

Not too comfortable

Thought for the Day

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This is a busy time of year for the Jewish Community. Last week was Rosh HaShanah, the Jewish new year, followed this week by the fast of Yom Kippur. Then tonight the week-long festival of Sukkot begins, ending next weekend with a celebration of the Torah, when we complete the annual cycle of readings and start again immediately from the beginning.

Of course everything is different this year with people having to keep their distance and wear masks, services in parallel or in shifts or even in cyberspace, not able to share food and drink. But people can still raise a wry smile – one of the customs is to process round the synagogue with palm branches and citron fruits – so needing a one-way system helps avoid collisions! Both within the Jewish community and without, there's another thin silver lining in that more people are aware that we do things differently in Scotland!

This week the Institute of Jewish Policy Research published some fascinating findings about how comfortable members of the community feel about going back to events in the real world. They found that the more religious and the more orthodox people are (not the same thing), the more comfortable they feel; that there is most unease amongst the under-25s and the over-60s – but that over-85s are more laid back! Students, interestingly, are bang on the average.

We've also conducted our own less formal survey in Scotland, and it's surprising how positive people are about their sense of community, helping friends and family, and the ease of attending virtual rather than live events.

All of this has particular resonance in a week when our tradition is to leave the comfort of our homes and eat or even sleep in temporary huts with only some flimsy branches for a roof. We're always told that the moral is that we shouldn't get too comfortable and should value what we have. This year more than ever we understand!

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