



Temple Emanu El History

In the summer of 1947, Temple Emanu El was founded. Dr. Alan S. Green was named rabbi and graced our pulpit for 30 years. Irvin Bushman became the first cantor.

The earliest members were primarily young, enthusiastic, post-war families living in the epicenter of what was to become a new Jewish neighborhood – the Heights.

In June of 1950, land was acquired in University Heights to build Temple Emanu El's original home. Ground was broken in 1951; the cornerstone laid in 1952; and the dedication of our beautiful new building in 1954.

In October of 1977, Rabbi Green passed the torch to then assistant rabbi, Daniel Roberts. Rabbi Roberts served as the senior rabbi for 25 years. During Rabbi Roberts' tenure, the Temple established a preschool.

When Rabbi Roberts transitioned to emeritus status in 2002, Rabbi Andrew Paley was hired and was with the congregation for 3 years. Rabbi Steven Denker was brought on board in 2004 as interim rabbi and in 2006 as senior rabbi.

The demographics of the Cleveland Jewish community had shifted significantly by this time. What was once the center of Jewish Cleveland was not any longer. Fifty plus years after Temple Emanu El dedicated its first building, the Board of Trustees started to look at our options and, with congregational input, determined that relocation was our best avenue. In 2005, an 11-acre partial was purchased in Orange Village.

During the summer of 2007, weather cooperated for the official groundbreaking with hundreds of families in attendance. In August 2008, adults and children alike helped march our 6 sacred Torahs 6.3 miles to their new home.

Since settling into our new facility, Religious School has an enviable 75% retention rate after B'nai Mitzvah, well above the national average. The Preschool -- accommodating children 6 weeks through pre-kindergarten -- has also gained momentum, making it necessary to add new classrooms. Temple Emanu El's senior youth group, TEMTY, routinely leads Cleveland's Reform congregations in sending the largest contingent to regional conventions. Active and growing adult groups, like the Brotherhood and Women of Temple Emanu El, keep members involved. Social and advocacy-oriented programs have become a cornerstone of who we are as a congregation.

Rabbi Denker retired in May 2022 and Rabbi Matt Cohen started his tenure in May 2022. Under Rabbi Matt's tutelage and with his charismatic nature, the congregation has already gained 50 new families and is continuing to grow.

Our location, size, and sense of community attract and welcome a growing number of interfaith families. Temple Emanu El is the only full-service Reform congregation servicing the eastern and southern suburbs of Cleveland as well as the Jewish community of western Geauga, northwestern Portage, and northern Summit counties. The future is very bright for Temple Emanu El in all aspects. Our plan is to continue to engage our entire congregation in expanded programming, meaningful worship experiences, and innovative education for all ages.