

## President's Message March 2009

I am honored to be serving with a diverse group of individuals working with the regional office of the [Union for Reform Judaism](#). Our main focus is to assist congregations in the region that are experiencing financial difficulties. Since that essentially includes all congregations, it is a great opportunity to share ideas and experiences with others during these difficult times. I was interested to discover that several congregations had even merged to help improve financial issues.

The number of reform congregations in our regional number is just shy of 50. The region is essentially from Kingston, NY, to Freehold, NJ. The congregations split largely into three groups small, large and very large. We are in the first category, and proud of it! The very large congregations have annual budgets well over \$1 million. Our annual budget is in the \$140,000 range. I am sharing approximate figures. You will get exact figures for our annual congregational meeting on June 7, 2009.

Unlike most other congregations in our region, we have no debt, and own our building. However, dues only cover about 50% of our annual budget needs. The other amounts come from special donations such as our 60th anniversary celebration, High Holy Day pledges, special pledges and hard work by congregational volunteers on the Hanukah Bazaar, Purim Carnival and other simchas.

Our [Board](#) established a policy that Jewish education is part of our mission. Consequently, we have one of the few "free" [Sunday School](#) programs in our region. It would not be possible without all of the volunteer help that the PTO and others provide. Thank you.

Over our 60-plus years of operation, we have received one significant endowment. The Davis family generously established a fund to support educational activities. Most larger congregations must depend on significant revenues coming from such sources since even their dues structures are typically not able to fully support the budget.

Like most groups of creative people, our congregation has more ideas than money to actualize them. Fiscal responsibility was the cornerstone of the founders of our congregation. I related in an earlier newsletter that it "only" took the JCNWJ founders three attempts over successive years to get the original deed for the building registered at the Belvidere county offices. The building was "sold" to the congregation for the sum of \$1. Even in this terrible market, the building is worth much more than that today.

Please bring your creative ideas to our June 7 annual meeting. We need them in these difficult financial times.

Please contact me at [arvesen@att.net](mailto:arvesen@att.net) or by phone at 917-941-4332 for any questions or comments.

Shalom,

Jim Arvesen

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