

## Sanctuary Redesign Update for the New Year

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From: Peggy Hackett (office@beki.org)

To: bekinews@beki.org

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Dear BEKI friends,

As we approach the new year, we are writing with news about our progress toward transforming our mid-20th-century sanctuary to a more inclusive, more spiritually intimate, and more fully egalitarian worship space.

The Sanctuary Redesign Committee and a related team, the Implementation Committee, spent much of the summer on two major efforts:

- determining whether the conceptual design that we presented to the congregation in the spring fits within our target budget;
- filling in the outlines of that conceptual design with artwork, furniture, and acoustical work.

Right now, budgetary considerations are at the forefront.

Working with our architect, the Implementation Committee — which overlaps with the redesign group and will take over the project once the design is complete — solicited cost estimates from a half-dozen highly regarded construction firms.

Unfortunately, construction costs have risen roughly 40 percent in the past year, and all the estimates we received exceeded our target budget. Our team is now working with the architect and contractors to identify potential savings. The Sanctuary Redesign Committee is considering how to modify the design while still meeting the project's goals within our budget.

The Fundraising Committee is pleased to report that congregants have already pledged and/or donated just over \$600,000 toward the overall fundraising goal of \$1.25 million. To everyone who has made a donation or pledge, thank you for your generosity! The Fundraising Committee is continuing its efforts to raise additional funds through grants and incentives as well as through additional donations and pledges. The Finance Committee and the BEKI Board will also consider appropriate borrowing to help reach our goal. Of course, more congregant pledges will reduce our need for loans.

As mentioned above, the project's overarching goals are to create a space that reflects BEKI's values of warmth, inclusiveness, spiritual intimacy, and true egalitarianism. Specific priorities for the redesign — as reflected in a 2021 congregational survey — include accessibility, more natural light, a flexible seating arrangement, better acoustics, improved climate control and air quality, and an environment conducive to BEKI's style of participatory, member-led communal prayer.

Additional project developments include:

- The Implementation Committee is working closely with the architect to select an acoustical company and a structural engineer for specific aspects of the sanctuary redesign.
- A new Art Subcommittee has formed, made up of BEKI artists and members of the Sanctuary Redesign Committee. This subcommittee has developed a short list of potential artists for new and repurposed decorative elements, such as ark doors and/or curtain, Ner Tamid, and decoration surrounding the ark. The Sanctuary Redesign Committee is responsible for engaging with the artists and making the final selections.
- Seating is a very important element of the redesign. The redesign committee is scouring the earth — well, the U.S., Israel, and the U.K. — to find the right chairs for our updated sanctuary. BEKI members will have a chance to try out sample chairs before final decisions are made.
- Work continues on designing improvements to the sanctuary lighting and HVAC.
- In July, we held an online BEKI Schmooze about how the redesigned sanctuary can best meet the needs of neurodiverse people, such as those with autism spectrum disorders. We had a terrific turnout and received valuable input from neurodiverse members and their parents.

The conceptual design sketches, by Michael Goldblum and Building Studio Architects, are available [on the BEKI website](#) (password required). Much additional information about the project, including a [compilation of questions and answers](#) from the April congregational Zoom meeting, is available on the [Sanctuary Redesign section](#) of the BEKI website.

Please don't hesitate to contact us at [sanctuaryredesign@beki.org](mailto:sanctuaryredesign@beki.org).

*Shanah tovah!* We wish everyone a new year filled with sweetness, health, and joy.

Carole Bass, co-chair  
John Weiser, co-chair  
Eric Dunsker, Board liaison and House Committee chair  
Lynn Brotman

Howard Gralla  
Marga Hirsch  
Rick Saltz

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