

Rabbi Noah Arnow  
Sunday, August 19, 2018  
8 Elul 5778

### 7701 Maryland Avenue Groundbreaking

If you look around, you may be able to notice the outlines on the grass, and the cones at the corners demarcating the dimensions of our new sanctuary, and showing where its walls will be.

I want to speak about these walls that are outlined here, these walls we will build.

These walls will be built from steel, and wood and stone.

These walls will be built using materials that come from around the country, and around the world, materials that humans have found in the world, in and on the earth, and have fashioned to use for our needs.

These walls will be built by the hands of expert builders, using the best of human ingenuity to construct in ways that are safe, efficient, healthy and responsible.

These walls will be built by our architects, who have heard our hopes and designed our dreams. Within a budget.

These walls will be built by our synagogue volunteers and leadership, who have worked and worked and worked and worked to lead us to this moment.

These walls will be built by our dollars, and donations, our donors and supporters, who have given with deep generosity.

These walls will be built by our Jewish history, in St. Louis, in America, in Israel, and around the world.

These walls will be built by our memories of sacred spaces that we can still see in our minds' eyes.

These walls will be built by those who came before us, those who built for us before we could build for ourselves.

These walls will be built by those who are here, but are very young, and those who are not yet here, those who will repaint, and repoint and rewire, those who will repatch and repair these walls in decades and generations to come.

These walls will be built by our prayers, that over the coming years, and decades, will fill in the invisible chinks with our holiest desires, our deepest needs, and our highest wishes.

These walls will be built by our kindness and compassion and caring, for each other, and for all around us, inside and outside of these walls.

These wall will be built by our commitment to building a just world, and by our work on bringing liberty and justice to all.

These walls will be built by our tears, of sorrow, and of joy.

These walls will be built by our songs and our laughter.

These walls will be built by our hopes.

These walls will be built by our hands.

These walls will be built by our hearts.

These walls will be built by us.

And where is God in all this? Look at your hands. The hands you see are yours. But they are not only yours. For we, our hands, and ourselves, are God's hands in this world. When our hands build, God is building.

The walls will be built strong, and will keep the rains out, the sun off our heads. They will keep us cool in the summer, and warm in the winter.

These walls will create our new home.

But just as these lines on the ground do not, cannot contain us this day, these walls we will build, will not contain, will not keep inside, our prayers and dreams and work and love. The light we bring, the brightness we create, will shine far beyond these walls.

For we are here, as Kol Rinah, as Jews, and as humans, not to be alone, not to be behind walls, but to be together, to share and repair, to help and build our neighborhood, our community and our world.

One way we sanctify a moment in Jewish tradition is by making a l'chaim, a toast to life.

Please join me with the blessing over grape juice,

Baruch Atah A-do-nai, Elo-heinu, Melech HaOlam, Borei Peri Hagafen.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

And we all say Amen, and L'chaim!