



## **Pinner/ Reading Shabbaton**

Chief Rabbi Mirvis had an idea to twin communities, large with small, London with regional, his hope was to “develop as a way of establishing friendships across our congregations, sharing enriching Jewish experiences and fostering links with vibrantly differing communities, which paint the picture of the wonderful tapestry of Anglo-Jewry.”

Pinner Synagogue were at the vanguard of this idea over the last few years, twinning with Portsmouth and more regularly with Norwich. All experiences were amazing for Pinner community and we hope for the participating twinned communities with whom we spent Shabbat. However our recent twinning with Reading Hebrew Congregation was exceptional.

Both communities worked together in the planning and created a truly joyous experience.

This was aided by Rabbi Geoffrey and Rebbetzin Anne Shisler who helped set a warm and user-friendly tone from the outset.

Logistics are challenging, we take everything with us, including all the food for shabbat as well as sufficient urns and hotplates. Reading Community led by their chair Sarah Firsht, were incredible, all mucking in to help set up everything on Thursday night and Friday morning. We catered for 80 people Friday night, 90 shabbat lunch and 75 for our Melava Malka...quite an organisational operation.

We shared everything in terms of programmatic input including the services...it is hard work but incredibly worthwhile. Sarah, said that, "Sharing Shabbat with a warm and friendly group of people from Pinner has given all those present in Reading Shul on 8 and 9 February a greater understanding of how wonderful Shabbat is and how celebrating it with friends can make it even more special.

The atmosphere in both Shul and Hall was quite amazing.

I believe that events like this are exactly what Chief Rabbi Mirvis is trying to achieve with his Shabbat UK initiative.

Although it was hard work, I think that here in Reading we need to look and see if we can be bolder in the way we organise our local Shabbat and Yomtov celebrations.”

Pinner twinning co organisers, Leonie Lewis and David Kaye were delighted with the responses received from their 45 participants and are looking forward to their next community twinning.

Rabbi Shisler saw the potential for the twinning Shabbat experience and said, “It’s a wonderful idea to bring together a cohort of members from one congregation to join with another smaller one and spend Shabbat together.

In Reading a lovely, warm, friendly atmosphere was created by the two communities together, and a truly memorable shabbat was shared. I have already suggested that it is a project that the community where I now live in Edgware, might like to consider.”

A Reading member summed up all our sentiments, he said, “For me it was a weekend packed with new friends and old traditions. A bit like an extended family coming together for a special celebration.”

by Leonie Lewis, Pinner Synagogue



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