



PROCESS FOR ACCEPTANCE INTO THE JEWISH FAITH

Over the last forty years a number of people have successfully and happily completed a conversion process with our Synagogue. Most have been people already engaged to be married, or already married to Jewish partners, but some have been single candidates. Conversion, or more correctly, acceptance into the Jewish faith, is a long process that takes a minimum of one year and often a little longer than that. It demands enormous commitment and dedication from both the candidate and, where they have one, their Jewish partner or relative(s). On the other hand, many of those who have gone through the process have come to enjoy and value their new life as Jews.

This article describes the process that candidates can expect to go through on their journey to acceptance. As we are a small community, without a rabbi, we work with Rabbi Paul Freeman from Radlett and District Reform Synagogue on this issue.

1. INITIAL EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

When an individual or couple express an interest in conversion, the warden currently responsible for inquiries will meet with them to discuss why they want to convert and to explain details about the process. If the initial discussion raises any issues that need clarification, the responsible warden may refer the matter to the Sponsoring Rabbi, who may decide to conduct a longer and more in-depth interview.

The responsible warden will then invite the individual or couple to attend services. Attending services regularly and becoming comfortable and familiar with this aspect of Jewish life is vitally important before moving on to the next stage.

2. ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW

If the individual or couple want to proceed, having attended services for a while, and done some background reading and study, the responsible warden will put them in touch with the Sponsoring Rabbi.

The Sponsoring Rabbi will invite the applicant, and any Jewish partner or parent, to discuss their interest and experience more fully to ensure that they know what will be involved in the conversion process and that they both have the necessary commitment.

The study programme which is usually weekly, involves learning about Jewish ethics, customs, religious services, festivals and life cycle events as well as learning to read and pray in Hebrew to a reasonable level. If satisfied, the Sponsoring Rabbi will then complete a Registration Form for the *Beit Din* or Court of the Assembly of Reform Rabbis and the process will be formally started.

3. ACCEPTANCE AS ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF MKDRS

Once the Senior Warden has received a completed copy of the Registration Form, the candidate will be expected to become an Associate Member of the Synagogue and pay the relevant subscription. As an Associate Member of the Synagogue the candidate will be entitled to attend all of our religious services on Sabbaths and festivals, education programmes and social events, but will not enjoy voting rights.

If the candidate has a Jewish partner, they will be expected to become a member of the Synagogue and attend services and education sessions as well.

If there are children of the relationship then issues relating to their future status and their Jewish educational needs will need to be addressed by the Rabbi.

The syllabus of learning and experiences required will be decided by the Sponsoring Rabbi, and will include attending services and education classes at Radlett Reform Synagogue as well as MKDRS.

Should the Sponsoring Rabbi feel that the application for conversion is not appropriate the candidate will be informed of the reason and may be given an opportunity to reapply.

4. REVIEW

The candidate will have regular formal reviews of their progress with the responsible warden and the Sponsoring Rabbi. During these meetings, the candidate can expect to hear honest feedback on their progress towards their goals. When they are around six months away from the completion of their studies as a proselyte, a date will be set for their appearance before the *Beit Din* of the Assembly of Reform Rabbis.

5. ATTENDING THE BEIT DIN

At the end of a successful interview the candidate will be issued with a certificate confirming acceptance into the Jewish Faith.

6. RECEPTION INTO THE COMMUNITY

Following the above, the successful candidate will be expected to become a full member of the synagogue. They will be invited to have a short ceremony during a Shabbat service when they will be formally welcomed into the Synagogue community.

It is customary not to mention that a person is a convert once they have completed the process. They are now completely Jewish.