

Synagogue welcomes back congregants to renovated sanctuary

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Mike Segal carries a Torah at Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus' newly renovated Scheck Family Sanctuary during a rededication service. (Courtesy)

Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus in North Miami Beach welcomed back congregants to its newly renovated Scheck Family Sanctuary at a rededication Shabbat service.

Mike Segal, who led the sanctuary renovation efforts, thought the service was “extremely emotional.”

“I think everybody had a good time and were very excited about what was happening,” Segal continued. “I think it was one of the most significant events in the more than 80-year history of our congregation.”

In 1990, the membership of Beth Torah, which was founded in 1940, recognized the need to move its congregation and construct a new sanctuary and school on Ives Dairy Road in North Miami-Dade County where most of its families had moved. The sanctuary was completed in 1995.

In 2018, after consideration, the synagogue, which is home to more than 700 member families who have their roots from all over the world, determined it was time to embark on a project to renovate the sanctuary to accommodate changing times. The renovation project took place during the span of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus' clergy, past presidents, current executive leadership and Scheck Family Sanctuary donors at the newly renovated sanctuary. (Courtesy)

Rabbi Mario Rojzman, Beth Torah's senior rabbi who was involved in the renovation project, said, "After so many years of investing in education but neglecting the building, it was time to invest in beautifying the place where we worship and to create a place where the needs of the North Miami Jewish

community, which includes a lot of people who speak several languages, are met.”

Rojzman said any renovation done in the right way energizes the community.

“When you’re having problems with the membership and people aren’t participating, the urgency goes to another place, but when you have a community like ours that’s alive and vibrant, and you have a solid amount of people that come and participate, you want to give back to them,” he continued. “Beth Torah is such a diverse community, so this new structure will allow us to have services in Spanish, English and Hebrew simultaneously, as well as services with music and without music simultaneously.”

Rojzman added, “It’s not just about having new chairs; it’s about offering a venue for all these different opportunities.”

Rojzman said a new sound proof wall allows for multiple services to take place simultaneously at the sanctuary and ballroom, which are attached to each other.

Segal, who’s been a member of Beth Torah for approximately 40 years, said the synagogue has a significant amount of congregants from South America, with a considerable amount of them from Argentina.

“A few years ago we started having two High Holiday services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, one for the Anglos and one for the Hispanics, but it required us to have a tent outside in the back,” he said. “We would have this tent that would seat like 600 people, but it was quite costly and always in risk of rain which we had a few times, so we really wanted to be able to have two sets of services inside.”

Segal said he’s even more impressed with the renovated sanctuary than he thought he would be.

“I think it’s really breathtaking,” he said. “It was certainly no slam dunk when we started. We didn’t know whether we could get it accomplished. Of course, right in the middle came COVID, which made it only more difficult.”

Segal said the renovation is approximately 90-95 percent complete.

“It’s complete in the sense that it’s absolutely useable on a regular basis,” he said. “We just have to fix up a few things that many people don’t necessarily see, but we do. We also have to do the storage facility.”



Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus' renovated Scheck Family Sanctuary. (Courtesy)

Segal said that Rojzman was the one who came up with the idea for the project.

“He was also the guiding light throughout,” Segal noted about Rojzman’s involvement. “He wasn’t on the committees but he kept watch on it. He also did the lion’s share of the solicitations.”

Rojzman said the renovation will allow other local Jewish and Israeli organizations to use the venue.

“It’s not just for us,” he said.

Segal noted, “I think the building itself is already becoming a very desirable place to have affairs.”

The synagogue is still collecting funds for the renovation project.

Visit btbrc.org/sanctuary-project-donations/ to make a contribution.