THE FINCHLEY PROGRESSIVE SYNAGOGUE

**Converting to be Jewish**

Welcome to FPS. We are a constituent synagogue of Liberal Judaism. We use the Liberal Beth Din and conversion takes usually a year. It follows the cycle of the festival year and assumes twelve months of immersion in Jewish life around our congregation. You can expect to meet our rabbi regularly and to attend weekly classes (in term time) and shabbat and festival services throughout the year. Please see the accompanying document about converting with Liberal Judaism. The cost to the Liberal *Beit Din* is £520 which includes £200 to FPS/£320 to Liberal Judaism.

<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Conversion.pdf>

Whilst you are choosing to navigate Jewish tradition with progressive eyes, we are deeply committed to teaching Judaism so you feel empowered and familiar with traditional laws and and perspectives and the reason why we do not choose to fulfil them in the same way. Informed choice is vital. Those that embark on this journey with us tell us they feel held, supported and encouraged to be thoughtful and reflective about Jewish tradition.

Here are some parts of the course and what to expect.

Hebrew Learning

There is an expectation that you will learn a little of prayer book Hebrew to aid your navigating of the service and recognition of key Jewish vocabulary.

We offer a Wednesday lunchtime class and a Monday evening class at the moment administrator@fps.org will guide you to these. Both will be easier if you have mastered some of the Aleph Bet.

We also recommend a superb private tutor John Rubinstein. john\_rubinstein@yahoo.co.uk

Essays

LJ ask for two essays to complete the year of learning and submit before your Beth Din appointment.

The FIRST asks you to elaborate on why you are choosing to become Jewish…The SECOND can be on a topic of your choice which you can discuss with our rabbi. They are not to be long-aproxomately 1000-2000 words.

Attending Services

Even if religious services ‘are not your thing’ there is an expectation you attend to become familiar with them and the congregation. We believe deeply in the importance of relationality and the belonging to a synagogue, with the connections and relationships it brings. This makes the process more meaningful.

Friday Night Dinners and opportunities to be together.

We offer a Pot Luck Friday night dinner the last Friday of every month and we often encourage the Delving Group to attend and make Shabbat together outside of class.

Keeping a Journal

This is a useful exercise to chart your journey into Judaism and be able to observe and witness your progress and changing reactions to things. It can be a purely private endeavour just for you.

Classes

Our Conversion class is taught within the Delving into Judaism class on a Wednesday evening 7pm. These classes are exclusivity on zoom (for the moment).

Our classes move throughout the year and it is possible to join at any time whilst being abreast of the point in the year you began so you get the full cycle. There are folk who stay in the class for longer than a year so the curricula does change but you can be sure to cover these following topics.

**Jewish Calendar and the Cycle of the Year-**Key fast and festival days. How the Hebrew Calendar works and its interaction with the Gregorian year.

* “This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared” (Rabbi Alan Lew z’l)-The High Holiday Festivals of the Jewish New Year and their meaning.
* *Shalosh Regalism*-the Three Pilgrim Festivals, called because they required Pilgrimages to the Temple in Biblical Times: Sukkot, Shavuot and Pesach.
* ‘And After’ The festivals outside of Torah and later periods: Purim and Chanukah.
* December Dilemma and the Christmas and Chanukah mix.
* ‘What do they have to do with us?’ The newly added Yom HaShoah/Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha’atzmau’t.

**Jewish Lifecycle:**

* Birth and New Rituals and the Ambivalence of Circumcision
* Coming of Age-the Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah
* Marriage and Commitment ceremonies
* Conversion-Moses Maimonides’ letter about assuming Jewish Ancestry in the 12th century.
* Jewish attitudes to Old Age and Death.
* The Art of *Shehechianu*- Marking First Moments.
* Who’s Included-Liberal Judaism’s Pioneering new frontiers.

**Jewish Texts and their Importance as Amos Oz wote-*Jews No Longer talk of Blood Lines but Text Lines.*** *:*

* Torah and the portions of the Week and how they inform Jewish Life and Conversation.
* The rest of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) what are these texts and when might you encounter them?
* Rabbinic Writing Mishnah and Talmud the early years of the Common Era.
* Jewish Memory-Jonathan Safran Foer and Joseph Chaim Yerushalmi

**Jewish Practices and the Choices We make:**

* *Kashrut*-Ethical Eating and Consuming
* Prayer and Synagogue
* Jewish Denominations the different Movements.
* *Tzedakah*-The value of Charity and Philanthropy in Jewish tradition
* The Idea of *Minyan* and Showing up in Jewish community
* *Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof-Justice, Justice Shall you Pursue* (Deuteronomy) Social Justice and Social Action in contemporary Judaism’s pursuit of Tikkun Olam-Repairing the World.
* Making Shabbat
* Making Seder
* Useful Blessings and How to.
* History and Memory
* Navigating Sacred Texts-Torah, Tanakh and Rabbinic Judaism
* Compelling Commitments
* Lifecycle
* Death in particular