

AFRICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

הקונגרס היהודי האפריקאי

ESTABLISHED 1994

with Divine Guidance

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RAEDENE

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SOUTH AFRICA

2 April 2020

Dear Friends all over Southern Africa,

It is indeed a pleasure and an honour to welcome you all to the first issue of greetings from our proud new organisation.

Until last year, our two families, the Country Communities of South Africa and the African Jewish Congress of Southern Africa have always worked separately to foster the Jewish identity of their far-flung members. As of the beginning of 2020, the Country Communities have left their original base as part of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and formed an independent body called the Small Jewish Communities Association of South Africa (SJCA) to which the African Jewish Congress is proud to be affiliated.

It goes without saying that the link between the two organisations was in the past, and is now our CEO and Spiritual Leader, Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft. There is nobody on this great continent who is so committed to the welfare of its Jews both individually and collectively. We pray that his position among us all will continue for many years to come.

Our new organisation is up and running although some administrative glitches continue to present themselves, but we are pleased with the structure and have put together a Board to coordinate our work. Please find their details as the bottom of this letterhead. We also have to come to terms with a challenging financial situation which will not be entirely clear for the first year or so. That may mean that we will need to discuss with our affiliated African communities some contribution to the travelling expenses for the services we provide.

We take this opportunity to send warm wishes for continued strength and success to our supportive “big brothers”, the World Jewish Congress and the Commonwealth Jewish Council.

THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL DIFFICULTIES

But we dare not sit back and congratulate ourselves on our successes when the whole world is faced with the terrible challenges presented by the Corona Virus. We have to join with our fellow citizens wherever we are to preserve the precious gifts of life and health. We are already seeing tragedy around us, not only in terms of devastating illness and loss of life but also in the conduct of human behaviour, selfishness, greed, ignorance and violence stoked up into a furnace by fear.

As Jews we need to be seen as examples for good - supporting our elected leaders, setting examples of good behaviour and assisting others worse off than we are.

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“COMMITTED TO A JEWISH FUTURE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA”

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President: Ann Harris (South Africa)

Vice Presidents: Richard Lyons (Botswana), Geoff Ramokgadi (Swaziland), Mary Kluk (South Africa), Peter Sternberg (Zimbabwe)

Executive Committee: Michael Galaun (Zambia), Steve Felder (Kenya), Irene Zuckerman, Li Boiskin

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We also need to look to the future. When this crisis subsided, as with G-D's help it surely will, the world will not be the same place. Our new Chair of the SJCA, Barney Horwitz, who has been instrumental in its creation, takes the perceptive view that for example here in Southern Africa, the structure of our Jewish Communities large and small will require careful reconstruction.

So in these difficult times, we find it hard to wish one another Chag Sameach. But as a people, we have celebrated the festival of our freedom in unhappy circumstances before. We know we can rise above challenge.

This Pesach may be for many of us a time of isolation and loneliness. As Barney also points out, most of us live a relatively isolated Jewish life already so we know how to cope!

As you sit at your Seder tables, however small, spare a few moments to think of our community members all over the continent and send them the warmth of brotherhood and prayers for their safety.

Please accept my warmest personal wishes for a Chag Pesach Kasher v'Sameach.

Warm regards to all,

ANN HARRIS
PRESIDENT

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