

Chairman's Report October 14th 2015

I would like to welcome Barbara Maddison , Vice President of National Council of Women, from Nottingham, and also to welcome representatives of our many new affiliates:

- Angella Carne – League of Jewish Women, from Manchester
- Eve Swabe – chairman of Bnai Brith
- Raya Evan David and Ruth Nyman – Masorti Judaism
- Sherri – Chana
- Fiona Arghebant – Reform Jewish Women
- Sam Clifford – Women in Jewish Leadership
- Bayla Perrin – Paperweight Trust

This last year has been a very exciting one, culminating in our 50th Anniversary dinner. We have made several innovations in the way the organisation is presented to the public and we hope you like them.

But firstly I would like to begin with thanks. Firstly to Valerie Bello and Rabbi Julia Neuberger for welcoming us again to the West London Synagogue. We are always given such friendly help in arranging our events here.

Secondly thanks to Helen and the staff at WIZOuk for their support in acting as our postbox address and letting us hold our meetings at Charles House. Their hospitality is greatly appreciated.

Thirdly I would like to thank Sarah Manning who, over the last year, has set up our new website and manages it on an ongoing basis. She also designed our banner, which we are delighted to have here today, and the publicity and invitations for our Anniversary Dinner. I think our new image should be fine for the next 50 years!.

I must thank the Vice Chairman Vivien Freeman, and the Honorary Treasurer Helen Reisman for being towers of strength during the last year. I am still a new girl in the organization and without a secretary it has fallen to the three of us to work as a team and arrange a great deal. They have been wonderful. Louise Freedman has done huge amount of work, quietly and efficiently. She is responsible for the new publicity leaflet which is

available here today. It was amended a great deal, and in the end went through 21 versions before it was finally printed.

Louise also prepared the beautiful booklets which were on the tables at the Dinner. These included a history of AJWO, which was compiled by Valerie Bello and Louise. It was a most attractive memento of the occasion and some copies are still available on request from Louise. We must also take this opportunity to thank her for providing the beautiful flower arrangements on the tables at the Dinner. Whenever I ask Louise for help it is always given so graciously. It is actually 16 months since I became chairman in June, but our decision to hold the dinner in the summer, has resulted in us postponing the AGM till after the High Holydays.

Last summer we decided to have a new website and this is now up and running successfully. It has photos and details of past events and information about our future programme. We realized we needed to update our publicity leaflet too, as our affiliates have changed over the years. We bade farewell to the 35s Campaign which has changed its objectives and moved to Israel, and welcomed Chana, a group which supports couples with fertility problems. We do hope you will take some of the leaflets with you for distribution to your members.

In November we held our annual seminar at St Johns Wood Synagogue. The subject was gender stereotyping of children and we called it “Why not Pink for a Boy?” We had three excellent speakers. Angela Ferreira of the Children’s Media Forum, a producer of children’s television, spoke about programming and the growth of merchandising associated with the different series. Pat Spungin, a child psychologist, and Becky Francis, a Professor of Education and Social Justice, dealt with the problems faced today by schools and parents in combatting gender stereotyping. A group of Sixth Formers from JFS attended, thanks to the suggestion of Barbara Maddison, and provided searching questions for the panel. A delicious buffet lunch was served.

Our next big project was the Anniversary Dinner. A small committee, including Vivien, Helen and Louise, together with Linda Carr and Yvonne Brent and Judith Ussiskin, met regularly from January to June to arrange it. The administrator of the Central Synagogue where it was held was most helpful and we would probably use that venue again. Thanks to Linda for arranging this.

At the Dinner we decided to highlight the diverse nature of our affiliate bodies, and asked each representative to bring an object that exemplified their work in some way and speak about it for one minute. This imaginative idea worked wonderfully and 9 representatives stood up and spoke, showing us everything from a brown manila envelope and a headscarf, to a historic prayer book and a padlock and chain. Who would have imagined that Jewish women would stick to a one minute talk!

Our guest speaker Zehava Taub , wife of the Israeli Ambassador, was a delightful guest and entered into the spirit of the event by producing a dinner plate from the Embassy, a pomegranate, an Israeli flag and a packet of Bamba , which she used to explain her work as Ambassador. The reception and dinner were well catered by Daniels and the event went smoothly, enjoyed by 115 guests.

I would make a plea for someone to join us as our Secretary. It is not an onerous task- we have 4 executive meetings a year of our affiliate members and usually one annual seminar. We managed to arrange the large dinner without secretarial help, but we would love someone to give us a hand, particularly someone with IT skills.

It now gives me great pleasure to introduce our guest speakers today. Nisa- Nashim, the Jewish Moslem Women's Network, is a new and innovative venture and we were privileged to hear about it from Laura Marks and Julie Siddiqi on the day of its official launch. Its aim is to foster relations across the religious divide and we wish it every success.