with people sitting around chatting about trivial stuff. In a corner, there was a craft activity for the little ones to be entertained making some thematic paper toys. Members going in and out of the kitchen, ensuring everything was on check. I was warmly received by the few folks I knew then, and I took a seat while being included in the conversation and introduced to some other people.

As Rabbi Monique started the seder, I couldn't help but compare the traditions there with the ones back in my city. Both are essentially similar to each other, but I really enjoy the differences. We were all singing and following Rabbi's instructions as we went through the

Haggadah. She also explained some customs that liberal and progressive communities follow and the reasons behind each one. I just relished the moment.

The moment of the meal arrived and with it a little of disorder. It was a delicious three course meal (entrée, main and dessert). At first, I thought that it was going to be a peaceful night, when suddenly, some mischievous people started to throw around some toy frogs. These projectiles were inspired by the second plague of Egypt. Despite some occasional impacts of a frog, the evening was completely enjoyable. A public announcement, some thanksgiving and the search for the Afikomen began, plus some bad jokes from people sitting around.

Reaching the last part of the Seder, a lot of stuff had happened. We even got a 'Bird Eliahou'! (a random wild bird appeared at the stage of the Eliahou's cup). And after the last song of Nirtzah, we had concluded the seder. Lots of people instead of leaving straight away, stayed a little bit longer, helping to clean and organize the place. Inspired by them, I tried to help too. Eventually, the hall was cleared and the people were leaving. I totally enjoyed my time there, so it was a pity when it ended. I was saying goodbyes to the people remaining as I was leaving with a kind couple who

had offered me a lift to the city centre. Chatting in the car about what had happened that evening was how I finished my Passover night in Bristol.

To conclude, I highly recommend to any Jew around the world, in case they are staying abroad, to pay a visit to the nearest local community. It would be so worth it, as many good things are likely to happen. Perhaps it won't be exactly the same everywhere, but at least you now know from me that the BWPJC is definitely a nice place to be.

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

There are individuals in the community suffering financial hardship. This fund makes it possible for the Rabbi to provide assistance to those in need.

Donations may be made directly to the Fund by cheque, payable to "Bristol & West Progressive Jewish Congregation", and marked "ATTENTION: Rabbi's Discretionary Fund". Monies may also be transferred directly by BACS.

BWPJC bank details:

Sort code 30 99 38

Account number 00683538

Please email Rabbi Monique on rabbi.mmayer@gmail.com if you would like to help or need help. All enquiries are kept confidential.

Israel: a country of contrasts

Sam Waite

I recently got back from my first trip to Israel in over 20 years. The last time I was a 10-year-old boy and although I remember it being a fantastic holiday, I was too young to appreciate the significance of where I was.

This time however I was well aware of what an important country historically, religiously and culturally I was visiting and was going to make the most of it.



Mum and I were based in an apartment on the 40th floor of a brand new, shiny, office building in Tel Aviv's Sarona

district.

Everywhere you look in Tel Aviv there are new developments popping up – mostly glass fronted skyscrapers. One of the taxi drivers we had said Tel Aviv was looking more and more like New York every day!

After spending the first day chilling and acquainting ourselves with some of the area's trendy bars and restaurants, we spent the second day driving through the desert to Masada and the Dead Sea. Masada seemed much smaller than it did as

a 10-year-old, but I was still bowled over by its majesty and can see why the IDF use it for their swearing in ceremonies. As someone who drives around Bristol mostly it was also quite amusing to see camels on the side of the road!

The next day we went north, up to the leafy green artistic city of Haifa. Unfortunately, the famous Bahá'í Gardens were closed for a Bahá'í holy day, but we still managed to have a look around and enjoy the gorgeous view from the top of the gardens down across the city to the sea. The gardens being closed meant we had more time for lunch though which meant we managed to find an amazing little Lebanese restaurant called Fatoush. I love Lebanese food so being only 25 miles from the Lebanon border was a cool experience for me.

On the drive back to Tel Aviv, we stopped off in Caesarea to look at the historical Roman remains. Seeing the viaduct on the beach was one of the highlights of my trip and I couldn't help but think how poignant it is that these Roman remains, built



by a long-gone civilisation that oppressed and subjugated the Jewish people, stand in the world's only Jewish state.

As we arrived back in Tel Aviv at sundown, Yom HaShoah began. Strolling around the city that evening you could feel the sense of mourning and loss. The digital billboards had replaced commercial advertisements with images of burning candles and the city hall was illuminated with the words six million.

The next morning at 10am, the air raid sirens sounded, and the city came to a stop. People stopped their cars, trains and buses ground to a halt and buzzing, cosmopolitan Tel Aviv went silent as a mark of respect. The experience of witnessing this was one that both mum and I found very special.

On Friday, we strolled down to Old Jaffa and explored the flea market and old streets. It's practically impossible to leave the markets empty handed and we soon found out! Antiques, Judaica, fabrics and jewellery are everywhere. I came away with a beautiful old kiddush cup as well as loads of gifts for family and friends. As we left the market, the city was settling down for shabbat, so we went back to our apartment to relax and see in the sabbath.

Our last day took us to somewhere

we had both wanted to go for a long time – Jerusalem and specifically, Yad Vashem. It took us at least three hours to go around the museum and take it all in. The highlight for me was visiting the synagogue and seeing the few saved arks, ornaments, menorahs and other remnants from synagogues destroyed by the Nazis.

Praying at the Western Wall was intensely special, a moment I will never forget.



I fell in love with Israel during my second time there, so much so that I have already booked a week there again in September by myself. Am Yisrael Chai!

Yom Ha'atzmaut Israeli dancing



Time Passing

Valerie Russell Emmott

How do you mark the passage of time?

Do you also note the changing flowers and fragrances on morning walks

To the bus stop or the corner shop?

Or note shifting places where the risen sun glows on your bedroom floor?

I sense the flavours by the new and full moons

Reliably marking their places in the seasons

Wonderment each month I turn the calendar's pages

As Nisan turns to Iyar to Sivan

Feeling the sands trickling through the vast cosmic hourglass

The cycling of festivals, bnei mitzvot, yahrzeits, weddings and births

All milestones for catching sight of Time's fleeting garment

While we toil and delight in the daily humdrum

A longer song plays continually, enduring as vast unclimbed mountains.

Being a Jew in a Christian school...

Shay Spencer-Hutchings



As some of you may know, I go to school at St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School near the town centre. As the name suggests, it is a Christian school. I know exactly one other Jew in the school and that can be a bit alienating. Not many people at school knew that I was a Jew until I told my classmates (who then told their friends) in an R.E lesson.

My teacher and friends were equally surprised when I told them I could read Hebrew, which I did in front of my entire class. I was quite shocked when I saw the level of interest in the room as none of the people inside had heard Hebrew before.

This really helped me come over a kind of hesitance to show my full self as a Jew as I have a tendency to get extremely self-conscious with myself. Being able to express myself is a really relieving feeling.

Obviously at a Christian school, there is quite a lot of Jesus-y related talk and church services. This can feel very separating as I understand next to nothing about

the layout of the services and the prayers. This led me to think about how it would feel for a Christian to come to a Shabbat service. It would be a very different way to celebrate. Not only do we read from our books the 'wrong' way round, but we also read a completely different language to them.

The fact that I am one of two (I think) Jews in the school is slightly upsetting as it makes it harder to relate to people but it also makes me feel special and different. In a world like ours, it is a wonderful feeling.

Whether it's a siddur or a story,
a candle or a kippah:
Ask at the shop!

BWPJC
•Shop•

Ramadan

Kaloom Bashir



We are approaching the last ten days of Ramadan– the Muslim month of fasting. its a time that many of you will know as a time that Muslims will refrain from eating from dawn until dusk (yes not even water!) but for many it's much, much more than just food. Ramadan is a time for reflection and and evaluating not just myself, but my connection with those around me.

The Quran says “we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another.”

I don't believe that I have a monopoly on God or religion but rather think that as a woman of faith it is up to me to find what is good and true and beautiful in each of our ways of viewing God and his role in our lives. Yom Kippur, Lent and the Muslim month of Ramadan are more than just giving up food, drink and vices. They are about atonement and forgiveness.

For me, it's about being grateful for the opportunity to re-evaluate my life and make a change for the better, making peace with those I have wronged or who have wronged

me and strengthening ties with family, friends and neighbours.

It is my reaction during this time of self denial that will shape my character in the remainder of the year. It will either reduce me or uplift me. I may not be able to change others but ultimately be able to benefit myself. The prophet of Islam said “if someone commits a bad deed against you, return it with a good one”

If someone makes me angry, I know that to become angry myself diminishes me. I may be the victim of prejudice or hate but becoming bitter will make the pain become worse. Essentially a month of fasting for me is an opportunity I use to clean up my life, thoughts and feelings. In doing so I can face the challenges that the future year will undoubtedly bring.

We will have an article about the Grand Iftar in the next issue.

Summer Solstice

Emily Short



June is the very heart of summer and brings with it the Summer Solstice or “Litha”. The longest day and shortest night of the year, a celebration of midsummer where the earth is awash with vibrancy, fertility and abundance. It is a time for joy, fulfilment and celebration of achievements. The sun is at its height of life-giving power and the solstice signifies a bittersweet climax before the sun’s power begins to wane, we start the slow descent into autumn and the dark half of the wheel of the year.

As the solstice is a time for celebration, there are many, many traditions that surround it. An old tradition that particularly interests me (as a baker by profession) is the making of fruit and honey cakes using the dried fruits of the season. These cakes were baked at sacred sites such as stone circles, wells and tops of hills on large bonfires that were burnt to honour the fullness of the sun. People would dance around the fire long into the night, burning herbs and oak on the flames. Ashes from the fire were then strewn through the fields to ensure a successful harvest. The drinking of mead is also traditional

for this sabbath as the Midsummer full moon is known as the “honey moon” and mead is regarded as the divine solar drink, with magical properties. Very appropriate for honouring the power of the sun!

For me the solstice brings with it an assault on the senses that evokes powerful nostalgic feelings from my childhood. Playing in the stream by our grandparents’ house, daisy crowns, fishing for trout, picnics on the Quantock hills and foraging the delights of the season: elderflower, berries and fresh herbs, which were abundant around our home. Watching my father performing alchemy with herbs from the garden and creating vibrant pastes to marinate our freshly caught trout to cook on the fire, which we would eat with big colourful bowls of salad, warm, home made herb bread, washed down with home-made sparkling wine (a tiny glass if we were very good) sat by the small bonfire crackling and lighting the faces of my loved ones with an amber glow, feeling full, warm and content. To me that is the epitome of the summer solstice.

Scriptural reasoning: an interfaith experiment

Anthony Acton

A retired Reader in the Anglican Diocese of Bath & Wells

I was recently invited to take part in an evening of “Scriptural Reasoning” held at the mosque in Bath. Scriptural Reasoning is the name given to a programme for improving understanding between religions which was developed at leading universities in the 1990s. It involves placing alongside each other two comparable passages from the holy books of two different religions. A small group of people drawn from both faiths then reflect together on these scriptures. What began as a purely academic exercise was soon found to be much more than that: participants who came to learn about someone else’s religion went away having discovered new riches in their own.

Our group consisted of five young Muslim men from Palestine, Lebanon and Syria, studying at university in Bath, a rabbi from Bristol and another Jewish woman, and three Christians: a priest from Bath Abbey, a retired Methodist minister, and me. The Imam of the Bath mosque (a young man with degrees from Cairo and Cambridge) acted as our facilitator. These are the passages we had before us:

Surah 2:30-33 (the Cow) <https://quran.com/2/30-33>

Genesis 2:16-25 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+2%3A16-25&version=NIV>

The Scriptures: metaphor or history?

The Genesis passage was read to us in Hebrew by Rabbi Monique and then in English, and the Qu’ran passage was intoned in Arabic by one of the students, entirely from memory, before it too was read in English. To hear these scriptures in their original tongues was deeply moving. The Imam then asked each of us whether these stories were, to us, literally true or metaphor. We polled as follows: metaphor 5 (three Christians, two Jews) history 5 (five Muslims). The Imam then explained that every Muslim believes that the Qu’ran contains the literal truth, and that for Muslims Qu’ran stories such as that set out above are real history. (Though this, he said, can be problematic for them.)

What are these Scriptures about?

The Genesis passage was seen by the Christians as being about God’s relationship to human beings, man’s relationship to woman, humanity’s relationship with the environment, and an explanation of our fallible nature (i.e. “the fall” in Christian theology). The Jews saw Genesis in much the same way except they see the knowledge of good and evil as being about humanity acquiring moral responsibility rather than inherent sinfulness. The Muslims were puzzled

how it could ever be wrong to know good from evil. They saw their passage as being about God's gift of intellectual ability to human beings. We were all agreed that both passages warn us against elevating human wisdom above God's wisdom.

Eve: Adam's sidekick or equal partner?

The rabbi explained that the word translated as "helper" in our Genesis passage is *eizer k'negdo* in the original Hebrew. "*Eizer*" indeed means helper. But the second part, "*k'negdo*" means "alongside or in sight of" i.e. Eve is not subordinate to Adam; her skills and abilities are complementary to his, and each plays to the other's strengths. The word also carries the sense of "as if opposite" ie each partner can bounce ideas off the other, and rethink or even oppose where necessary. The Imam then teased his students by asking them whether the Garden of Eden was on earth or in heaven (and then explained that this is a notoriously controversial issue in Islam.)

The human race and the environment

The Jewish view of Genesis 1.28 (humankind to subdue/ dominate the earth) is that although those English words do correctly translate the Hebrew word *k-v-sh*, that verse must not be read in isolation. In Genesis 2.15 Adam is put in the

Garden of Eden to till and tend it, and even when Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden, they (and, by extension, we) retain those responsibilities. The Muslims explained their Arabic word for "stewardship", which is their concept of our responsibilities towards the earth and all its creatures, based on our God-given ability to reason and to invent. The Christians emphasised the spiritual aspects of being human, and made the point that of all God's creatures Adam alone was the one into whom God himself breathed life. We all agreed that human beings are called to be God's stewards of his creation.

Conclusions

The Imam had spoken of wanting to offer us both intellectual and practical hospitality. He and his 5 devout but cheerful young Muslim students certainly did that in spades. The whole evening was conducted in an atmosphere of harmony and friendship. The contributions to our discussions made by very able clergy from all three religions enabled us to avoid woolly generalisations. As a Christian it felt strange to be doing a kind of "Bible study" with people who do not have the Gospel, but I also felt how vitally necessary it is that religions learn to talk to each other.

Being Barmitzvah

Josh Walmsley



On the 11th May, I was grateful to see the amount of support and practice all come together for my Barmitzvah service and celebration. Nine months of support from my mum and Bar Mitzvah tutor, Raphael, led to an enjoyable service and I was glad to see so many people there.

My portion was Leviticus 23:9-22 and the aspects I covered in my d'var torah were about Sacrifices, Counting of the Omer and gleanings. It's easy to think about sacrifices in terms of what we give up, but I enjoyed discovering the original meaning of *korbanot* as 'Something which draws close', and the concept of developing a closeness with God, other people, or good causes through our efforts; a more positive spin.

For my mitzvah project I collected socks for the homeless. I had discovered that cold, damp feet are

a major cause of foot disease amongst homeless people and that the shelters did not receive many sock donations. I used social media, did a radio interview with over 40,000 live listeners and had an article in the Bristol Post. In the end I collected 710 pairs which we delivered to the shelter in December. I went on to collect wrapped packets of biscuits, which is something else that the shelter needed. This part about gleanings made me look at tzedakah in a different way and made me think about ways to give, depending on how much time I have available.

In preparing for my Barmitzvah I've enjoyed seeing how the weekly portion applies to current issues and discovering this for myself with my own. I've learned a lot about different aspects of Judaism. And by coming to more services, and learning from more people, I've felt more connected to the community than I did before. I want to thank Raphael again, who was always enthusiastic even when I was the contrary, And David Jewell and Rabbi Monique for helping me with leyning. I'm especially grateful for this experience which has helped me to develop my Jewish identity.

Poway: showing solidarity

Sam Waite

What should have been a peaceful Shabbat service to celebrate the end of Passover turned into another episode in a spate of hateful attacks against faith communities around the world.

On April 27th – exactly six months after the antisemitic tragedy in Pittsburgh - John T. Earnest entered Chabad of Poway, California and fired indiscriminately at the 100-person congregation.

Luckily, Earnest's gun malfunctioned causing him to flee, but not before he'd murdered 60-year-old Lori Gilbert-Kaye and injured three others including the synagogue's Rabbi.

Lori died heroically whilst shielding her Rabbi, Yisroel Goldstein, who survived. Other members of the congregation also bravely charged at Earnest which led to him leaving the synagogue.

Earnest was arrested the same day and is facing one count of murder and three counts of attempted murder.

Following the incident in Poway, BWPJC's council received a message of solidarity for the Jewish community in Bristol from Zaheer Shabir sent on behalf of Bristol's Muslim community:

Dear friends,

Some very terrible news coming from Poway California.

Whether the attack in New Zealand, Sri Lanka or now in California, there are wicked and evil people who are bent on their hatred against people of faith, set to destroy lives and communities.

Our deepest sympathy for the Jewish brethren who have been killed in this tragic hateful terrorist attack to you and our Jewish brethren of Bristol throughout.

Please let the two Bristol rabbis know that we are praying for peace and love through this terrible tragedy.

Evil never prevails and to the contrary it brings many people together to overcome hatred and divisions, for we all stand together insha'allah.

Please let me know of there is anything I could do to assist.

Yours,

Friend,

Zaheer Shabir on behalf of Bristol Muslim community

The realities of social media

Peter Brill

This article was previously published in the Bristol Post.



Social media can be both a blessing and a scourge. It can be used to share joyous moments and breathtaking landscapes, or as a stick with which to beat others metaphorically with views or opinions.

Like all communities, Bristol's Jewish congregations comprise individuals of all ages, backgrounds, genders and cultures. As a result, there is a rich mix of opinions and views. In some, we largely agree – shock and sadness at the news of violent attacks against religious communities; a desire to reduce homelessness on our streets. Others are subject to greater debate and nuance – Brexit, anti-semitism, Israel and Palestine, climate change. The rights, wrongs and solutions to all of these issues are often subjective and based on the individual's own life experience and background.

In today's society, social media plays an increasingly important role in influencing our views and opinions. As I write this, an electricity smart

meter is being installed in our home. Having written professionally about these meters being technology for positive change, I chatted to the installation engineer about how well they were being received in Bristol. His immediate response was that, while some people welcomed the meters and understood their purpose, others were negative based on "what they'd read on social media, particularly Twitter."

He went on to say that much of this was based on "ignorance and a very few number of incidents blown up out of all proportion." But, he was quick to point out that he would often respond to negative Twitter posts in a personal capacity to try and set the record straight. Our conversation quickly expanded to the issues of measles vaccinations, the Arab Spring, Yellow Vests in France and mainstream media 'bias'.

As with almost every conversation on or about social media, the outcome was more or less the same: 'facts' increasingly depend on the source they are received from; one person's 'truth' can be another's 'lie'; and social media is a power for positive and negative change that can bring communities together happily or tear them apart with devastating effect.

I can only hope that those communities who come under social media's influence accept three

pieces of advice. The first is to be open to the view of others and, where they disagree, challenge them with respect and well considered alternative perspectives. Secondly, to consider the possible impact and implications of what you say - on others *and* yourself - BEFORE you hit the 'share' button. And finally, examine the sources of information you receive. Don't just blindly accept one person's opinion as 'fact', or one video as 'reality'. Look at the bigger picture and explore the context – things are not always as they seem.

Three steps to clear the clutter in your life

Lauren Chiren
Health Coach

Do you feel the need to make change in your life, to increase your energy, get back on track emotionally or simply, that it is time to take the next step forward in your life and career?

If so, then you need to clear the clutter!



The theory behind Clearing the Clutter is that you must make space for the new things you want, by removing the old 'stuff' first; a bit like removing the sofa before you bring a new one in. Studies show that excess physical 'stuff' clutters the mind. So, your external world reflects your internal world.

Here are three areas of your life that are simple to clear the clutter:

Your environment

There are five areas where you can clear clutter in your office or workspace:

Clear your desk of paper piles, receipts, bills; anything that needs to be filed

Remove piles of magazines, papers, or projects

Remove piles of 'stuff' from your bookshelves, arrange books, photos, ornaments neatly and attractively

Unsubscribe from at least five electronic newsletters that you never find the time to read

Clear out your inbox of any messages older than four weeks

Your schedule

Do you worry whether you have the time to do everything that you want to do?

In the next seven days, what's one activity you can say no to or cancel?

What is one activity that you can delegate? e.g. laundry, shopping, car sharing, cleaning.

Choose a recurring day of the week and time of the day that you can devote to that one thing you never find time for. Make it non-negotiable. Whatever it is for you, make it a recurring appointment in your calendar so it becomes a ritual; it becomes a habit

Think of someone who drives you crazy; who winds you up for no good reason. Someone you think: "If he/she would just xxx, then I would be happy." Reflect on how much energy you put into trying to control someone that you can't control or change. Next, centre yourself and ask: "What do I need right now that's going to help me feel happy or relaxed or fulfilled?" And do it.

Finances

How you manage money, signals to the universe how you value money and your time. Most people wait for other people to give them

permission to value their time and value money.

Bring all money owed to you up to date. Write down every company or person who owes you money and the amount they owe. Contact each of those companies or people and request they bring their debt up to date

Look out all your unused gift cards and certificates. Use them or spend them in the next seven days

Have a look around and collect up all the loose change you can find. Exchange it for bigger bills and spend it in the next seven days

Check your bank statements for recurring charges. Are you being charged on a monthly basis for items or services that you no longer use or need?

Think of your wallet as money's house and respect it. If your wallet is torn, worn, or packed with receipts, replace it with one that is new and that makes you happy. When you pull out your wallet, you should feel abundant. You should feel like, "Ah." Money loves to have a nice place to go. So, give it a beautiful house.

Adamah: I am of this earth. A Jewish woman potter's story



Jess Baum

*I have a little dreidel. I made it out of clay.
And when it's dry and ready, then dreidel I shall play.
Oh dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, I made it out of clay.
Oh dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, then dreidel I shall play.*

I had a ceramics teacher at school – a draconian, Scottish woman, who ran the pottery like she was overseeing the infantry – and when I was twelve years old, I came in to her classroom to find she had thrown away my work. Unsurprisingly, it took nearly twenty years for me to overcome the trauma of finding my mediocre renaissance replica staring up at me from the bottom of the rubbish bin. Which is quite something for a person who went on to train as an artist.

It was only when I was thirty years old, and pregnant with my first child, that I had the urge to get my hands dirty again. So I enrolled on an evening class at the City & Islington College in London, and to

where I waddled every Thursday night from the 106 bus that had wound its way through Stamford Hill to my new-found sanctuary.

It was here in the College pottery, where I first sat at a wheel. Week after week, I endlessly pushed and pulled at balls of clay, as my daughter grew inside me pushing me ever further away from my work. It was here that I learned about the qualities of porcelain, stoneware and earthenware, and about the true elemental nature of ceramics.

Some years later, upon reflection fed by my then recent work in a secure mental health facility and my new experience of motherhood (it must be said, both positions sharing striking similarities), I wondered what had brought me back to clay after all those years. Why did I have such a strong desire to play with a material that was, fundamentally, mud? And why did I find it so addictive, so pleasurable, and so therapeutic?

My first thought was of the corporeal: I understood that, physically, sitting at the wheel prepared me for childbirth. It was an opening up, a pulling up and outwards, a pushing and grounding, that ultimately came back to the breath. But upon further reflection, my connection with clay went deeper. It occurred to me that my

life was competitive, confusing, computed, and cerebral. I was driven by desire and ego (who am I kidding, I still am), and even motherhood was not immune. Lacking in skills to tap into ancient roots of intuition, I always fell back on the lofty tenets of academia and opinion. I read Winnicott and counted the hours that my baby slept, feeling inferior to my fellow parents whose children slept longer than mine. In contrast, the quiet act of making a bowl from the earth was an opposing force to this world I inhabited; a humbling act of resistance against the loud voice of the industrious and ambitious nature of modernity, and a therapeutic experience that continues to educate me in the fine art of 'letting go'.

I recall one evening in the studio when I dropped a whole shelf of my own freshly-thrown pots on the floor; what else could I do but breathe and carry on? Making stuff and using one's hands serves as a great metaphor for life. For example, I cannot control, fix, and direct my beloved, small children forever – they too are like balls of clay that I have modelled and, like the clay, they will go out into the elements (the fire, water, and air of life) and respond as their nature intended. Without me.

Of course, ceramics is also a highly

skilled craft and art form that has an incredibly rich history. It is a practice that is rooted in every culture and tradition across the world, each varying in amazing ways. From the diversity of clay that is dug up on mountain sides, in forests or by rivers; and the variety of shapes, sizes and forms that are made; to the functions for which it is used. Sun-baked, pit-fired, ash-glazed, this is a human expression that we can date back almost 30,000 years.



Ceramic cup by
jess

In the next issue, Jess will be writing about the Jewish connection to her work.

The House of David

Tamar Hodos Lucas



The discipline of Biblical Archaeology finds its origins in efforts to prove that the Biblical tales actually happened. This applies as much studies of Jewish history as the origins of Christianity. Our sources are mainly literary and archaeological. Literary sources are more often lists of conquests and achievements by foreign powers, such as the Assyrians, Babylonians and Egyptians. Narratives like the Bible itself, are rarer, but they provide a more rich portrayal of life in antiquity. These narratives were often written considerably after the period under discussion, and for audiences with different priorities and concerns than those under discussion. Therefore, the situations described may not necessarily be accurate reflections of the past circumstances. This is why archaeological evidence is important, because it can help shed light on aspects discussed, alluded to, or neglected in the written sources. More often than not, however, such evidence raises more questions than it helps to answer.

This is the case with our earliest

corroborating evidence for Biblical tales, which pertain to King David, who is believed to have ruled during the tenth century BCE. Two stone blocks dated to the ninth century BCE that make reference to a House of David, or a David, have been found at two different sites. One is from the site of Tel Dan, in northern Israel, and the other is from the ancient Moabite town of Dibon, 20km to the east of the Dead Sea in modern day Jordan.

The Tel Dan stele is an inscribed stone that commemorates the King of Damascus' victory over two enemy kingdoms. It was discovered in 1993 as part of the excavations of Tel Dan, an important settlement from the Neolithic period (c. 5000 BCE) through the early modern period, and with a series of substantial fortifications across the Bronze and Iron Ages (spanning the third to first millennia BCE). The stele itself is thought to have been commissioned by King Hazael of Aram (Damascus) to commemorate his defeat of Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah in the late ninth century BCE; written in Aramaic,



The Tel Dan Stele
(Israel Museum,
Jerusalem; photo via
CC BY-SA 4.0)

the names of the kings themselves have been reconstructed as they are only partially legible. The inscription nevertheless identifies the Judahite king as ב'תדוד which is usually translated as 'House of David'. If correct, this would be the first extra-Biblical reference to King David to be discovered. Some scholars argue that the term refers to a specific place, however, rather than David's ancestral dynasty, much like ב'ת לחם refers to Bethlehem. This is because the word lacks a word divider, which is used elsewhere on the inscription to divide some words. Other scholars argue that such word dividers are not always necessary for interpretation. Thus, there is no firm consensus. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the phrase as 'House of David' is widely accepted.

The Moabite stele was erected around 840 BCE by King Mesha of Moab to record his territorial expansion and substantial building projects. It is thus known as the Mesha Stele. Discovered in 1868, the slab was deliberately broken up by the Bedouin



The Mesha Stele (Louvre; photo via CC BY 3.0). The rough sections are original pieces, while the smoother, clearer sections are reconstructions from the 1870s.

tribe on whose land it was discovered to prevent the Ottomans from giving the object to European antiquarians. As a result, sections of the inscription have had to be reconstructed, even though prior to its destruction, a papier-mâché impression, known as a squeeze, was taken of the inscription (although one must 'read' a squeeze in reverse form, which can be a challenge in itself). In 1994, after seven intensive years of study of this inscription in West Semitic (it is unclear if this variant is Phoenician or Proto-Hebrew, both of which are very closely related), the French epigrapher André Lemaire identified a faint letter in line 31 on the slab as ט and suggested that this section of the text could be reconstructed to read 'House of David'. The stone and the squeeze were reunited in October 2018 in an exhibition in Paris, and high-resolution images were taken of the squeeze to better analyse text missing on the stele itself. As a result, just last month, scholars suggested that the letter in line 31 is, in fact, ,ב and thus the first letter of the name of a monarch, whom they suggest is Balak, another Moabite king, and who is mentioned

in the Book of Numbers (chapters 22-24). They argue that the missing syllables for this name better fits the space than ב'תדוד. One difficulty with this interpretation, however, is that King Balak lived two hundred years before the tablet was created, and it is unusual for such commemorations to be recorded two centuries later.

Once again, the more we study, the less we know. Or as Israel Finkelstein, one of the authors of the revised reading of the Mesha Stele, and a leading scholar of this period of archaeo-history, has put it, "It shows that the question of historicity in the Bible cannot be answered in a simplistic 'yes' or 'no' answer."

The editors apologise for the errors in the layout of the Hebrew script in this article, despite Tamar's and David Jewell's best efforts to assist. Alonim will be purchasing its own Hebrew software in an effort to ensure this problem doesn't recur.

My working life

Ruth Squire



My first job was working for Nat West at 18 years old and after five years I moved to what was then Sun Life (now Aviva). The attraction of Sun Life being the free lunches! Over the next 22 years I continued to work at Sun Life in the Compliance Department at all the various sites around Bristol until they moved to the purpose built office at Parkway.

In 2011 my husband was made redundant and this was a chance for me to re-evaluate my career. Until this point I'd made steady progress at work, balancing this with spending time with our sons (then aged 15 and 17 years old) by working three days a week. This was now an opportunity for me to start to put my career first. Without much thought I put my CV together and within a month I was offered a contract role working for RBS. I resigned and left three weeks later! I was told this was a brave move, however at the time I had little time to think about this. I had to find out about setting up my own limited company, how to arrange my tax affairs and ensure I had some money to pay myself at the end of the month.

Now eight years later I am still contracting in the financial services

sector. Work has taken me from Bristol to the City in London, Swindon and Reading. Most of my contracts remain in the City and this involves me staying away between two and four nights a week.

My role as a Financial Promotions Compliance Manager relies on me ensuring that the business follows the regulations set out by the Financial Conduct Authority. This isn't just following the letter of the rules but also the thinking behind it. As a compliance manager I act as a trusted friend to the company and I'm responsible for challenging the business, driving behaviours that mean we are 'doing the right thing', whilst being aware of commercial priorities.

I provide a final check of any marketing material which is distributed to clients, making sure the principle of 'treating customers fairly' is followed and that the content it is clear, fair and not misleading. This means taking an objective view from a customer's perspective (the intended audience) and highlighting anything that might be misinterpreted. For example, an advert appearing to promise guaranteed return of x% but not clearly balancing any risks involved with appropriate warnings. For example stating that the final investment value may be less. This is why so often you will see adverts

including the warning 'The value of an investment may fall as well as rise. Past performance is not a guide to future performance'.

A recent example is of London Capital and Finance which has been in the news. Unfortunately for investors, the investment was not regulated (although the firm was) so now that LCF have gone into liquidation investors look unlikely to be covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. So, making sure that the type of investment (as well as the investment firm) is covered by the FCA is extremely important for a customer. The saying "If something seems too good to be true, it probably is" rings true.

Shavuot

Gemma Thomas



Doctor's appointments and shopping lists and children's homework and coffees with friends and work deadlines and family birthday presents and boxsets and washing up and spin classes and visits to relatives and Facebook posts and the leaking tap that keeps you awake at 3am. Wake up, repeat.

Here is an invitation to slow down, to notice each day, to count each moment precious. Gather and harvest what is good and what is true and what will nourish you. Make bread from the riches of life. We can all make a choice.

Your people shall be my people.

Perhaps you are driving your car as dawn breaks. Perhaps you are dancing. Perhaps you are in your garden. Perhaps you are at prayer. Perhaps you are watching your sleeping child. Perhaps you are sitting in your kitchen, remembering your mother.

Into the stillness, the words will come. A promise. A covenant given, and required. Like honey and milk, it lies under your tongue.



JEWISH WEST

A united organisation for Jews in the West of England wanting to come together and socialise.

Our first event will be 14th August at 7pm, located at Falafel King, Cotham, downstairs in The Khan.

Join us for a get together - food, drink, fun and entertainment.

Tickets are free - you just buy your own food and drink.

Reserve your place (for free) here:
www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/jewish-west-3017100896



Deaths from strange fire

Jane Clark

Parliament passed the Occasional Conformity Act in 1711. Some wag commented that this law was the only one of its kind until the introduction of the speed limit, because you only had to conform occasionally. In our synagogue we treat fire regulations with even greater contempt than many people treat speed limits. I have a four-year-old photograph of a fire extinguisher being used to prop open a fire door in our building. There is nothing new about our behaviour. Relying on luck is fine, until it runs out. Then you have no fallback position.

Nadab and Abihu suffered the first recorded Jewish deaths from flouting fire regulations (Leviticus 10:1-11). A fire in our building would not be like the burning bush in Exodus 3:1-4:17, which did no damage to the burning object.

On the contrary, while building fires are mercifully rare, they are swift and deadly. In the event of a fire, we have about two minutes to get everyone out before people start to lose consciousness due to smoke inhalation.

Yes, two minutes. If you don't believe me, watch this three-minute

video on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piofZLySsNc>. Most of the ingredients in the fire shown are present in our sanctuary. If well organised, you can evacuate a large number of people in two minutes. In drills at my workplace, they regularly get 600 people outside in this time.

But we can't do that while we flout the rules. We have to change our behaviour.

Next time you arrange chairs without a clear one-metre (or one-yard) corridor to all our fire exits, or block a fire exit, think of our less mobile members, and think of two minutes.

Next time you wedge the fire door into the kitchen open, making the front doors – our only stair-free exit – unusable as an emergency exit in the event of a kitchen fire, think of that YouTube video. Think of two minutes. Think who can't manage stairs quickly.

Think that when Notre Dame Cathedral unexpectedly burned, they got every one of hundreds of people out safely – because they had a plan and kept to it.

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