

PESACH WITH UPJ

Magical moments at online seders

AJN STAFF

THE presence of COVID-19 has seen the emergence of creative and innovative ways to celebrate Pesach with family and friends, even while physically distanced from each other.

In the lead-up to Passover, Union for Progressive Judaism (UPJ) congregations throughout Australia, New Zealand and Asia offered online weekly Shabbat services and daily minyanim, lunch and learn classes, bubs and bagels get-togethers, cocktail chatter groups, havdalah story times for families, uplifting clergy 'thoughts for the day' and cooking classes.

The UPJ community celebrated the message of hope that Kehilat Shanghai brought when that com-

munity hosted a safe, healthy and successful community 'offline' seder in a hotel, one of the few communities to be blessed with the opportunity to celebrate together in person. Attendees went through strict hygiene safety measures (temperature check, QR tracking code, completion of quarantine) and the hotel entirely privatised one of its restaurants. The congregation also live-streamed the seder by Zoom for community members unable to attend in person.

More than 10 online seders were offered by UPJ congregations throughout Australia, New Zealand and Asia.

To assist with virtual seders, two UPJ congregations – the Jewish Community of Japan and Temple Beth Israel – shared online versions of their haggadot.

Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black from the Leo Baeck Centre for Progressive Judaism conducted an online seder with an orange prominently displayed on the seder plate in recognition of gay and lesbian Jews, and others who are marginalised in the Jewish community, and a roasted beetroot in place of the shank bone, a common substitution in vegetarian households.

For use at online Shabbat services a flip-book version of the UPJ's siddur, Mishkan T'filah, has been made available online via the UPJ website.

Many said the Ten Plagues remind them of the past year's afflictions, including COVID-19 and the bushfires. Inspired by this, attendees at Beit Shalom Synagogue's online seder in Adelaide shared insightful com-



UPJ co-president David Knoll.

ments about freedom and slavery.

UPJ co-president David Knoll joined his wife's family's international seder, with attendees in Australia, Ohio and Pennsylvania, which was held over breakfast to allow for the different time zones. Rabbi Gary Robuck led a dual congregational seder with attendees from the Progressive

Congregation of the ACT Jewish Community and Beit Or v'Shalom in Brisbane.

In addition to seder offerings, the UPJ's Assembly of Rabbis and Cantors of Australia, New Zealand and Asia presented an inspiring service of healing that was live-streamed on the UPJ Facebook page on April 12.