

## Handout D: Report of Interview with Belinda Lasky

Belinda Lasky is the Assistant Executive Director and Director of Membership at B'nei Jeshurun in New York City. B'nei Jeshurun is a 4,000 members congregation with a \$7,000,000 budget and 25 full-time staff, including 3 Rabbis and a Cantor. Membership dues are expected to cover 50% of the running costs of the organisation.

B'nei Jeshurun moved from a Fixed Fee to a Fair Share model nearly 20 years ago when the community's demographics and the economic climate was very different. They found that an exact percentage is not really a fair share as disposable income is not directly proportionate to actual income. In 2011 they moved over to a Sliding Scale model that better reflects their members' ability to contribute towards the community.

B'nei Jeshurun now has 12 different levels of dues according to income plus special introductory rates for young people. The lower income rates have been frozen for several years while additional payments are expected from higher income members towards specific costs such as security and building repairs. Belinda still has dozens of conversations each year with members and potential members who cannot afford the sliding scale and wish to negotiate their dues.

B'nei Jeshurun believes that Jewish community and spirituality should be available to everyone so they value their sliding scale model as a way of ensuring that those on a lower income can still be involved. Belinda recommends this model to other communities who share this value.

In the current economic climate, B'nei Jeshurun is struggling so the Dues Committee are currently considering the following issues that will affect how the rates are set over the next 3-5 years. Should membership dues cover a higher percentage of running costs? In this difficult economic climate, can we afford to have such a sliding scale model? Should we have a more Fixed Fee model but with incentivised rates for new members? Would a Free Will model encourage people to want to donate or make those who cannot afford much feel excluded from the process?

Belinda recommends the Sliding Scale model but warns that you have think it through very carefully, consider what other asks you are making of your congregants and do a five-ten year assessment of financial stability and demographic/economic variation before making a decision.