

Jews on the Jouse

March 2026 Adar 5786 *Edition 29

ברוכים הבאים!

Welcome to the Purim edition of the YLJC newsletter. In this bumper issue, we welcome our new Chair, Lucy Skelton-Meech and new Vice-Chair, Sarah Hubbard.

There is a lot of information about the work of the wider Progressive movement in Britain and reports from the Board of Deputies and our representative, Owen Power.

There are many opportunities to get involved in community life so please do get in touch if there is something in particular that you would like to pursue.

Please keep an eye on the website for further details of our Pesach seder. Before then though, is Purim to celebrate.

Chag Purim
Sameach!

RUTH MORRIS



CONTRIBUTIONS WANTED!

Your community newsletter needs you! Please send your articles to info@jewsinyork.org.uk. The deadline for the next edition of the newsletter is 29th May 2026.



STEPPING INTO THE ROLE OF CHAIR OF YLJC

Becoming the new Chair of YLJC is both an honour and a deeply meaningful moment for me. YLJC has long been a community rooted in connection, purpose, and a shared commitment to strengthening Jewish life in York. As I step into this role, I feel inspired by the work that has come before me and energised by the possibilities that lie ahead. My hope is to build on our strong foundations while opening new pathways for growth, engagement, and collective impact.

One of my central aims is to grow our community — not just in numbers, but in spirit. I want YLJC to be a place where people feel welcomed, valued, and encouraged to bring their ideas forward. A vibrant community thrives on diversity of thought and experience, and I'm excited to create more opportunities for people to get involved, whether through events, learning, volunteering, or simply showing up and being part of our shared journey. The more voices we bring in, the stronger and more resilient we become.

I'm equally passionate about expanding participation in our social action projects. These initiatives are at the heart of who we are: a community that doesn't just gather, but gives back. There is enormous potential to broaden the reach of our work — supporting local causes, collaborating with partner organisations, and launching new projects that reflect our values. I want to make it easier for everyone to take part, whether they have an hour to spare or a long-term passion they want to pursue. Together, we can create meaningful change that extends far beyond our own walls.

At the same time, as we look to the future, we must remain deeply connected to our past. York's Jewish history is rich, complex, and at times profoundly painful. We should never forget the tragedy at Clifford's Tower, where so many Jews lost their lives over 700 years ago. That event is not just a historical footnote — it is a defining moment that shapes our identity and reminds us of the resilience of Jewish life. Part of my vision is to continue bringing this history to the forefront of people's minds, ensuring it is remembered, honoured, and used as a foundation for education, reflection, and unity. Our past gives depth to our present and purpose to our future.

Continued...

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Above all, my hope is for YLJC to continue growing as a welcoming, active, and inspiring community — one where everyone feels empowered to contribute, where our heritage is honoured, and where our collective efforts lead to meaningful, lasting change. I'm excited for what lies ahead, and I look forward to building that future together.

LUCY SKELTON-MEECH (CHAIR)

PESACH 2026

Friday April 3rd

Pesach Seder @ York St John's University

Save the date! Further info coming soon.



Other News

We now have a **calendar** on our website with all the services for the year, festivals and extra events. Please have a look, we will try to keep it up to date.

[Events for February 2026 York Liberal Jewish Community | Jews in York](#)

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ENGLAND (JHSE)

Florence Place Cemetery, Brighton - Its History and Importance

24 Mar 2026, 19:30 via Zoom

The Brighton & Hove Hebrew congregation was amongst the earliest congregations outside London to have a burial ground. Opened in 1826 and closed in the 1970s, the ground holds around 530 grave plots. The original ground was presented by Thomas Kemp (of Kemp Town fame), and in the 1890s it was extended northwards (gifted by Brighton Borough Council) and then southwards (through purchase). Through a detailed analysis of the minutes of the congregation from before 1826, together with records from funeral directors, and extracts from contemporary newspapers, this talk will outline the history of the burial ground, the acquisition of the land, and an analysis of the details of those buried there. This

talk is based on a forthcoming book marking the 200th anniversary of the cemetery.



VICE CHAIR: INTRODUCTION TO WHO I AM AND MY VISION

Hello to our wonderful community. I am delighted to have been voted in as Vice Chair. Many of you know me from my interfaith role but I want to introduce myself to those who do not know me.

I moved to York five years ago and chose York for a variety of reasons: its rich heritage, arts and culture, beautiful buildings and not least its liberal Jewish community and what an awesome community it is! My Jewish story will resonate with many in the community; my grandmother was born near Minsk in Russia and came over to the UK during the Pogroms between the wars, settling London in the East-End. The family moved to Leeds during World War II because of the blitz. My father's family were committed to education, and my father went to Leeds Grammar School and then studied Law at Leeds University, where he met my mother who converted to liberal Judaism, being taught and guided by Lady Montague herself. My parents supported and encouraged my sister and me in our education, imbuing us with the confidence to pursue our academic interests as well as teaching us the Jewish values of tolerance, integrity, resilience and optimism. My younger sister and I both went to Oxford. She followed my father and became a lawyer, and I followed my mother and went into education.

As many of you know, my sister died of ovarian cancer at the age of 52 in November 2025. I would like to thank the community for the support they gave me during her illness and after she died.

My vision for YLIC

As someone who cares deeply about young people and their education — including early years learning — I am keen to get to know more of our young families. I hope to develop what we offer to our younger members, particularly around Jewish learning. Jewish education can take many forms, and we need to be imaginative in how we engage our young people. We have supported many Bnei Mitzvot who, as young adults, are now making invaluable contributions to our community.

I am also committed to Interfaith work, as building relationships with other faith communities helps promote understanding, respect and tolerance. At the same time, strengthening our own community remains a top priority for me.

We have so much that unites us, and collectively we hold enormous potential. I am interested in exploring how we can share our intellectual passions — in Jewish Studies and in the amazing array of topics that you have expertise in. I know many of you have valued studying with our Rabbi and found that it has supported your own spiritual journeys. We look to develop learning which enables you to connect deeply and personally with our Jewish faith and experiences.

I am very grateful to Natasha for organising and collating your responses to the Engagement Survey and many thanks to all who completed it. We will be using the results from this to plan our work going forward.

SARAH HUBBARD



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY—WHAT YOU TOLD US

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete our Community Engagement Survey. We were delighted by both the number of responses and the thoughtfulness of the feedback.

What matters most to you

Across the responses, a few clear themes emerged:

Building local friendships and social connection is a top priority. Many people are looking for welcoming spaces to meet others and feel part of something meaningful.

Jewish learning – for adults and for children – remains central. There is strong interest in accessible, engaging learning opportunities across different life stages.

Inclusive and welcoming environments matter deeply. Respondents want spaces where everyone feels comfortable, regardless of background or level of religious observance.

Culture, music and creativity – from food and film nights to heritage walks and creative workshops – are important ways people want to connect.

Flexible and hybrid options are valued, helping people participate around work, family and other commitments.



Differences across life stages

The survey also shows that priorities vary by life stage:

Young adults are particularly interested in social events and informal gatherings.

Families with children prioritise Jewish education and family-friendly activities.

Older members place greater emphasis on spiritual nourishment, High Holy Day experiences and in-depth learning.

Interest in cultural events and social justice activities cuts across all age groups.

Religious and cultural connection

Respondents who describe themselves as more religiously connected tend to prioritise prayer, High Holy Day experiences and structured learning. Those who identify more culturally or as less religious place higher value on social events, music, food and heritage activities. Encouragingly, many priorities — especially inclusive spaces, learning and community action — are shared across the spectrum.



What happens next?

We are using this feedback to:

Strengthen social connection opportunities,

Expand accessible learning for different life stages,

Continue developing inclusive and hybrid programming,

Pilot a mix of spiritual, cultural and social justice activities.

This survey confirms that there is real appetite for connection, creativity and community. Thank you for helping shape what comes next — and watch this space for new opportunities to get involved.

NATASHA ALMOND



Pesach Sameach

from everyone at CST



Pesach is a profound annual reminder of family, of tradition and how every Jewish household connects with others, not just in Britain but all over the world. The Haggadah story we tell at our dinner tables is one of persecution and liberation, darkness and light. This year it all feels especially emotional, given what we and our fellow Jews have faced in Britain, Australia, Israel and many other places.

The troubles that we have faced since the mass murder attack in Israel on 7 October 2023 have caused deep fear and uncertainty. Here in Britain, terrorism struck a synagogue on Yom Kippur. In Australia, it was a beach at Chanukah. And now, at the next festival, at Pesach, we honour the memories of those who should have been enjoying another seder night with their families but whose absences will instead be felt in the deepest and most cruel way.

Despite all of the pain, Jewish life in Britain and many other countries, is not just continuing, but in many ways flourishing, with a determination to stand firm to our values and heritage. At CST, this

makes us even more proud of our work and our mission. We are stronger than ever before, with many hundreds of men and women having passed our rigorous training and joining CST. Our strength reflects the courage of our community, because that is where each and every member of CST comes from.

CST's drive is rooted in Community, in Security and in Trust, but it is only ever made possible by the support and participation of British Jews and our communities throughout the UK. We rely on you, your vigilance, reporting, volunteering and financial support. There are many ways you can support CST. You can contribute by becoming a volunteer, reporting antisemitism and suspicious behaviour or by donating to us.

From all of us at CST, we wish you and your families a **Chag Pesach Sameach**; and we hope that when we gather again next year, it is with a better outlook ahead.

MARK GARDNER MBE
CST CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Scan the QR code to report, donate or become a volunteer

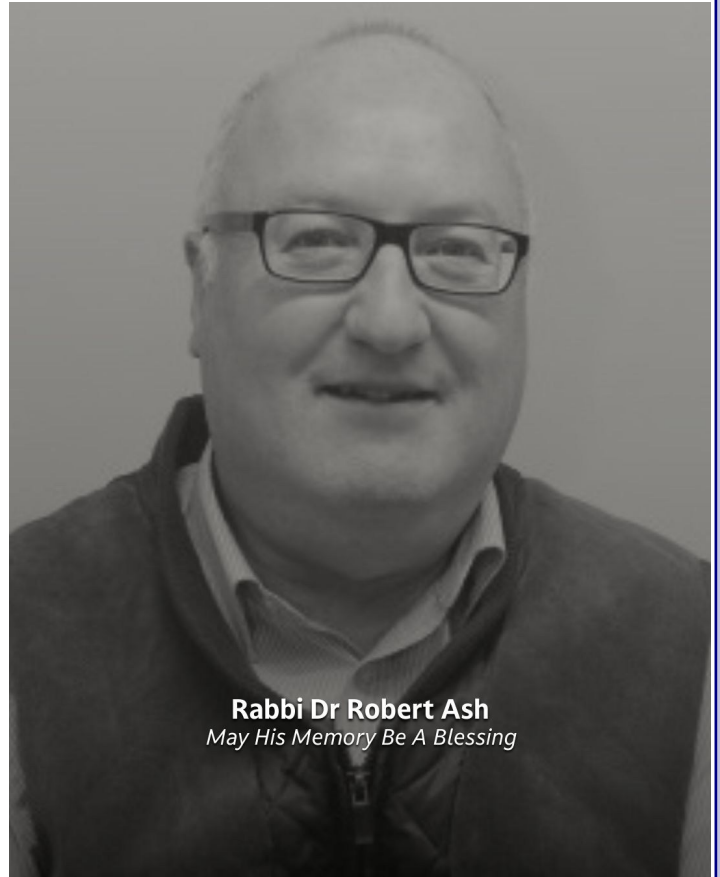
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RABBI DR ROBERT ASH z"l

Rabbi Robert Ash, a member and early supporter of York Liberal Jewish Community, has died at the age of 77. Robert was born and raised in Yorkshire before joining the civil service. In 2002, he became a rabbi, qualifying at the Leo Baeck College in North London, and served a number of communities across the north of England, before being appointed Rabbi of Beit Emanuel Progressive Synagogue in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2007.

He returned to the UK around 2015 and soon reached out to the then fledgling York community. He was extremely interested in our strategies to grow the community and, despite living on the other side of the Pennines in Preston, was for a regular in those early days. He made himself available to lead services when the student Rabbis who then served YLJC were unavailable, often tying his visits in with trips to Bridlington to catch up with family.



Rabbi Dr Robert Ash
May His Memory Be A Blessing

He led the first ever Progressive Jewish service in Scarborough in 2017 and joined us on the beach for a picnic afterwards. He also led some of our early life-cycle events when an ordained Rabbi was required. In addition, he adopted many of our strategies to grow his own community in Lancaster and the Lakes, even adapting the YLJC logo and organising many similar events.

His sermons were never short but were always challenging and his enthusiasm for study shone through. He is very much part of the York's founding story and he will be much missed but long remembered.

BEN RICH, Co-founder, YLJC

Image: <https://progressivejudaism.org.uk/remembering-rabbi-dr-robert-ash/>





SCHOOL VISITS

Could you spare a few hours to do a school visit to introduce young people across North Yorkshire to Jewish culture? They are incredibly important and we get more requests that the current school visitors can handle. Talks are during school hours but can normally be arranged to the convenience of the speaker. Full training and speaker notes will be provided. If you are interested, please email

chair@jewsinyork.org.uk

Here are some photos from Ben Rich's recent visit to Leavening School near Malton.



600 CANDLES

The York Minster's 600 Candles Event was held in the Chapter House on 22 January 2026. Congratulations to Finlay and Iris who read beautifully. The Jewish community of York values its relationship with the Minster, as the oldest faith community established in the City of York, and with a relationship to the Jewish community going back to the 12th Century; it is beautiful to see that this relationship is renewed in the present day.

SAM BORIN



Photo:
<https://cdn.images.express.co.uk/img/dynamic/1/590x/secondary/holocaust-memorial-day-3884804.jpg?r=1643356096295>

CLIFFORD'S TOWER COMMEMORATION

The York City Council Clifford's Tower Commemoration will take place at 6:30pm on 16 March (doors open at 6pm) at the Castle Museum. The speaker will be Dr Louise Hampson, Deputy Director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture at York University and an eminent expert on the mediaeval history of York, including its Jewish community.

Tickets are limited and can be booked at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cliffords-tower-commemoration-tickets-1983599303915>

SAM BORIN



Photo: <https://dynamic-media-cdn.tripadvisor.com/media/photo-o/0f/36/c8/e0/screenshot-20170508-141018.jpg?w=1200&h=1200&s=1>

THE MOVEMENT FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM: MAKING THE DREAM A LIVING REALITY

On 1 January 2026 something extraordinary happened. A dream that had been spoken about, argued over, refined, resisted, re-imagined, prayed for and worked towards for decades finally became real. The Movement for Progressive Judaism came into being, and you, our communities, came with us. Across cities, towns and regions, from large, long-established synagogues to small congregations holding Jewish life with creativity and care, communities chose to step into the future together. They chose partnership over fragmentation, shared purpose over separate histories, and hope over fear. That choice is no small thing in Jewish life. It is, in fact, profoundly Jewish.

Today, we are the largest Jewish movement in the UK by number of communities. More importantly, we are a movement that reflects the full breadth of Progressive Jewish life. Students and elders, families and single people, lifelong Jews and those who have joined our people by choice, LGBTQI+ Jews, mixed heritage families, regional communities, urban centres, and everything in between. This is what a living movement looks like.

Now the real work begins.

In the months ahead, change will be felt in visible and practical ways. New programmes will be developed. New leadership pathways will open. Young adults and students will sit at the heart of our vision. Communities will be supported in deeper and more connected ways. Progressive Judaism will show up in British society with confidence, clarity and moral seriousness.

We are proud of the foundations already laid. Thanks to the extraordinary generosity and belief of donors and partners, we have secured record levels of fundraising. That support gives us the confidence to build something that is sustainable, ambitious and worthy of the trust placed in us. It allows us to plan for growth, creativity and impact.

Our public presence will continue to grow. We will be heard more often and more clearly in national conversations. We will bring a Progressive Jewish voice to civic spaces, to interfaith work, to education, to the media, and to moments when Jewish values need to be articulated with courage and care. We will from our tradition and for the future we want to help shape.

It is important to be honest about what this moment requires.



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On 1 January 2026, The Movement for Progressive Judaism did not simply launch; it came into existence. That means that behind the scenes there is significant work underway. We are recruiting staff, aligning systems, creating new processes, developing governance structures, and learning how to work together in ways that have never existed before in quite this form. There are databases to integrate, policies to write, teams to grow and ways of communicating to refine.

If, at times, things feel slower than expected, or more complicated than you would like, we ask for your patience. This is the steady work of creation. Jewish tradition teaches that the world is not completed in a single moment but shaped over time through human responsibility and care. That is where we are now, building something real and lasting, piece by piece.

What gives us the greatest sense of confidence is that we are doing this together. Clergy, chairs, educators, youth leaders, trustees, volunteers, donors, staff and congregants are all shaping what this movement will become. This is not a project owned by a central office. It is a shared endeavour and a collective responsibility.

There is still much to do and there is much to celebrate. What we have begun together is already shaping Jewish life in this country in ways that will endure.

The Movement for Progressive Judaism is not simply a new structure but a renewed commitment to Jewish life that is serious, joyful, ethical and alive. We are proud of what has been built, grateful for the trust that has been placed in us, and excited by the responsibility that now rests in our hands.

The work ahead will take patience and care, but it will also bring new energy, new leadership and new possibility. We look forward to building it together, step by step, community by community, with confidence in the road we are on and in the future we are shaping.



By Josh Levy and Charley Baginsky, Co-Leads of The Movement for Progressive Judaism

We are delighted to announce a very special week, in June 2026, celebrating Progressive Judaism in the UK and around the world!

We start with two parallel events in the same gorgeous Northamptonshire hotel, which you can switch between as you choose:

Thursday 18 – Sunday 21 June: Shirei Chagigah, our musical experience.

Shirei Chagigah is a conference that focuses on Jewish music, prayer, and spirituality. It is for leaders of music and prayer, and those of us who just love to sing and learn!

Led by dynamic and inspiring teachers from the UK and abroad, it's about singing, composing, prayer-leading, learning new melodies and, above all, creating community.

It is an opportunity to relax, be spiritually uplifted, reflect on the role of music in our services, and – if you choose to do so – further develop as a service leader or music leader that you've always wanted to be. Shirei Chagigah blends the traditional and the new. Whether you want to incorporate choral or folk music, new melodies or old standards, start a choir or simply sing for your own pleasure, this is where you will find like-minded individuals and teachers to join, learn alongside, and celebrate with you! This then is joined by the new flagship national conference for our new Movement for Progressive Judaism.

Friday 19 – Sunday 21 June:

Hineinu, our brand-new flagship conference

Hineinu: Here We Are, is more than just a name. It's a statement of presence and responsibility – a chance to come together across backgrounds, geography and generations.

It will combine the best of our previous Reform and Liberal conferences, but with more participants, more wonderful speakers and session leaders, and more opportunities to explore your Progressive Judaism.

Most importantly of all, it will be a key milestone as, together, we begin to shape the future of our new unified Movement.

Both Shirei Chagigah and Hineinu will take place at a gorgeous hotel in Northamptonshire. Your ticket includes a hotel room, all meals, the full programme, and the option to switch between Hineinu and Shirei Chagigah, including all tracks within both, as you wish

Book your place today, so that you don't miss out!

See: <https://www.reformjudaism.org.uk/celebrate-progressive-judaism/>



PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM EDUCATION HUB PODCAST LAUNCHES

The second season of the Progressive Judaism Education Hub – titled Principles of Progressive Judaism – is now a full Spotify Podcast and YouTube Series, thanks to funding from the NLPS Trust.

Over 11 episodes, leading Progressive rabbis and educators deliver fascinating sessions on topics including God and belief, liturgy, Jewish law, egalitarianism, marrying in, Jewish status, Zionism and, most recently, disability.

Whether you're new to Jewish studies, seeking to deepen your understanding or just interested in finding out more about the 200+ year history of Progressive Judaism, this series illuminate the shared ideals and transformative journeys that have shaped the Judaism we know and love today.

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/show/04EKD00yiGNT3VlcXwqk3f>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@progressivejudaismuk>

Further information on future seasons of the Education Hub will follow soon.



HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

The York City Council's Holocaust Memorial Day Civic Event was on 27 January 2026. There were remarks from the Lord Mayor of York and the Pro Vice Chancellor of York St John University, who generously hosted the event in their Creative Centre again this year. Lord Dubs sent his speech as a recorded video as he was unable to come in person; we wish him and his wife all the best of health. Susie Kaufman from the Holocaust Educational Trust spoke movingly about the history of her family and the escape of some of them from the Holocaust. Finally, the Seven Commitments of Holocaust Memorial Day were reaffirmed by representatives from various institutions of the City. *SAM BORIN*



OWEN POWER'S REFLECTIONS ON INTERFAITH, SOCIAL ACTION, AND THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES

It was great to be re-elected at the community's recent AGM to serve on the steering committee for another year. It looks as if we have a formidable team with energy and determination to ensure the community grows in the years to come. I particularly love the commitment Rabbi, Sarah, Pete, Natasha, Hilary, Enfy, and Wren the social action team have for interfaith, always looking at imaginative ways to



promote interfaith through some of our services and other events. For those of us who do not live in York, there are usually opportunities wherever we live to attend interfaith events, at the end of Ramadan I attended a lovely Iftar meal at Salford Civic Centre as we know there is no better way to break down barriers than conversations over a meal! My personal Judaism is based on “light” – doing something to help make the world a better place; for me one way of doing this is through social action and interfaith. I never tire of pointing out the Board of Deputies mobile Jewish Living Experience

Exhibition is a brilliant resource to promote interfaith and community cohesion, I was delighted it was back in Salford at Eccles Gateway for two weeks last December after its successful week at Pendleton Gateway in August 2025. Board staff Sara Radivan and Anna Silver organised and hosted daytime sessions for local school children while I once again organised and hosted discussion groups for adults in the early evenings. My sessions included members of Salford Disability Forum, the Focus Foundation for people with learning disabilities, LGBTQ+ faith community, members of the Salford interfaith community and finally an “Open-House” event with Pete, our “drop-ins” included the local Catholic Parish Priest and some of his parishioners and the local police! It was all very productive and informal (see photos)! Jessica Pathak Salford’s Diversity and Inclusion lead attended three of them and later asked Sara Radivan and myself (we both serve on the Salford HMD steering committee) to set up the exhibition as part of the HMD event in January which turned out to make the service even more special than it usually is.

The Board of Deputies recently launched Jewish Culture Month, this is another great interfaith and community cohesion opportunity. It will take place from 16 May to 14 June, which corresponds to the Hebrew month of Sivan. Jewish Culture Month will provide a focus on all that’s best in our country’s Jewish culture. The month will feature a range of aspects including comedy, food, music and literature. Its components will include: Giving a platform to key Jewish cultural institutions. Encouraging wider British cultural institutions, public bodies and schools to celebrate British Jews. Supporting local Jewish centres, including synagogues, schools, and charities, to open their doors to visits from local schools and other groups. I am leading an event in Salford which will be a joint celebration of Jewish culture and the City’s centenary entitled: “Salford is not Manchester! Owen Power in conversation with Andrew Walters discussing diversity, the range of Haredi and independent Jewish communities in Salford and much more!” Rabbi, Pete and the social action team will be hosting a special PRIDE Shabbat Dinner at Saviourgate on Friday evening 5th June to celebrate both Jewish Culture and LGBTQ+ PRIDE!

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On the social action front, I have just completed training to be a Hate Crime Reporting Ambassador in Salford, a team of people with protected characteristics to support victims of hate crime who may not feel comfortable talking to the police or other officials. I am D/deaf, gay and Jewish and feel my lived experiences will enable me to have empathy with victims to put them at their ease and provide support that works for them. Looking ahead, their might be ways a similar project might be created to operate in York to support our members and the wider community who experience Hate Crime? Purim Sameach!

OWEN POWER

Deputy York Liberal Jewish Community

Preferred Pronoun: He/Him

<https://twitter.com/OwenOwenpowerAS>

<https://twitter.com/OwenOwenpower/status/1272894270236692485?s=20>

<https://www.facebook.com/owen.power.794>

Photos: previous page— LGBTQ+ (Jewish Living Exhibition Experience)

Right: Interfaith (Jewish Living Exhibition Experience)

Below: Hate Crime Reporting Ambassador



**I'm a Hate Crime
Reporting Ambassador.**

Find out more at www.salford.gov.uk/hcra

BOARD OF DEPUTIES REPORT

The Board of Deputies of British Jews is the democratically elected representative national organisation of the UK Jewish community engaging with the Government, media, different faith communities and the diplomatic corps. Founded in 1760, the Board is made up of 200 member synagogues and communal organisations, who have elected more than 300 Deputies, who meet approximately every 6-8 weeks as a 'British Jewish Parliament'.

The Board continues to advocate for its five key priorities of fighting antisemitism; standing up for peace and security in Israel and the Middle East; defending our religious freedoms; making our community more united and more inclusive; and celebrating our faith, heritage and culture.

Representing the Board of Deputies of British Jews, I was proud to lay a wreath at the Prestwich Remembrance Sunday ceremony. The crowds grow bigger each year. We remembered the fallen and we honoured the courage and sacrifice of our veterans. I joined the Board of Deputies delegation the following Sunday at the AJEX Remembrance Sunday parade and proudly marched down Whitehall in memory of my dear late parents.

I was thrilled to attend the induction of Rabbi Kath Vardi at Menorah Cheshire Reform Synagogue. Deputy for York Liberal Jewish Community Owen Power also attended.

I received training and am now a Salford Hate Crime Reporting Ambassador and attended the recent launch event during Greater Manchester's Hate Crime Awareness Week and I spoke about why I wanted to become an Ambassador. Deputy Owen Power is also a Hate Crime Reporting Ambassador.

The Jewish Living Experience (JLE) Exhibition continues to "travel the country" and was recently housed at Eccles Library, Salford. An excellent civic and interfaith launch event was held and many school pupils visited the Exhibition and learned about Jewish belief, culture and religion. The success of the Exhibition at Eccles Library would not have been as good as it was without the support and encouragement of York Liberal Jewish Community's Deputy Owen Power who helped a lot as a guide to the Exhibition.

Chanukah is always a busy week and representing the Board of Deputies, I attended civic Chanukah lightings at Bury Town Hall, Greater Manchester Police Headquarters and at Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service. I was also thrilled to host the GM Fire and Rescue Service at an online safety awareness event the week prior to Chanukah. Chanukah was even more poignant this year following the terror attack at Bondi Beach resulting in many Jewish fatalities.



**BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF
BRITISH JEWS**

ADVOCACY | DEMOCRACY | COMMUNITY

Continued...

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To the outside world, the Jewish community is primarily identified through the Holocaust. Holocaust Memorial Day is often seen as the only national event marking Jewish life, and Holocaust education remains the only compulsory teaching about Jews in UK schools. Whilst Holocaust remembrance is hugely important, the Board of Deputies is also determined to show that there are living Jews in the UK today who contribute to society, the economy and our shared culture which is why the Board has launched British Jewish Culture Month, due to take place in the Hebrew month of Sivan (May/June) 2026. More information about British Jewish Culture Month can be seen at www.jewishculturemonth.org.uk Thanks to Pete Simms and York's Deputy Owen Power for hosting events during Jewish Culture Month. Let us have #lessoymorejoy

After repeated urging from the Board of Deputies and others, the Board welcomed the statement from the Met and Greater Manchester Police when they announced a tougher, clearer approach to chants and placards such as "Globalise the Intifada". It is hoped that other police forces will take the same action.

The Board of Deputies produced their Impact Report 2025 which can be viewed at [www.bod.org.uk/our-impact-2025 /](http://www.bod.org.uk/our-impact-2025/)

The Board of Deputies ensures that the UK's Jewish community can live freely and happily and continue to practise their traditions. The Board of Deputies has an enhanced knowledge and understanding of Jewish life across British society, including the regional Jewish communities. There is no facet of Jewish life, region or denomination where the Board of Deputies does not advocate on behalf of the community. With growing challenges, we need a strong voice. It is only with the support and payment of the Communal Contribution that the Board of Deputies can continue to work to secure the future of the Jewish community. The Board of Deputies encourages and thanks all those who pay the Communal Contribution of £35 per year with their synagogue membership. This communal contribution greatly assists the Board of Deputies to protect and advocate for the whole UK Jewish community. If you would like to give an additional donation, payments of any size can be made at <https://bit.ly/Donate-BoD>

I look forward to continuing to work with the Deputy for York Liberal Jewish Community Owen Power.

Sara Radivan

Board of Deputies Deputy & Community Engagement Manager

sara.radivan@bod.org.uk / +44 (0)7957 962 055



ATTENTION ALL JEWISH
ARTS & CULTURE EVENT
ORGANISERS!

**REGISTER
AN EVENT
FOR JEWISH
CULTURE MONTH**

[BOD.ORG.UK/JCM-REGISTER](https://bod.org.uk/jcm-register)

JEWISH CULTURE MONTH

MAY 16 - JUN 14, 2026 | סיון 5786

BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF
BRITISH JEWS
ADVOCACY | DEMOCRACY | COMMUNITY



Jewish Culture Month will provide a focus on all that's best in our country's Jewish culture. The month will feature a range of aspects including comedy, food, music and literature.

Its components will include:

Giving a platform to key Jewish cultural institutions

Encouraging wider British cultural institutions, public bodies and schools to celebrate British Jews

Supporting local Jewish centres, including synagogues, schools, and charities, to open their doors to visits from local schools and other groups.

At a time when the Jewish community has been suffering from record levels of antisemitism, Jewish Culture Month will accentuate the positive experiences of Jews in this country and the positive contribution British Jews have made to our nation's society, economy and culture.

Highlighting the contribution of high-profile Jewish people to British public life.

Jewish Culture Month will supplement crucial initiatives like Holocaust Memorial Day and Holocaust education with a wider, more upbeat lens on Jewish life in this country.

We want Jews and our friends and neighbours of different faiths and beliefs to experience all the light, creativity and laughter of Jewish life in the UK.

See: <https://bod.org.uk/jewish-culture-month/>



16 MAY-14 JUN 2026 | סיון 5786

YORK INTERFAITH GROUP (YIG) PROGRAMME

YIG hugely appreciates the support of our members and friends and especially your attendance at our monthly meetings. Please see the table below which shows the programme for 2026.

Interfaith Programme 2026	
	Meeting topic
Jan	Transitions and liminality: traditions associated with January
Feb	Indigenous religions of Africa, including exploration of religions in different regions of Africa (late celebration of world religion day)
March	Touch: fabric and touch in faiths (part1)
April	Dimensions of World Peace through the lens of faiths and religions: challenges and contributions
May	Physical movement and gesture in faiths
June	Planning meeting
July	Sikh Temple visit
August	Picnic: venue TBC
Sept	Religious faiths in Japan (part 1) Chris Collingwood
October	Languages in faiths
November	Talk from Local Chaplain from the Fire service
December	AGM and bring and share of food from different faiths and cultures(social event)

If anyone wishes to attend the meetings they are on the first Tuesday of the month at The Council Offices West, Station Rise at 7pm. Please send Sarah Hubbard a brief message to say they are coming at S.hubbard25@hotmail.co.uk

Please read on for the February meeting information.

YORK INTERFAITH GROUP FEBRUARY MEETING—EXPLORING INDIGENOUS AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

At our recent York Interfaith Group meeting on 3 February 2026, Bethel Omeife delivered a fascinating and thought-provoking presentation on Indigenous African Traditional Religions — a subject rich in history, meaning, and contemporary relevance.

Guided by the African proverb, “The wisdom of the ancestors lights the path of the living,” the session invited participants to look beyond familiar religious frameworks and engage with one of the world’s most ancient and deeply rooted spiritual traditions.

Part 1: Why African Traditional Religion?

In the first part of the presentation, Bethel explored why African Traditional Religions remain profoundly important:

- They shaped African history and civilisations
- They explain cultural resistance and resilience
- They challenge long-standing stereotypes
- They highlight shared human values
- They promote deeper interfaith understanding



She suggested that rather than viewing these traditions as relics of the past, we should seek to understand their continuing influence on identity, community, and spirituality.

A Rich Diversity of Belief

Bethel introduced participants to the remarkable diversity across the African continent. From the Dogon religion of Mali to Akan beliefs in Ghana, Serer spirituality in Senegal, Zulu traditions in Southern Africa, and Yoruba-influenced practices in Nigeria, the session illustrated that African spirituality is not a single system but a tapestry of interconnected traditions.

Despite regional differences, several shared core beliefs emerged:

- Belief in a supreme being
- Recognition of deities and spirits
- Ancestral veneration
- Deep ties between morality, culture, and community life



As highlighted in the presentation, African Traditional Religions are holistic systems — interweaving faith, identity, ethics, and social cohesion.

Sacred Symbols and Objects of Worship

The presentation also explored the symbolic world of African spirituality. Sacred objects such as masks, drums, beads, cowries, libation vessels, amulets, and shrines were discussed not merely as artefacts, but as meaningful conduits of spiritual connection.

These elements communicate with the divine, honour ancestors, and embody cultural memory.

Survival Through Adversity

One of the most compelling themes was the impact of colonisation. Colonial and missionary narratives frequently labelled African religions as “primitive,” resulting in the destruction of sacred sites and suppression of traditional practices.

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Yet, as the presentation powerfully conveyed, these traditions did not disappear.

They survived through:

- Adaptation
- Secrecy
- Cultural resilience
- Collective memory



Many practices — including chanting, music, rhythm, and dance — continue to influence contemporary worship across multiple faith traditions.

Culture, Faith, and Identity

A central message resonated strongly with attendees:

A people without culture are like a tree without roots.

The presentation underscored how culture and faith function as pillars of identity, dignity, and continuity — particularly during historical periods of slavery, displacement, and cultural erasure.

Promoting Interfaith Understanding

By examining African Traditional Religions alongside Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and newer religious movements, the session fostered meaningful reflection on shared values, spiritual expression, and mutual respect.

The discussion reinforced a vital principle at the heart of interfaith dialogue:

Understanding begins with listening.

Final Reflection

The session concluded with a powerful reminder:

Culture and faith are two great concepts of humanity. They are the roots that keep a people alive in the past and grounded in the future.



YELLOW CANDLE AND YOM HASHOAH



The Yellow Candle Project, managed by Maccabi GB, is a practical and informal educational tool to remember Jewish Holocaust victims on Yom HaShoah, and broaden participants' understanding of the Holocaust, in the safe space of their homes.

The project aims to distribute yellow remembrance candles to as many individuals in the community as possible; alongside each Yellow Candle, a card with the name, age, date, and place of death of someone who perished in the Holocaust is enclosed. Participants are invited to share images of their lit candles on social media on the eve of Yom HaShoah, thereby creating a modern-day collective communal memorial. See <https://www.yellowcandleuk.org/about>



THE ULTIMATE MITZVAH

It is a good thing to give time and expertise to a faith community. It is a mitzvah. It is only through this that most communities survive, especially when the community is relatively new. For example some people must take responsibility for being committee members and these people are generally visible to the congregation. Others have the knowledge and expertise to lead the services, and be involved with the education of the young people and those requiring assistance. There are lots of people preparing food, setting out chairs and generally helping to enable a service to run smoothly; these are indeed fulfilling mitzvot. Most people, especially new members, would love to do something for the community but are unsure what to do.

Let me offer the ultimate Mitzvah: The Chevra Kaddish which is often referred to as "The Sacred Sisterhood/ Brotherhood who perform tahara for those who have passed away. This is the greatest mitzvah of all. As we all know the only certainty in life is that one day we will die, and when that happens we will need to be prepared for burial. It is a very meaningful experience to wash and prepare someone's physical remains. It is performed with care and dignity, working as a team of four people. Some are very experienced whilst others are relatively new to this. But full training will be given, before, during and after the procedure, and no one will be asked to do this without experienced support.

It is important that a Jewish woman/ man is prepared for burial by other Jewish women/men, washing and preparing according to tradition and the faith, reciting prayers. The reason that I think that it is such a huge mitzvah is that you are the last person on earth to be able to help that person, and because of this they cannot say thank you. Also the general congregation don't know who you are so it is like 'Good work by stealth.'

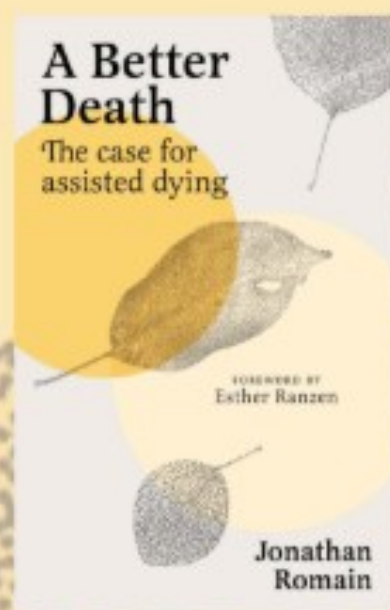
THE TAHARA TEAM



A Better Death

The Case for Assisted Dying

Jonathan Romain



‘Thank you so much, Rabbi Romain, for entering this debate. I know it has not been easy, but your intervention has been crucial in setting the balance straight.’ — Esther Rantzen

Assisted dying is one of Britain's most pressing and divisive social issues. Should terminally ill people in pain be allowed to choose death on their own terms? This timely and accessible book lays out the moral, legal and practical dimensions of the debate. It draws on real-life experiences, explores opposing viewpoints with sensitivity and examines the wider social and ethical implications. Designed for readers of all beliefs and backgrounds, it presents the facts with clarity and compassion. A pioneering section also offers the first guide to meaningful ceremonies at the time of an assisted death, helping families honour life and ease grief. Whether you support, oppose or are unsure about assisted dying, this essential book provides insight and guidance on a deeply personal issue.

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