



## Construction Ceremony – Cantor Zoe Jacobs

### Looking back in this place

They say that we can't really know where we're going if we don't know where we've been. So we start together by acknowledging and giving honour to the history of our community in this space - albeit looking a little different than it does now.

Perhaps you remember when the youth centre was our only building? The jumble sales held to allow us to afford our first Torah scroll? Or later when we received our first Czech scroll? The dedication service for our main hall, attended by our local MP at the time - before she became Prime Minister! Perhaps you remember those incredibly comfy brown chairs up in the old library and down in the small hall? Perhaps you remember when we finally fitted an actual ceiling on the inside the main hall, or when the toilets were refreshed and painted blue? Perhaps you remember when the beautiful sculpture was added to the hallway, or when the new portacabins were added to the kindergarten... This space has seen us grow and change in so many ways.

Perhaps you remember when we used to host our homeless guests for lunch on Thursdays, as the precursor to Homeless Action in Barnet? Perhaps you remember being in the synagogue the day after Yitzchak Rabin was tragically killed, desperately coming together in the hope of peace? Perhaps you remember the first night we hosted our Somali-Bravinese friends for Ramadan prayers in our main hall? Or any one of many extraordinary calls to action in the sermons or teachings by one of our Rabbis - Henry Goldstein, Jeffrey Newman, Howard Cooper, or any of the rabbis and teachers who are a gift to our community by being a part of us? Perhaps you remember the induction of our extraordinary leader and wise guide - our senior Rabbi, Miriam Berger? Or the time when we opened a London Citizens meeting with a set of shofar blasts? Our community has always been on the front of social action and change - never afraid to step outside the box, to step into the water, to go first.... Never afraid to stand up and be counted.

Perhaps you remember one of the many incredible youth events that were created in this space? The creation of Friday Group so long before it's time... the

extraordinary weekend residential where you slept on the bima or policed the space as madrichim, trying to convince the children to go to sleep! Perhaps you can hear our community coming together in song - singing songs from the 60's from the old shiron on a Friday night, or singing more recent Jewish compositions - sometimes even led by the composers themselves. Perhaps you can still hear the harmonies echoing around the building during Shirei Chagigah, or the ruach of the Rhythm 'n' Jews or B'yachad teams leading us in song - perhaps even at an indoor bonfire? Perhaps you can hear the joy as we celebrated Simchat Torah with Shir, or recall the solemnity of Kol Nidre as we've decamped so many times around north London? Perhaps you reflect personally on your own s'machot - a baby blessing, B'nei Mitzvah, a wedding, an anniversary, or perhaps you've been comforted during a shiva, a yahrzeit, or during yizkor here. We've always come together to lift our voices in prayer - to sing, to plead, to hope - we have found God here in this very place - perhaps even when we weren't expecting to do so. We are a community whose strength only increases when we come together. And we have done so in many ways - more recently, even on Zoom.

Perhaps you've been here from the beginning. Perhaps you've joined more recently. We each have our own memories of this space. From the 20 families in 1960 who felt called to the blessing of lech lecha - to become a blessing as a new community - to the more than 900 families who are now part of our community - we have grown and changed, we have stood up and been counted, we have supported and celebrated, but most of all, we've never stood still.

***Mah tovu ohalecha ya'akov, mish'k'notecha Yisrael*** - How extraordinary is this place we call our tent and our dwelling place!