

December 2017

# UNITY News



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Since taking over from Hilary at the beginning of October as Quartet President the Lodge has had a busy and eventful period. The highlight without doubt was the Tea Party held on 15 October to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the founding of First Unity as an Adult Lodge.

There were close to 50 attending an afternoon full of reminiscences. A number of representatives from other Lodges joined our celebration and we were also pleased to welcome back a number of past members. We are all very grateful to Jo, Hilary, Sylvia and Adele for organising such an important and enjoyable event. A well-deserved and special presentation of a Certificate of Appreciation was made to Alf Allenstein in gratitude for his efforts over the years on our behalf.

A message was received from Alan Miller, President of BB UK from which I quote: *"The success, the achievements and the contribution that First Unity Lodge has made to B'nai B'rith, along with your contribution to the larger community, is something in which each and every one of you can take immense pride"*

Our varied programme under the guidance of Henny has continued. Myra Sampson spoke to us on the *Art and Social History of the 1950s*. Two weeks later we had a good attendance at our Annual Unity Lecture and were privileged to welcome Rabbi Rodney Mariner. He spoke on *'Unity through Diversity: A millennial Perspective'*, a subject which gave us all much to think about and discuss. The use of a new venue at Fellowship House was appreciated by us all.

What we call "home grown" events are always popular and as I type this bulletin we look forward to hearing David Lewin talk about his fascinating hobby *'Search and Unite'*. Next, we will welcome Pam Fox who will provide us with a social history of the Jewish Community in Golders Green. Plans are now well under way for our New Year's Eve Party at the home of Hilary and Tony.

Monthly Bridge continues under the guidance of Michael and, since his unfortunate illness, now organised for the time being by Hilary. The Area and Craft Groups are continuing but looking for more members.



Our contribution towards the charities we support continues. This year we have sent £2000 to Qiryat Gat and £2000 to the Ukraine as well as £500 to BBYO and £500 to BB Young Professional. This year your Board and Council agreed to make a special extra contribution to the development town of Qiryat Gat. I was in Israel on the BBUK Tour together with Marion and Margaret Arenias when we handed over a cheque from our Lodge for £3500. This was to pay for replacing outdated and much needed air conditioning units in the warehouse used by the volunteers on the feeding programme for families in need. (See picture above).

We keep in contact with BBUK and I recommend especially that you regularly look at the BBUK information on the Web. Robert is representing us on BB Southern Council. The problems with BB Europe are not yet resolved but there are signs of an improvement.

Our welfare work has adapted itself to emphasize our own needs rather than to provide help outside. Unfortunately, a growing number of our own members are not so well or are in need of assistance so that the support we give each other has become increasingly important.

Our membership numbers are still close to one hundred and within BBUK we are considered as one of the largest and most vibrant Lodges. We can, therefore, look forward to the next year with continued confidence.

**George Summerfield**

News and Programme from First Unity Lodge

## **FAMILY NEWS.....**

Mazeltov to **Doreen Natoff** on the birth of a grandson Lenny Ray Natoff born 14th Nov to Daniel and Jo.

Mazeltov to **Adele Gibson** on the Barmitzvah of her grandson Jacob Gibson.

**Pam Friend** has a new email address

**Doris Lewis** has moved

**Michael Levin** thanks the Lodge for their support during his recent illness.

## **BBUK CHANUKAH GELT APPEAL**

You will be pleased to learn that this year First Unity Lodge has collected a total of £210 to send to Qiryat Gat.

The money will be used to buy Chanukah presents for the selected pupils attending the After-School Programme. Marion, Margaret Arenias and I saw these pupils during our recent BBUK visit.

They were nearly all of either Russian or Ethiopian origin and were given extra tuition and guidance to help them integrate into life in Israel.

**George Summerfield**



**News From BBUK  
November 2017**

### **Qiryat Gat Project**

During October, twenty six members of BBUK visited Israel to see behind the scenes. The group visited Qiryat Gat to meet the organisers of the Foundation and to see their work in action.

BBUK Israel Portfolio lead, Walter Breindel, presented a cheque for £10,000.00 to the Foundation and George Summerfield of First Unity Lodge presented a further cheque for £3,500.00 to provide air conditioning at the warehouse and also to mark the Golden Anniversary of First Unity Lodge. Maureen Daniels of Yad B'Yad, presented £1,200.00 to provide essential equipment at the centre and First Lodge also made a generous donation.

### **See the Real Israel**

Greg Wand led a group of twenty six members to Israel during October where we spent a fantastic four days in Jerusalem and an even more incredible four days on the Golan Heights. All those on the trip felt the experience deepened their understanding of the situation, both social and political and certainly hearing the rumble of shellfire coming from Syria made a deep impression on everyone involved.



### **Ukraine Project**

Malcolm Factor has now taken over the responsibility of overseeing the work and acting as our link to the project, which has now been redesigned and relaunched. BBUK will be concentrating on the task of funding the provision of drugs and medicines to the elderly survivors of the Holocaust and Righteous Gentiles in Kiev. The scheme is administered by the B'nai B'rith Kiev Lodge, with whom we have a great relationship. Our target is to raise £8000.00 p.a. The provision of food parcels has been taken over by World Jewish Relief. Please try your best to support this scheme, which is essential for the end users, who live in increasingly difficult circumstances.



## FIRST UNITY CELEBRATES!

After numerous meetings, exploratory visits to Costco and OneStonegrove, our motley band of myself, Sylvia, Hilary and Adele were ready!

The Great First Unity 50th Anniversary Party was ready to be launched – and you came!

We decided to make it as relaxed as possible using our home-grown talent to produce exhibitions, a film show and entertainment. A potted history of the Lodge from Young Adult Lodge days to the present, with contributions from the South African contingent, song and dance from our famous twins, as well as instructions on how to play the Great Folding Chair Game were all part of the programme.

The birthday cake was cut by Mavis, a specially produced musical interpretation of the BB Preamble and Closing Statement was provided by Henny and Suzanne as well as a raucous rendition of an adaptation of the Lincolnshire Poacher composed by Hilary. Food – lots of it – was consumed, champagne drunk and a special presentation made to our sound and vision expert, Alf. In all a fun-packed afternoon.

We hope you enjoyed it. We did! Lots of photos of the event are to be found on Page 4 in this Newsletter.

### Jo Bieber

PS. We have prepared a booklet of members' reminiscences from the earliest days of the Lodge to the present time. I have some copies still available, so if you would like one, please get in touch. An on-line version is also available and can be sent to you by e-mail if preferred. Please let me know.



Dear Presidents and Members of First Unity Lodge,

On behalf of BBUK may I wish you all a hearty Mazeltov on the 50th Anniversary of First Unity Lodge! It has been a personal delight to follow the growth and success of your Lodge during the (mere) forty-four years that I have myself been a member of B'nai B'rith.

The success, the achievements and the contribution that First Unity Lodge has made to B'nai B'rith, along with your contribution to the larger community, is something that each and every one of you can take immense pride.

First Unity Lodge delivers Benevolence, Brotherly and Sisterly Love and Harmony as a model for other Lodges to follow.

I thank you for all that you have done for B'nai B'rith in the past and for that you are going to do in the future. I hope that the 50th Anniversary Tea on 15th October is a wonderful and memorable event for you all.

My very best wishes,

Yours fraternally,

*Alan Miller*  
President BBUK

# First Unity Celebrates 50th



**REPORT OF VISIT TO QIRYAT GAT  
BY GEORGE SUMMERFIELD  
QUARTET PRESIDENT OF BNAI BRITH FIRST UNITY LODGE  
ON 18 OCTOBER 2017**

B'nai B'rith UK has been involved for many years in providing support to the development town of Qiryat Gat in southern Israel. First Unity Lodge regularly sends funds and in particular has helped with donations towards the feeding programme and for musical instruments at Herzl Primary School. In August this year a special appeal was launched for additional support for five main projects. This appeal was sent out to all UK Lodges on the 3rd September.

The appeal was discussed by our Board and Council at their committee meeting on 6th September. There was a unanimous decision to donate our usual amount of £2000 for the feeding programme and also this year, to support the additional appeal for the air conditioning units. We later learnt that this involved a further donation of £3500. The details of this project were circulated, and I approached the committee members and was given approval by all to offer the extra donation. I had a special interest as, together with my wife Marion and also our Secretary, Margaret Arenias, we were visiting Qiryat Gat in October as part of the BB UK Tour of Israel. A cheque for £5500 was sent from the First Unity Lodge Trust on the 27th September for both the feeding programme and the special air conditioning units. The need for the air conditioning was described as follows:



**George with the Head Teacher of Herzl School, Qiryat Gat.**



*'The volunteer organisation, Mashbir Le Gat, stores dry goods and prepares the food packages in a warehouse that urgently requires air conditioning and repairs to the ceiling (see picture at left) and toilets to improve the safety and conditions for the 70 volunteers who make up and distribute the weekly packages. Their first priority is for air conditioning, the cost of which would be covered by your donation'.*

Our BB UK Group consisted of 26 members, including Alan Miller, President BB UK. We were on a 8-day tour with stays in Jerusalem and in the Golan Heights. On the 18th October our coach took us from Jerusalem to Qiryat Gat where we received a warm welcome on arrival from Yitzak Abt, Chairman and Debbi Regev, the Administrative Manager for the Board of the Qiryat Gat Foundation as well as Walter Breindel. We spent the greater part of the day visiting the Herzl Primary School, the After-School Project and the feeding programme.

At the Herzl Primary School, we were greeted by two lines of children handing each of us a red rose. We were also welcomed by the friendly head teacher and some of her staff. We learnt that one third of the children are new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, one third Ethiopian immigrants and one third children born in Israel. A large proportion are from low socio-economic homes.



Next, we were seated in the main hall where we were treated to a musical performance by the pupils. A group first played classical music on violins and then the rest enthusiastically played percussion instruments. The head teacher gave a talk and spoke of the gratitude of the school for donations received towards the purchase of musical instruments, including the donation from First Unity. More finance was still needed, so that they could form a

*(Continued on page 6)*



(Continued from page 5)

full orchestra. Finally, all of us landed on the stage showing off our prowess on the percussion instruments. Behind us a huge poster stated, "Together we will create music and the music will bring the change"

Next, we spent time at the After-School Project. We were told that the children



selected for this project were those who were most in need of extra attention for their school work and who would otherwise spend their time roaming the streets. We were given time to visit the children in the classroom and get to know them. The children have strict instructions to speak only Ivrit at school and not their home languages, so some were hesitant to try to speak in their broken English.

Finally, we arrived at the rather dilapidated warehouse in time for the weekly food distribution. The warehouse itself was quite large comprising two rooms. The main part in the front was full of volunteers organising the distribution of the food. The volunteers were mainly young people who were filling 70 large cardboard containers. We all joined in to help and gradually these containers filled up. Once a week these parcels are taken round to families chosen for their need. They are just left outside the homes on the same day each week at around the same time to avoid embarrassment.

After the work of filling the containers was completed Walter Breindel, on behalf of BB UK, presented a cheque for £10,000 for the feeding programme. I then told everyone present the background to the donation from First Unity Lodge UK and handed over the cheque for £3500. There was no doubt that the provision of air conditioning would make a big difference both in storing the food and in the working conditions for the volunteers. Our gesture was praised by Alan Miller, Yitzak Abt and the main Project Manager in charge.

Within a few weeks we received the news that two new air conditioning units were already installed. Within a month the plaque with the description we suggested (see picture on page 5) was placed on the wall between the two conditioners and photographs sent. The inscription says:

***"This air-conditioning unit has been donated by BB First Unity Lodge UK to commemorate 50 years as a Lodge 1967 - 2017"***

We have now received a letter of thanks from Walter Breindel, thanking us for our generous donation and also an appreciation from Debbi Regev.

On the 9th November the following letter was received by First Unity Lodge from Yitzak Abt:

*'The Qiryat Gat Foundation and the young volunteers of Ha`mashbir Le`Gat are very grateful to have been chosen as the recipient of your donation celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of First Unity Lodge. The air-conditioning units have been installed which allow all the packaging to take place inside the warehouse even during the hot summer evenings when previously everything was taken outside. It is a very appreciative gesture that recognizes the wonderful spirit and dedication of these young volunteers. Wishing you all good health and continued good works for your community and the projects your Lodge supports'.*

For the 26 members of the BB UK Tour and especially for the three of us present from First Unity Lodge, our time spent in Qiryat Gat was definitely the highlight. The numerous photographs received will serve as an important reminder that our efforts have been well worthwhile.

**George Summerfield**

# Unity Lecture 2017

**R**abbi Rodney Mariner is always a pleasure to listen to, from the mellifluous sound of his voice and his gentle manner. He gave the B'nai B'rith First Unity annual lecture on Sunday 12 November, a lecture which commemorates the uniting of the First Unity Men's Lodge and the First Unity Women's Lodge in 1972.

He took us on a journey using the Millennial generation as a lens to make some observations relevant to the topic Prospective and Retrospective.

He gave a thumbnail sketch of Generation Y who represent the generation that will count for 70% of the workforce and from whom this country's future leadership will be drawn. The most startling conclusion is that these 13 million+ will be the first to have a poorer quality of life than the generation that preceded it.

Then he considered the rise of populism in contemporary political life and how it has undermined democracy, infected politesse in political debate, betrayed and cannibalized the youth vote. Brexit here and Trump there were given as examples.

He then talked of the position of Jewish Millennials, particularly in the UK, against the background of an aging Jewish population, a resurgence of incipient anti-Semitism that, according to a national poll, has shown 1 in 3 Jews considering aliyah and 80% critical as to Labour's failure to address effectively anti-Semitism in their party. Outside ultra-Orthodoxy, Jewish Millennials have shown themselves to be strong on maintaining and sustaining a Jewish identity but weak on synagogue affiliation. Their need to devote long hours to the business of employment to survive has had considerable effect on their social and spiritual lives. Unorthodox methods such as Limmud and SEED have achieved some success but interest in traditional synagogue life has been elusive and when successful has resulted in a substantial proportion of UK's annual aliyah coming from this cohort.

He felt that it is apparent, that with regard to the Millennial generation, there is a constant and concerning trope namely the willingness to use and abuse them as cash cows, as election fodder, as Jewish baby makers but seldom as partners in the future with voices which need to be heard and respected, now.

He then discussed the situation with today's British Muslims which led to a discussion during question time about the troubling situation of the Muslim Centre now being created in Golders Green. He concluded with a summing up of unity and diversity:

*'True unity comes when a diverse group of people come together in support of a common cause. If our history teaches nothing else, it is that unity can be a messy and painful business and that diversity both requires and allows for unity. If the history of the world teaches us anything, it is that quests for unanimity often lead to marginalisation and oppression of dissenters.'*

Unity requires a commitment to remain one in spite of forces that pull groups apart, including the things that make individuals unique. Unity means agreeing on the vision, mission and identity of a group, even whilst listening to dissenting voices as part of the discernment process moving forward. It takes work and commitment to build relationships of trust and acceptance – and even more work to maintain them.

Rodney ended with this: *'I wish you continued unity, a unity informed and sustained by diversity'*.



**Sylvia Lewin**