



Dear Congregant,

I am writing to inform you of a significant development in relation to our rabbinic leadership and the future of West London Synagogue.

Earlier this year, the Board instigated an independent review into complaints relating to the announcement of Rabbi David Mitchell as Co-Senior Rabbi and joint successor to Rabbi Julia Neuberger. These complaints were taken seriously and, as was right and proper, a formal and impartial process was put in place that would enable the Board to decide what action needed to be taken. Notice was given to the community in January and reported in the press.

The Board appointed Sir Michael Burton GBE, a former High Court Judge and President of the Employment Appeal Tribunal, to conduct a fact-finding investigation as part of the review. Sir Michael conducted interviews with all relevant parties, including the complainants and some others who were not complainants but who wished to have their views heard as part of the review.

All those who had initially raised the concerns which were being investigated were interviewed by Sir Michael. Additionally, Sir Michael reviewed the content of every email and read a note of every phone call from people who had come forward since January 2020. All relevant matters that were drawn to his attention were taken into account by him, going back as far as 2012. We are satisfied that everyone who wished to be heard, including current and former staff, has had sufficient time since January to contact the Synagogue and statements in the press to the contrary are incorrect.

In his conclusions, Sir Michael found that there is no reason why Rabbi David should not resume his rabbinic duties nor take up his contractual duties as Co-Senior Rabbi, tomorrow, 1st April. The Board has agreed to publish Sir Michael's executive summary of his report on our website. Here is a link: http://www.wls.org.uk/wp-content/files_mf/1585641744SirMichaelBurtonGBEsReportSummary.pdf

Having considered the conclusions and reviewed the report by Sir Michael and taken those conclusions into consideration, the Board has unanimously agreed that there is therefore no impediment to Rabbi David assuming his position as the Synagogue's Co-Senior Rabbi. The Board looks forward to Rabbi David commencing his duties as Co-Senior Rabbi alongside Rabbi Helen Freeman as scheduled on 1st April.

The Board is extremely grateful to Sir Michael and all those who assisted the Board in conducting this review. From the very beginning, we have sought to handle this matter in a sensitive and responsible way, fair to all parties and in line with our governance code and our community's values. We could not have achieved that without the support of a loyal and dedicated team.

As a result of the Board's response and the processes we have put in place, the Charity Commission has informed us that they are satisfied that we have cooperated responsibly with their enquiries.

I am sure you will join us in welcoming Rabbi David back to the Synagogue and you will of course be hearing from him very soon. Having drawn a line under this episode, we must now focus on the future – and on how we support each other through the challenging weeks and months ahead.

In these unprecedented times your Board would like to thank the WLS staff for the extraordinary efforts made to reach into congregants' homes. On the first weekend when services were virtual there were over 150 households that joined the service remotely. In the first week of lock down Social Care has organized that 800 vulnerable, elderly and isolated congregants received a telephone call, so that the Synagogue understands what form of support each of these people need. On that same first weekend Religion School connected with 60 students. It is at times of adversity like these that the West London Synagogue community have always done much selfless and generous work both in our own and in the wider community. Thank you again to the Rabbis, staff and volunteers for preparing WLS so quickly to face the challenges of COVID 19 and to allow WLS to provide real and virtual support to the Community.

SENIOR RABBI Julia Neuberger
PRINCIPAL RABBI Helen Freeman
RABBI David Mitchell
RABBI Neil Janes
RABBI Sybil Sheridan

PRESIDENT Mark Fox
CHAIRMAN Patrick Mocatta
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Stewart Sether

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INCORPORATION NUMBER: 08578248 REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1155821

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The Board would also like to thank the Congregation for their support, patience and forbearance in allowing the Board properly and carefully to carry out its duties and responsibilities to this wonderful and unique institution during this most sensitive and difficult of times. With our dedicated and enthusiastic team of staff and volunteers, we expect and hope that we will all move forward together to support our Co-Senior Rabbis, Helen and David as they help steer our community, going forward.

Yours truly,

Patrick Mocatta (Chairman) and the Board of Trustees
Mark Fox (President)
31 March, 2020