

Torah Study, Achdus, Hospitality, and a Fresh Look— Woodbourne Shul Has It All

By Dov Levy

If you have not yet visited this summer—now's the time.

With major renovations completed, the Woodbourne Shul, located at 457 Route 52, is back in full swing and welcoming record crowds to enjoy davening with a unique brand of hospitality under the aegis of its beloved leader, Grand Rabbi Mordechai Jungreis shlit" a, the Niklesburg Rebbe. And its morning kolel program kicks off each day with intense Torah study.

Much has happened here over the past winter, yet the approach and geniality remains the same as in previous years. After showing signs of severe strain from the unprecedented flow of crowds over recent summers, the Niklesburg Rebbe undertook a major renovation of the historic, 90+ year-old building. Construction was still ongoing as the summer season began and the first weeks found tefilos being held outside. Rabbi Jungreis himself visited numerous times during the winter to oversee the efforts and was on hand to help drag tables and benches into place as the things began to arrive.

Now he is here every morning proudly greeting the 21 members of his morning study program, "Kolel Mesirus Nefesh." This group spends one hour devoted to Torah every morning from 8 to 9 AM, Monday through Friday. Many come from far away and wake up as early as 6 AM – some catching the milk truck or early bread delivery – to make it to the shul on time. Last Friday the Rebbe proudly wrote out the first batch of 21 checks in the amount of \$102 (it started at \$100, but the Rebbe follows a policy of "מעלין בקודש—going up in holiness") for distribution to his beloved kolel students.

And that is just the beginning of a grueling schedule, overseeing the function of the shul and the constant flow of minyanim throughout the day as the prayers metamorphose from Shacharis to Minchah and from Minchah to Mariv, ending long after midnight. In response to requests to open the shul earlier, the first weekday Shacharis has recently been moved up from 8 AM to 7:20.

At any given time the Rebbe can be found directing chiyuvim to the amud of the next available minyan and making sure to send off his beloved mispalelim with some cookies, "צידה לדרך." The weekend evening cholent made available to all has grown from 8 large crock pots to 10 and now 11! And as per popular request, the Rebbe now serves cholent on Sunday evening as well.

As in previous years, the shul has become a central gathering place for finding a minyan and catching up with the latest. Yidden from all walks of life and every stripe mix freely here and all barriers are left behind. The same minyan can include men in beaver hats and knitted yarmulkas, Sephardim and

Ashkenazim alike. All come here to share a smile, a good word and a pleasant atmosphere of universal camaraderie that knows no borders.

A number of prominent rabbonim have graced the shul with their presence. Notable among them are Rav Dovid Goldwasser who delivered a shiur, as well as the Mezhibozher Rav HaRav Bick who commented that he felt compelled to visit despite his frailty in order to strengthen the Rebbe and those who gather here. As in the past Rav Moshe Meir Weiss delivers a brief but fiery shiur daily, in addition to his popular keynote shiur each Thursday evening. The shul also hosts several Daf Yomi shiurim daily.

For those who are interested in the physical comforts the Woodbourne Shul offers, the Rebbe is proud to have added another strip air conditioner downstairs, raising the total to three. Plus, four such units have been installed upstairs where people previously complained that the heat made it too unpleasant to daven or learn. New carpeting on the entire shul is scheduled to arrive later this week.

But what is most significant is not what has changed, but what remains the same: the 'קידוש ה' of so many Yidden davening together in complete achdus, the incredible hospitality of the Rebbe shlit"א as he greets everyone who enters the front door with his trademark smile and warmth and the love shared through the constant refreshments and shower of brachos he presses on every weary traveler who takes a moment to stop in.

Take the time to stop by. You'll be glad you did.

Those who wish to help out with the staggering expenses of the renovations and general upkeep are invited to visit www.thewoodbourneshul.com.