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# Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt: 'Support communities back into synagogues'

Conference of European Rabbis holds Spring Standing Committee meeting via Zoom.

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Conference of European Rabbis Zoom meeting

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The Conference of European Rabbis yesterday held its Spring Standing Committee meeting via Zoom. Rabbis discussed the practical issues that many Jewish communities across Europe were facing amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and how they engage new congregants who have participated for the first time during the lockdown.

Many CER Rabbis have reported increased attendances at online classes, events and services during COVID-19 lockdowns; several report sometimes 100 times the normal attendance. One of the major challenges facing communities is to keep engagement high, when activity moves back to synagogue.

Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis, said: "Every Standing Committee meeting is unique as we visit a different community and understand new issues. However, there is no doubt that this year was a new experience. The fundamental question revolved around how Jewish communities in Europe can adapt to a new world post-lockdown. We have already seen several states begin to lift restrictions on the goings-on of daily lives. The Conference of European Rabbis wants to ensure that its communities are supported back into synagogues and equipped with the best advice and guidelines to help them carry out religious practices in a safe manner. This is an extremely testing time for everyone and we are here to support wherever we can."

The meeting brought together some 50 of Europe's leading Rabbis. Since the middle of February, the CER has had ongoing conversations with its Rabbis around the virus, hosting an emergency meeting of the Standing Committee via Zoom before Pesach, agreeing clear guidance on a number of issues including the precautions that individuals should follow prior to official lockdowns being announced. The CER has been outspoken throughout on its calls to strictly follow government advice in all countries. The organisation had previously issued Halachic advice around the observation of religious festivals – most recently Pesach – as well as a new prayer for the protection of patients and medics.





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Other agenda items included the economic impact of COVID-19 on religious communities and the potential creation of a fund to support families later in the year. Similarly, the organisation spoke about forming thinking groups that will act as a sounding board for ideas about how community leaders can continue to engage effectively with members in post-lockdown world. This follows the resounding success of the CER's recently launched learning platform, which provided a comprehensive directory of online shiurim, classes and resources.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/279833>

