

MANIFESTO 2008

Presented by:

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The United Synagogue is a family of communities dedicated to vibrant Jewish life and Torah values. It has, at its core, the ethos of 'Kol Yisrael Arevim Ze Ba'Zeh' – every Jew has an equal responsibility to his or her fellow Jew, regardless of religious observance. At its centre, it comprises an organisation committed to the provision of services and financial assistance to its communities. It also provides Jewish institutional service to the wider Jewish community.

The past three years have seen a major transformation of the US towards an open transparent organisation capable of passionate open debate and the adoption of change. This environment augurs well for the next three years.

Your trustees-elect are proud to present an ambitious five-point programme which will:

1. Improve US Structure, Representation and Communication

The United Synagogue recognises the primacy of its communities. This was less the case historically and the organisation became highly centralised, thereby creating an unhealthy culture of dependence by some communities on the Centre. The formula for all of our successful communities has invariably been a combination of good rabbinic leadership and a degree of innovative independence from outside interference. We would like to see more responsibility taken by communities for the achievement of their individual aspirations in an environment that attracts innovative and active volunteers. We will:

- Carry out a US-wide consultation on increased autonomy and increased responsibility. We will also, in that context, work with our communities to remove the current two-tier (constituent and affiliated) structure of the Charity;
- Explore and, where possible, implement greater equality of leadership between men and women;
- Improve representation of communities and their members. This will involve further major review of current governance structures including that of US Council;
- Convene an annual Members' Conference, in addition to our regular Council meetings, to give members the opportunity of directly influencing the policies being developed by trustees; and
- Seek and implement ways of communicating effectively with communities and directly with members. The US website is an excellent starting point for communication and we will seek interactive debate, possibly through the use of moderated blogs and social networking sites, to allow us all to speak to each other openly and effectively.

2. Enhance Service Provision

Communities within the family of the United Synagogue benefit from a level of service, unequalled in any other Jewish Community worldwide. We have a superb team of professional staff working both at the Centre and across the Community who constantly strive to improve service. In a constantly changing environment such as ours, however, we must not be shy of challenging accepted ways of serving our communities. Your trustees-elect believe that we must now examine the relationships between our central institutions and our communities so as to improve the nature, level and measurement of the services provided. We will:

- Consult our communities and work with our staff to redefine and review the Centre's service provision roles and the way that they are managed;
- Respond to the increased demand and communal need for the provision of Eruvim. We will institute a programme, in conjunction with other orthodox bodies, to more effectively meet that demand;
- Review the role and management of our central institutions, including the AJE, Kashrut, Bet Din and Burial, with a view to entrenching their service ethos;
- Ensure further development of financial control, budgeting, forecasting and reporting;
- Institute a major review of the sources of funding of our Community; and
- Oversee the widespread adoption of key measures of service performance for effective incentivised management. We will communicate principle measures to our stakeholders.

3. Materially Increase Membership

In spite of major changes to community over recent decades, membership remains the key method by which individuals participate within the community. Your trustees-elect will put special emphasis on materially growing the membership of the US over the next three years. They will ensure that the US will:

- Actively support local programmes aimed at increasing membership;
- Work with communities to set up satellites, where demographically warranted. This has worked very well in the past and satellites have often been the progenitors of new communities;
- Create new communities based on geographic or demographic requirement;
- Invite independent communities who subscribe to the ethos of the United Synagogue, including those outside London, to join our family; and
- Seek ways for individual members of non-US communities to be part of the US story. Many people subscribe to the US ethos and would also wish to avail themselves of some of our key services. Assuming they are prepared to pay a contribution to our central institutions, in line with that paid by our members, we would wish to include these people and families in the US.

4. Youth and Future Leadership

It is an important truism that the future of our Community lies with its youth, and the United Synagogue has taken great strides, through Tribe, to help its communities attract and maintain youth involvement. Cross communally we have recently instituted a Tribe Summer Camp. Champions for Change has focussed on innovation as a spur to leadership training. Your trustees-elect recognise the importance of these initiatives and will:

- Review and enhance Tribe's provision of services to communities as they seek to attract, serve and engage young people - both members and potential members;
- Review and further develop the Champions for Change Programme; and
- Seek an enhancement of the successful Tribe Community Membership Scheme to ease the financial burden on young people as they join their local communities.

5. Training and Education

We have for long recognised the importance of all levels of education in achieving a successful and growing community. Education is the glue that brings together three key parts of the Jewish jigsaw: home, community and school. The United Synagogue plays a role in each of these areas and we are uniquely placed to integrate all three.

United Synagogue communities now provide wider and more effective adult education than at any time in the US's history. The RCUS instituted the P'eir in-service training programme for Rabbanim and the US provides training for management teams at community level.

Your trustees-elect will:

- Work with School Governors and professionals to prioritise and enhance the way we support our Schools within the constraints of resources;
- Work with the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue to further enhance the P'eir Programme;
- Seek joint programmes with institutions in the UK, Israel, and the United States to train entrants into the Rabbinate;
- Assist the growing number of community adult education programmes. We recognise that there are some excellent outside bodies that target specific aspects of adult education, including LSJS and SEED. We will strengthen our links, both centrally and communally, with these bodies;
- Review and enhance training of community volunteers; and
- Ensure widespread continuous professional training for our staff.