

Our New Sanctuary is Almost Here!

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June is upon us and with it comes the annual Year-In-Review issue of Temple Topics. Recently Rabbi Geller asked me what I was most proud of in my work this past year. Many things came to mind, including the amazingly fun and successful Purim Ball, the continued growth of the Pillar Program, and involvement of our Pillar members, as well as the opportunity I have had this past year to work with the volunteer members of the Capital Campaign Steering Committee: Sue Brucker, Scott Stone, Scott Shlechter, and Marcie Zelikow. But perhaps the most outstanding event to have transpired was that of breaking ground in the sanctuary in December. We finally did it!

December seems like ages ago. And in the intervening months, the sanctuary, social hall and surrounding spaces have been stripped of their 25 year-old finishes, revealing what our architect Mark Rios had promised – the remarkable ‘bones’ of our building.

As I have taken families on tours through the social hall – with the four original floor-to-ceiling vertical windows newly visible now that the kitchen has been returned to its original footprint, and with the symmetry of the room reclaimed as the dropped ceiling, which loomed over the bar area and was affectionately known as Siberia, was removed – the overwhelming phrase I have heard is ‘WOW’. Usually followed by, “I had no idea how expansive this room was.”

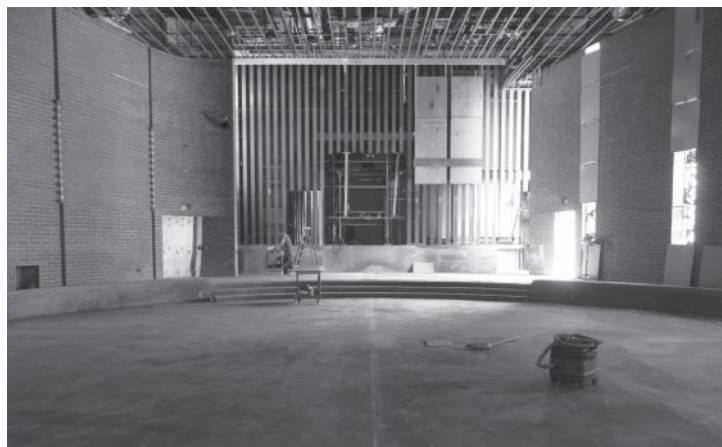
I heard Stacey Kesner share a similar ‘WOW’ story she heard from several of her ECC parents who only realized in April that the construction had begun. For many ECC families, their awareness of the construction was linked to the removal of the terrazzo in the courtyard as well as the removal of the steps leading up to the clergy offices and the ECC entrance. In place of these steps is an incline, and as several parents enjoyed the ease of pushing their baby strollers up a sloped walk (versus cajoling a stroller up stairs) it dawned on them that something awesome was taking place.

With the terrazzo gone, a foundation layer of bare concrete has been revealed, which will ultimately be covered by some truly gorgeous Jerusalem limestone en route to us via the Panama Canal. I am excited to think of the beauty that will unfold when this stone is set in place; and how meaningful it will be to not only have a spiritual connection to Israel but also a direct physical, earthly, connection in our newly transformed synagogue.

The Jerusalem limestone will continue on into the interior foyer, thereby connecting the indoor and outdoor spaces quite elegantly. The stone will also coordinate in color with the sanctuary and social hall’s new carpet, bringing warmth and depth to the space. In preparation for laying the custom carpet, the construction crew has spent the past month removing the reverse-raked, concrete slab from the sanctuary. (The next time you see Cantor Kliger ask him about his new music composition based on the driving rhythm of the jackhammer. And when you ask Rabbi Aaron a question, don’t be surprised if he states ‘I can’t hear you.’). In place of the slanted floor will be a flat floor, at the same elevation as the floor of the social hall.

While every step of this process has been incredible, and everyone who has taken a ‘hard hat’ tour has been struck by the majesty and detail being revealed from within the original architecture, perhaps the most awe-inspiring moment is just around the corner. On the day I wrote this article, I visited the construction site, only this time I entered the sanctuary directly onto the new bimah... and all I could say was ‘WOW’. The new bimah is elevated only three steps from the congregation and is gracefully curved, ever so slightly in the front and then completely on the sides, toward the congregation, giving the sense that the congregation is held within the arms of the Torah. I got goose bumps standing up there – and this was with erected scaffolding, an assortment of construction equipment, and exposed surfaces filling the room – imagine what it will look like when the final chair is put in place!

In the coming months, and leading up to the High Holy Days, there will be several opportunities to come and see the work in progress. This is an opportunity you won’t want to miss.



*Sanctuary under construction,
including new bimah and leveled floor.*