



# Rabbi Application Pack

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## Job Specification

### **The Shul on the Common**

We think The Wimbledon Synagogue is a special place. As our mission statement says: “The Wimbledon Synagogue is an active member of the Reform Judaism movement and always aims to be a vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive community offering something for everyone looking to connect with being Jewish in whatever way they want.” [www.reformjudaism.org.uk](http://www.reformjudaism.org.uk)

We are the largest community south of the River Thames. We’re based just across the road from Wimbledon Common in a building we moved into in 1997. It’s large enough for all our needs – Shabbat services, High Holy Days, Cheder and an independent nursery. We recently renovated the building, including the prayer sanctuary. We are currently being well supported by Rabbi Tony Hammond, who is our part-time, interim Rabbi, and two wonderful student Rabbis who are an absolute credit to the Leo Baeck College and who never fail to bring energy and new perspectives in their sermons.

Diversity runs through the core of the synagogue from the ages and interest of our membership to the range of activities we run.

We currently have 855 members: 633 adults and 222 children. There is literally an activity every day of the week (and sometimes three at the same time): from nursery school to winter night shelter, Yiddish classes to a film club, bridge club to amateur dramatics. We have over 100 children in the Cheder.

We’re also very aware that at the heart of a Jewish community is religion and we’ve tried to keep our membership spiritually engaged with a variety of different Shabbat service styles through the month.

We are financially secure. The vast bulk our income comes from membership subscriptions, though we also raise some money by donations and fundraising. We own our building, so that our major expense is the staffing.

Wimbledon is a great community and we think the Rabbi with the right attitude will find it fun, challenging and rewarding in equal measure and enjoy the opportunity of working with us to take it to another level.



## What we are looking for in our new Rabbi

- We're looking for a full time Rabbi, who will be a spiritual leader of the community and who will inspire us from the bimah by the way they lead their services and the content of their sermons.
- We are a community with education at its heart, and we'd love our new Rabbi to be a passionate and inspirational educator.
- Our members will also need rabbinic pastoral support.

We know that an incoming Rabbi will want to bring their own thoughts and innovations to the partnership, so we don't want to be too prescriptive. Ultimately, we're looking for a Rabbi who wants to be engaged in the life of the community and is going to take us on a spiritual journey.

### A bit more detail

The detail of the job won't surprise you and, as we get further into the process, we'll discuss a detailed job spec, but for now the key headlines of what the job involves are:

- **Spiritual leader:** Of course, there's leading the main synagogue services but there's more to it than that. Let's get creative and find out how we can innovate services both in liturgy and music while keeping the traditions which our members like best. We've got a good track record at that, but we'd love the professional in you to take us forward. You won't be alone in this: you'll be working with our team of wardens and our lay readers as well as our spirited choir and director of music. The ability to deliver a satisfying sermon will take you a long way to our hearts too.
- **Community partner:** We want to ensure we keep growing; work with us both to keep the existing members happy and be attractive to new ones. Our religious community is a proud part of the wider local community and Reform Judaism. As Rabbi you'll have a key role in the activities which make that possible.
- **Lifecycle commemorator:** Baby blessings, b'nei mitzvah, weddings, funerals .... the whole megillah. You'll be the community's key officiate through its collective life cycle rituals.
- **Counsellor:** You need to be a compassionate pastoral carer dealing with the whole range of issues you'd expect, from being a friendly confidant to bereavement care.
- **Educator:** Working with our community educators, we want you to help transmit a love of Judaism to our members. We want them all to feel as comfortable in the beit ha'tefillah as they do at home and to be secure in their Reform Judaism. You will need to be at Cheder most Sunday mornings in term time, as this is your opportunity to engage with the families who will be the future leaders of our community, and to inspire our children. We also have the most vibrant adult education programme in the Reform Judaism movement, with something on every single day of the week, and rabbinic input is a key component.
- **Proselyte partner:** Supporting the conversion class and partnering its members as they go on this exciting (and sometimes daunting) journey.

### The mishpochah

If you have one, we'd love your family to feel very welcome in the synagogue but we know they've got their own lives as well, so there's absolutely no obligation; we're hiring you not them.



We hope you'll want to be involved in the social life of the community and its members, but we recognise that your free time is your own, and we want you to enjoy it!

## The challenges

As ever, no job is entirely straightforward.

Like all Jewish communities we have our challenges:

- How does Judaism stay relevant to a younger generation? And what does the synagogue – an institution – need to look like to appeal to an age group which doesn't value institutions?
- How do we engage across the wide variety of ages – and interests – of the community?
- How do we modernise but stay faithful to a Reform tradition?
- How do we brighten the beacon of Jewish life in South London?

Our incoming Rabbi is going to be absolutely at the heart of these discussions. We want you to help us develop and share a vision for the future.

## The support you should expect

We have an active team of volunteers and administrative support in the synagogue office to keep you company.

The synagogue is a team and you should expect support in a number of different forms:

- The synagogue **Council** and other committees are hands on and look after all the different aspects of synagogue life. We will want to work with you to support your work across your brief, e.g. the Care Group and our part time Care Worker will help you provide pastoral care.
- The synagogue's **Office Manager** has her finger on the pulse of the community. This will be a vital relationship for you to build and she will be a great partner as you go about your work.
- **Services:** we have some very competent lay leaders who can take services, read Torah and even make the occasional sermon. Don't feel that you have to take every service. In fact, we're very happy to arrange one weekend away from services each month if that suits you.

## Feedback loop

We know the Rabbi's job can be a slightly peculiar one, with a lot of autonomy on a day to day basis, but a lot of people who will tell you what they think needs to be done!

We think the best way to work through this is for you to have regular support meetings with a designated member of council (normally the Chair). They will work with you in balancing the many demands on your time, and agreeing reasonable objectives. They will be there to help you, when, as inevitably will happen, things don't go well and, inadvertently, people are upset. This will also be your opportunity to tell us what is working well and not so well for you.

## Financials

The Rabbi's salary will be in line with the pay scales of Reform Judaism.



## Person specification

We've spent quite a long time thinking about what sort of Rabbi we want and have consulted widely in the community. Set out below are the attributes we think will make for a happy Rabbi–community relationship. We do know that no one is going to tick *all* our boxes but during the interview stage we'll want to test you on some of this.

### **The basics**

You need to have semicha acceptable to the Assembly of Rabbis of Reform Judaism and to have spent time in one or more communities.

### **A spiritual leader**

We are looking for a spiritual leader who will impart a love of Judaism to our members. We are passionately Reform Jews; you should be too and be able to help us interpret Judaism – and synagogue life – for the twenty-first century.

### **Warmth and love of community**

We are a warm and supportive community looking for someone to whom such things really matter. Excellent communication skills and a sense of humour will also be greatly appreciated.

### **Your part in taking services**

Since we are looking to be inspired and educated, we want a Rabbi who can demonstrate their depth of Jewish knowledge and is a fluent leader of services and Torah reader. We have a tradition of lay readers and we'd like you to encourage more people to take part.

### **Team player**

The synagogue is made up of lots of different teams: from Wardens to Cheder teachers to the Care Group and so on. We really need you to be a team player, working as appropriate with the various different groups.

### **A diplomatic approach**

We're quite a diverse community – some of us are observant, others are members for more social and community reasons; some are quiet and others are very confident when it comes to expressing their views. That probably means we're just like every other Jewish community. So, we are looking for someone who is approachable, diplomatic and has the skills to help ensure everyone's desired outcomes are met while not losing sight of your own ground.

### **Managing your time**

There's a lot going on and a lot of calls on a Rabbi's time. You'll need to be able to manage your time effectively and prioritise the tasks. Although the chair and executive will work with you on priorities, on a day-to-day basis you'll have the freedom to decide how to put it into action.

This is going to be a partnership between synagogue and Rabbi. We do need you to be flexible – and you should expect the same from us.



## Some nice-to-haves

We have a lot of children in the community and are keen to encourage more young families to see Wimbledon as their home, so if you're good with the young then so much the better.

Likewise, a lot of our members (and their children) are in mixed-faith relationships. We don't see that trend diminishing so we (led by you) need to keep working on how they continue to feel part of the Wimbledon community.

We have a lot of educators in the community but rabbinic support, guidance and teaching is always very welcome.

Thank you for indulging us thus far. We look forward to meeting you.

## The Application Process

- We guarantee not only to respect the confidentiality of every applicant, but also to conduct the recruitment process in a very secure manner. Confidentiality will be maintained until a contract has been signed. (This includes not disclosing any names to Council or at the EGM).
- A Rabbinical Recruitment Committee (RRC) has been set up to conduct the recruitment process. It is made up of a very small number of members of the synagogue who represent all aspects of the community and its breadth demographically. It is chaired by Irving Childs who is also the Chairman of the synagogue.
- Please email your cv with a covering letter to [irving.childs@sky.com](mailto:irving.childs@sky.com) by **30<sup>th</sup> April 2020**. All applications will be acknowledged on receipt.
- The RRC will consider all applications and those moving forward to interview will be informed accordingly and an initial call or meeting arranged with the Chairman.
- All interviews will be held off site to guarantee candidates' confidentiality.
- At the initial interview with 2 members of the RRC, candidates will be asked to give a short D'var Torah on the week's portion to get us all into the right frame of mind. Thereafter, our questions will largely be based on the Job Description and Person Specification.
- The successful candidate will then be invited back for a second interview with other members of the RRC.
- Once contract terms and a start date have been agreed, Council will be asked to ratify the RRC's recommendation, and an offer of employment will be made.
- Membership will be informed of the appointment at an Extraordinary General Meeting.
- We do, of course, encourage interested applicants to visit the synagogue or Cheder to get a sense of our community, but understand this will not be possible for many due to the need to maintain confidentiality.
- If you have any questions about the role before submitting an application, we will be only too happy to answer them. Please direct them to [irving.childs@sky.com](mailto:irving.childs@sky.com).

We look forward to receiving your application.