



Introducing TBI's "twin": Kehilat Shanghai



As part of the increased activity within the Asia-Pacific congregations of the Union for Progressive Judaism, we have exciting news that Temple Beth Israel is "twinning" with Kehilat Shanghai, the Progressive congregation in China's largest metropolis.

Kehilat Shanghai was established five years ago in response to the needs of a diverse and unique Jewish community.

While for various reasons the Chinese government does not officially recognise Judaism as a religion, it is permissible for Jews to gather together to celebrate as communities.

Shanghai hosts Chabad communities and more recently Kehilat Shanghai was established to cater to the needs of Progressive Jews.

With the vast majority of Shanghai's Jews being westerners who are temporarily in Shanghai as part of their professional work, many of them on medium to long-term appointments, the challenge for Kehilat Shanghai has been to become a congregation for a Jewish community with some turnover, which means the need for continuity, even as they welcome many new faces.

The community is comprised of singles, families, interfaith couples, seasoned entrepreneurs, executives, young professionals, teachers, students, artists and others.

Kehilat Shanghai also welcomes travellers to China who are visiting Shanghai and looking for a welcoming community with which to celebrate Friday night dinners and festivals.

Kehilat Shanghai is affiliated with and strongly supported by the WUPJ (World Union of Progressive Judaism) and its regional arms: the UPJ (The Union of Progressive Judaism) in Australia and UJC (United Jewish Congregation) in Hong Kong, from which it received initial support.

The congregation's President Arie Schreier is an accomplished Israeli-born businessman who holds Masters degrees in Entrepreneurship and Innovation from Swinburne University in Melbourne, Public Administration from Tel Aviv University, and a BA in Political Science and International Relations from Tel Aviv University.

Roger Mendelson, President of the Union for Progressive Judaism, is thrilled about TBI's plans to "twin" with Kehilat Shanghai, and hopes to see a mutually beneficial relationship evolving between our two congregations.

As noted by Rabbi Fred Morgan, Emeritus Rabbi at TBI, who is the UPJ's recently appointed Movement Rabbi, the twinning relationship will resonate strongly with quite a few members of TBI, who were either Holocaust survivors in Shanghai during World War II, or trace their family history back to these wartime "Shanghailanders" or through other ties to Shanghai's long Jewish history that dates back to the nineteenth century.

Over the coming months we will profile a number of activities at Kehilat Shanghai on the TBI website and in Kol Yisrael.

Just to give you a taste of Progressive Judaism, Shanghai style, here are some highlights from our "twin" congregation:

*** Shabbat dinners, with a Kabbalat Shabbat service and singing.**

*** Shavuot retreat: Kehilat Shanghai went on its first community retreat to Chongming Island off the coast of Shanghai over the Dragon Boat Festival holiday weekend (which conveniently fell on Shavuot this year).**

Special guests were Rabbi David Wolfman who led the retreat, and Carine Wasawski with her friend Danielle who led an amazing children's program together. There was another special guest: the congregation's new Sefer Torah. The kids became fast friends as they played together, while the adults schmoozed over wine and cheese and scotch and cigars.

*** Rabbi Fred Morgan, the UPJ Movement Rabbi, visited Kehilat Shanghai over Pesach, with 170 people in attendance at the event.**

Over the coming months, TBI and Kehilat Shanghai will be planning several exciting joint initiatives, including hospitality programs for congregational visitors from Shanghai to Melbourne, and vice versa.

For further information, contact Roger Mendelson: roger@mendelsons.com.au or Arie Schreier: arie@kehilatshanghai.org and visit the Kehilat Shanghai website at www.kehilatshanghai.org