

# ‘Biggest change in British Judaism since the war’ as new Progressive movement forms

- Member communities of Britain’s Liberal and Reform Jewish movements vote to unite
- Historic moment is the culmination of 250 years of Progressive Jewish history
- First ever merger of two Jewish denominations and the first in any religion for 53 years

**London (Sunday 18 May 2025):** In a history-defining moment, member communities of Britain’s Movement for Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism have voted to unite into one Progressive Judaism for the UK.

The decision was made at two parallel Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs), with the number of votes in favour at each exceeding 95%.

Dr Ed Kessler MBE – a leading interfaith thinker, writer and academic – chaired the Advisory Board that has overseen the process. He hailed the decision, saying: “This is the biggest change and most significant development in British Judaism since the Second World War. For the first time, this country now has a single, unified Progressive Judaism – providing a voice and a space that brings together timeless Jewish tradition with the diversity and values of 21st-century Jewish life.”

The new Progressive Judaism will be the UK’s largest synagogal movement, measured by number of communities (80). It will represent 1/3 of synagogue affiliated Jews with the goal of reaching out to roughly the same percentage of non-affiliated Jews who are known to align with Progressive Jewish values.

This is the first ever known unification of two Jewish denominations and the culmination of 250 years of Progressive Jewish history (see addendum for full timeline). It is the first merger of any two religious streams since the Presbyterian and Congregational Christian groupings formed the United Reformed Church in 1972.

Rabbi Charley Baginsky, CEO of Liberal Judaism, and Rabbi Josh Levy, CEO of the Movement for Reform Judaism, have led the process and will continue the work of creating the new movement. They have spent the last two years, since the project travelling and hearing directly from Progressive Jewish communities.

Rabbi Josh Levy said: “We have heard first-hand how Progressive Jews all around the country want to take this once-in-a-generation opportunity to create something new and intentional – a Progressive Judaism that has something to say into the world and that can help more people have more fulfilling religious lives.”

Rabbi Charley Baginsky added: “We are now seeing the fruition of the next iteration of Progressive Jewish history. Through this vote, our members are both standing on the shoulders of all those who came before us and creating something long and lasting for our children and the generations who come after us.”

## Path to **Progressive Judaism**

Progressive Judaism differs from Orthodox Judaism in several vital ways.

Progressive Judaism understands that the religion's formative texts are not the literal word of God, but the divinely inspired work of human beings. It believes in Progressive revelation and the overriding importance of values and ethics in defining how we behave.

In practical terms, Progressive Judaism's fundamental principle is equality. Services are egalitarian with everyone sitting together. The Progressive clergy is 50% women and 20% LGBTQI+. Progressive communities fully welcome mixed-faith families and hold dual-heritage wedding blessings. The movements campaigned for the introduction of the same-sex marriage law. In a further key difference to Orthodoxy, Jewish status can be inherited from either parent where a child is brought up as Jewish.

Liberal Judaism Chair Karen Newman said: "Our new Progressive Judaism, just like the two movements which have come together to create it, will manifest from day one its commitment to a Judaism that is non-dogmatic, inclusive and celebrates diversity in policy, prayer, and practice."

Paul Langsford, Chair of the Movement for Reform Judaism, added: "As a unified movement, we will now be stronger, our voice will be louder and we will be able to bring even greater benefit not just to our own members, but to the whole Jewish community and wider British society."

The new Progressive Judaism will have four key missions: to strengthen, support and connect its communities; to promote, amplify and embolden Progressive values and forms of Jewish life; to inspire and nurture the next generations of Progressive Jews; and to foster inclusion, provide resources and pave the way for those seeking to join.

At the same times as the EGMs were taking place, Reform and Liberal communities all over the country were getting together for joint ice cream picnics to celebrate both the result and the Jewish festival of Shavuot.

It will now take around six months to legally form the new Movement for Progressive Judaism, with a brand launch and celebratory fundraising dinner set to be held in November.

- Picture: Rabbi Charley Baginsky, Paul Langsford, Dr Ed Kessler MBE, Karen Newman and Rabbi Josh Levy celebrate the formation of Progressive Judaism (photo by Zoe Norfolk).

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