



Beth El is here for you.

Imagine a Beth El even more vital and viable than today—a home for traditional Judaism that is open, egalitarian, accessible, and diverse. Imagine a model synagogue that is welcoming—to newcomers, visitors, students, and families of all kinds. A Beth El that meets the needs of people with disabilities, engages with people of all backgrounds, and supports those seeking to connect with time-honored Jewish traditions as they explore their Jewish identity.

Imagine a Beth El with members who are more energized, active, and engaged in our religious activities, our educational offerings, and our joyous simchas. It is a place that fosters learning for our young people and our adults, a place where our kids want to go—and return—and where all community members can connect with knowledge and wisdom as deep as Judaism itself to help navigate the turbulent times we live in.

Imagine a Beth El that opens the door wider so everyone, regardless of politics, income, Jewish background, wealth, or social status is supportive of each other's needs. It is a place to seek help when ill or in crisis, to find the warmth of home and family, and to repair the world and meet the needs of those in our community who struggle.

Beth El is here for you. It has thrived for more than 125 years because it was able to fulfill the lifelong needs of countless Jewish families who felt a commitment to its values and understood its importance. Now we are asking you to help us build a Beth El that can thrive for generations to come.

For the last three years, our congregation has engaged in a strategic planning process focusing on three key areas: Fostering Community, Revitalizing Buildings & Grounds, and Improving Youth Education and Engagement. We already have begun that work. But there is much more to be done. Now . . .

Imagine a Beth El that is more welcoming and inclusive, a place that cares for each individual and is a home for our diverse community.

Already, our congregation includes students, interfaith families, gays and lesbians, and people with differing politics, income and Jewish background. But we can do better. Executive Director Casey Baker is creating a new member handbook, reinvigorating the chavurah program, and launching a new and improved website. Small gestures can go a long way toward making people feel recognized and included. Volunteer greeters and a coffee station now welcome worshippers on Shabbat. Nametags were added to High Holiday services this past year. And the ritual committee is selecting an English transliteration of the Shabbat morning service to make those who do not read Hebrew more comfortable with our service.

Helping people connect with their Beth El neighbors is part of another initiative spearheaded by Margueritte Cox. Using a computer application that provides geo-coded maps of the region superimposed with a database of Beth El member addresses, members will be able to connect with those who live nearby to carpool, form chavurot, and provide support in times of need.

To better accommodate members who live in the Triangle's southwestern region, Beth El is holding more events outside Durham, including a series of Lunch & Learn programs at the UNC Chapel Hill Hillel. And we have initiated efforts to make our space more accessible. We are mounting signs that point to the handicapped bathroom, adding wheelchair stations inside the sanctuary, buying large print prayer books, and providing assisted listening devices to make services clearer for the hearing impaired.

"Is Judaism for everybody or only for the able-bodied? If we don't say we're inclusive, we give the impression we're not." -- Meg Anderson, Beth El board member

Imagine a Beth El that can comfortably accommodate 400 families with an inspiring and flexible design that meets the needs of all of our religious, social, and youth activities.

Beth El's building is nearly 60 years old and it will need major improvements in the next few years. Dozens of people left Kol Nidre mid-service because there not enough seats; the building has no wheel-chair accessible fire exit and no handicapped ramp to access the bimah; and during the recent snowstorm, our roof began to leak.

We have begun thinking of how to improve our physical space. We have formed a buildings and grounds committee and have hired Weinstein|Friedlein Architects of Durham. The architects have been asked to draw up three different scenarios that would allow Beth El congregants to reimagine our existing facility and will present drafts of possible designs and renovations to the board this summer. Any renovation or expansion of the building will be done only after a careful assessment of feasibility to insure Beth El's overall financial capacity.

"We're a growing congregation. We have a dynamic rabbi. The quality of our building doesn't match the quality of our community. We owe it to ourselves to change that. Imagine what we could do in a building that served us." -- Nathan Bearman, co-chair buildings and grounds committee.

Imagine a Beth El that fosters more learning and engagement for children and teens, that places an even higher value on our children's education, where the preparation is rigorous and there are more deeply meaningful opportunities for learning and engagement from early childhood through high school.

The Talmud Torah curriculum has been reformatted this year to have a unified structure with clear and concise goals. It has introduced a new T'fillah (prayer) program and the rabbi now leads Mincha/Maariv for our 2nd-6th graders. Last year we hired a new b'nei mitzvah coordinator to grow our exemplary peer-tutoring program for our burgeoning classes. We are further improving the program to enhance the education and experience of our teens.

To better engage our teens, we have strengthened our relationship with Community Midrasha and are encouraging continued learning for our 8th to 12th graders. We are organizing popular teen Shabbat dinners at Rabbi Greyber's home. And we will soon hire a teen engagement coordinator to create meaningful relationships with teens and sustain a strong post-b'nei mitzvah cohort.

I love the feeling of warmth and community at Beth El and preparing for my Bat Mitzvah has been a great experience. I can't wait to be a part of the new teen programs – they encourage us to be excited about staying involved in the community after our b'nai mitzvahs. -- Mira Pickus, 7th grade Talmud Torah

Imagine a Beth El that maintains financial stability and continues to welcome members regardless of their ability to pay.

A high priority for the strategic plan is to maintain financial stability. Dues currently constitute about half of the annual budget, yet keeping dues affordable requires that we rely more on donations. To that end, Treasurer Sheila Goldstein and the Finance Committee generated a five-year strategic projection to inform our plans to secure the revenue we need to implement the strategic plan while keeping dues affordable. Beth El is committed to never turning anyone away because they cannot afford the costs of membership.

"I've been very grateful that people have allowed me to have a sliding scale. When I have a little bit more, I contribute a little more and when I don't, I can't." -- Galia Goodman, Beth El member

Imagine a Beth El that is vibrant and joyous, serious and spiritual, rich and celebratory, one that is accessible to all and inspires us with its physical beauty and the rich opportunities inside. Beth El is here for you and for all of us, and it will take your support to make it happen