

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Temple Israel Reform Congregation
 other names/site number _____
 name of related multiple property listing _____

Location

street & number 315 Forest Ave not for publication
 city or town Staten Island vicinity
 state New York code NY county Richmond Co. code _____ zip code 10301

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
 I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
 In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
 ___ national ___ statewide X local

 Signature of certifying official/Title Date

 State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

 Signature of commenting official Date

 Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

 Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/ Synagogue

Religious School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/ Synagogue

Religious School

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Midcentury Modern

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick, Concrete, Wood

roof: Asphalt

other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Temple Israel is located at 315 Forest Avenue, on the north side of the avenue, between Randall Avenue and Hart Boulevard, in the West New Brighton Neighborhood of the Borough of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York. The boundaries of the property are described as Staten Island Tax Block 131, Lot 225. The surrounding area, within the north-central portion of the borough, is largely residential, primarily occupied by single family homes, with an active commercial corridor further west along Forest Avenue. The site lies in a dogleg at the extreme southeast corner of West New Brighton, Tompkinsville, Silver Lake and Sunset Hill (originally considered part of West New Brighton) meet.

Temple Israel was built from 1961 to 1964, to designs by architect Percival Goodman, with congregant Albert Melniker listed as the associate architect, and is distinctly midcentury modern in design.

Narrative Description

The synagogue is bounded by Gregg Place to the north, Randall Avenue to the east, Forest Avenue to the south, and Hart Boulevard to the west. The site occupies the entire southwest portion of the block and takes up the entire frontage along Forest Avenue. The plot extends northwards, fronting a portion of Gregg Place at the middle of the block. Centered on the plot, the synagogue takes up less than half the area of the site; a parking lot encompasses the entire western portion of the parcel, while a brook runs through a landscaped garden that surrounds the synagogue on the north, east and south.¹ (Figure 1)

Exterior

Temple Israel is “a ‘split-level’ type of plan.”² The single-story foyer entrance wing, which projects west from the bulk of the building, is entered at grade. To the east, the main spaces of the sanctuary, lounge and social hall, are reached by a half-flight of stairs up from the foyer level, while the school area, tucked beneath the main spaces, is reached by a half-flight of stairs down from the foyer level, and exits to the north. There is a butterfly roof over the main spaces: the portion over the sanctuary slopes upwards to the south, while that over the social hall slopes upwards to the north.³ The flat roof connecting the two wings of the butterfly sits over the lounge. The lower section to the north, beyond the butterfly roof, is occupied by a custodian’s apartment and a kitchen for the social hall. (Figures 2 & 3)

In the words of the architect: “Foundations and walls to grade as well as slab on grade and first floor slab are reinforced concrete. Structure above consists of cavity brick and block bearing walls with roof composed of laminated wood beams and wood roof planks.... The concrete is left exposed and unfinished, the brick in a range of warm reds and dark browns

¹ Though originally considered an obstacle to construction, the brook has become an asset to the congregation, and is used for the annual ritual of "Tashlikh."

² “Temple Israel Reform Congregation of Staten Island, Staten Island, New York,” marked “Goodman, 10.8, series IIiv, Temple Israel Reform Congregation # 760” and held at Columbia University’s Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Drawings and Archives, “Goodman, Percival Acc.#1994.006” Box 10.

³ Goodman letter to the Building Committee, June 15, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel. See significance section for further information.

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creates a color harmony with the dark stained wood members of the roofs.”⁴ The brick in question was described as “used brick,” and the colors alternate in what appears to be a random pattern across the walls. The laminated beams are composed of sixteen narrow, stacked planks glued together.⁵

Entrance wing

The entrance wing, entered at grade, is one-story tall, with walls on three sides. It is capped by a flat roof that is supported by a series of laminated wooden beams, including three large single beams, which in turn are set into the brick walls for support. The roof continues in an extended overhang above the entrance, with a less pronounced overhang over the side walls (Photo 1).

The west wall of the entrance wing is divided into two halves. The southern half is a solid brick wall, adorned with a projecting concrete plaque that reads “1963 Temple Israel” in both Hebrew and English (Photo 2). To the north of this plaque is a recessed entrance to the synagogue foyer, which includes a double-door entry. Each door is illuminated by three small, blue, rectangular windows of textured glass and a large, rectangular, glass transom above. The entry is flanked on either side by full-height rectangular windows, each with an operable hopper window below (Photo 3). The double-doors are replacements, but exact replicas of the originals, as evidenced in construction photos.⁶ (Figure 4)

The north side of the entrance wing is primarily of brick, with a set of narrow operable windows running just below the major beam, and another row of fixed windows above, which continue the motif of narrow bands of windows as are found in the sanctuary (Photo 4). The configuration is unchanged, as shown in the construction photo (Figure 5)

The south wall, rather than brick, uses poured concrete, which was later sealed with masonry coating. The use of narrow bands of windows that frame the large support beam mirrors that found on the north side (Photo 5).

The original window configuration, which was slightly altered at some point after 2007, included four large, fixed panes that alternated with four narrow two-part operable windows as shown in Figure 6.⁷

The main body of the synagogue peeks above the entrance wing, with the sanctuary to the south, and the social hall, kitchen and custodian’s apartment to the north (Photo 6). The sanctuary wall is plain brick, with the exception of a thin band of windows along the roofline, which make a turn at the southern corner and expand into a multi-paned triangular window which stretches to floor level.

The Social Hall portion, to the north of the entrance wing, is flanked by a tall brick boiler chimney on the north and a portion of brick wall on the south. In front of the chimney is a gravel-filled brick box intended for plantings. The social hall is approached by a two-part flight of steps of soldier-course brick-clad risers with metal railings, leading to a terrace. The current configuration is unchanged, as per the construction photo below, with the exception of a new vestibule behind the chimney. The social hall is lit by four full-height bays of wide, rectangular glass panels. Each panel has a tall, angled portion above a shorter fixed window with an operable hopper window below, mirroring the arrangement that surrounds the main entrance doors. (Figure 7)

The northern-most window features an entrance to the social hall in its lower portion, which is now obscured by a vestibule. This vestibule was designed by George and Anne Targownik, with Albert Melniker, long-time member of the synagogue, as the architect of record.⁸ Situated behind and west of the chimney, this vestibule was added in 1999 to

⁴ “Temple Israel Reform Congregation...” *op. cit.*

⁵ Over time, glue dried out in some of the beams most exposed to the sun and required repairs, for which the congregation raised funds. In some cases, damaged beam ends have been enclosed in metal sheathing.

⁶ All the construction photos included in the figures section, taken in 1963, are in the synagogue’s files; they have been cropped in this description to illustrate original conditions for comparison’s sake. According to the congregation, the door replacement dates to the 1990s.

⁷ Published in the *Staten Island Advance*, May 14, 2023; photo by Chad Rachman. Caption on the photo suggests it was taken in 2007.

⁸ New York City Buildings Department, Job No. 500392540.

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create an ADA-compliant restroom servicing the social hall.⁹ Double doors now lead from the vestibule to the terrace, and a new windowed wall sits between the chimney and the kitchen wing. Below the vestibule is a secondary entrance to the building's basement.

North of the social hall is the exterior of the synagogue's kitchen, a brick wall with three irregularly placed rectangular windows of various sizes, a motif which is repeated in the sanctuary (Photo 7). Below the kitchen are a concrete lintel and windows, which continue the pattern used for the school wing on the east elevation (Photo 8).

South elevation, facing Forest Avenue

the south elevation along Forest Avenue, though not the façade, effectively acts as the public face of the synagogue. This elevation faces the street and is inscribed with the name "TEMPLE ISRAEL Reform Congregation of Staten Island" set beneath a sculpture of a menorah (a seven-branched candelabra, historically a major symbol of the religion). The elevation is purposefully designed to suggest the form of the ark of the covenant – the central feature of the sanctuary which lies directly behind this southern wall – by having the central section project out from the main wall; Goodman designed the brick wall sections on either side to suggest the two tablets of the Ten Commandments (Photo 9).

This section is topped with a wooden platform supported on projecting laminated beams; the platform protects the colored glass atop the ark inside. Above the platform rises a metal rod supporting a Magen David (star of David), another standard symbol of Judaism (Photos 10 & 11).

Beneath the name of the synagogue, two sets of three double-hung windows provide light for the school. These are set between slabs of concrete with a concrete lintel above, matching the design of the school on the east elevation. A large plaque with information about the school has been added at the bottom of the projecting "ark" section. At the north side of the projection, a concrete shelter protects a secondary entrance to the school (Photo 12).

East Elevation

In many ways, the east elevation displays the most dramatic composition of the four elevations. Its long stretch, with a central projecting concrete staircase, reflects all the major interior sections of the synagogue (with the exception of the entrance foyer). From south to north in the upper story: the sanctuary with its irregularly placed windows, the lounge with its exit onto the concrete staircase, the social hall, and the custodian's apartment. The lower story houses the school. At the top of the elevation, the butterfly roof is clearly visible.

In the architect's words: "The lower level of class rooms with its concrete construction is clearly expressed by the horizontal concrete lintel beam over the windows and piers." The classrooms are lit by a long series of double-hung windows set in fourteen groups of three, stretching from one end of the complex to the other (Photo 13). Those windows replaced the originals, which replaced pairs of tripartite windows (Figures 8 & 9; Photos 14 & 15).

The concrete staircase provides access to a balcony that leads into the lounge and the social hall. Set between wall segments, the east entrance repeats the arrangement seen at the entrance wing: a recessed entrance, set back several feet from the brick walls, with an entryway identical to that of the main entrance. There is an additional, door at the north end of the balcony that leads into the social hall, and another at the south end leading to the sanctuary.

North elevation

On the north elevation, a concrete pathway leads from the sidewalk to the entrance of the school and passes over a brook that runs through the property. The lower story, where the school is located, has no windows, only a double-door main

⁹ This addition was part of an effort to make the synagogue more accessible – the lift on the lobby staircase and the lift in the sanctuary were added at the same time, in a program called "access to Judaism."

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entrance that is situated beneath a balcony. This concrete balcony is the primary architectural feature on this elevation. It is supported on projecting brick piers that rise to the roof line, and its surrounds and platform have been painted red. On the second floor, a recessed windowed area sits between the balcony's piers, providing access to the custodian's apartment that occupies the eastern side of the second story. The synagogue's kitchen occupies the western side, and is lit by four tall, narrow windows. A brick projection is positioned over the balcony on the roof, which serves to unify the two halves of the elevation (Photo 16).

Interior

Foyer, stair hall and synagogue office

The synagogue's main entrance leads into a spacious foyer, lit by narrow windows on the west side (Figure 10). The laminated support beams seen on the exterior are visible here as well, and support the wooden slat ceiling, while large cylindrical down lights are attached to the beams. This style of lighting is used throughout the interior. A large, centrally-placed chandelier, a later addition, hangs from the ceiling near the entrance. The floor is tiled, and the wood-paneled walls are hung with typical synagogue features, including a variety of memorial plaques and two "tree of life" installations, which mark significant life events of congregants (Photo 17).

At the east wall, a wide staircase with terrazzo risers leads up half-a-flight to the gift shop, beyond which are double doors leading to the lounge, sanctuary, and social hall. On the west wall, a narrow staircase has been fitted with a handicap platform lift and leads down half-a-flight to the synagogue school (Photo 18). A door on the south side of the foyer leads to the synagogue office, a simple space with concrete-block walls and laminated wooden ceiling beams (Photo 19).

Sanctuary

The sanctuary, like the social hall, is a single large space, with concrete-block walls sides and a ceiling that rises to the south as part of the butterfly roof (Photo 20).

Unlike the social hall, the sanctuary's concrete blocks are exposed. In the architect's words: "The walls in exposed unpainted concrete block, the ceilings in stained wood, are simply functional, a functionalism relieved by the colored glass in the windows and the decorative pattern used in the block work."¹⁰ Goodman used two of these patterns: on the east and west sides, the concrete blocks are arranged in a pattern of two rows in horizontal-stack bond and one offset row (Photo 21).

The south wall is divided into five sections by projecting concrete-block piers that support the ceiling beams. The upper portion of the two sections to either side of the ark have alternating groups of three rows in horizontal-stack bond and two rows of offset horizontal-bond blocks, with alternating headers and stretchers (Photo 22).

The center section of the south wall contains the ark – the ceremonial centerpiece of the sanctuary where the Torah scrolls are kept. Originally, in line with Goodman's stated beliefs, the ark was closed by a curtain rather than by doors.¹¹ The current doors are a later addition, as is the "ner tamid" ("eternal light") fixture above the doors, and the decorative glass window at the top. Both the doors and the window, donated by the family of a synagogue member, illustrate the story of "Jacob's Ladder."¹² (Figure 11, Photo 23)

¹⁰ "Temple Israel Reform Congregation of Staten Island, Staten Island, New York," marked "Goodman, 10.8, series IIiv, Temple Israel Reform Congregation # 760" and held at Columbia University's Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Drawings and Archives, "Goodman, Percival Acc.#1994.006" Box 10. Though the write-up doesn't specify that it was written by Goodman, the level of detail and the language does make his authorship seem likely.

¹¹ As quoted in the significance section: "[Goodman] repudiates the use in many synagogues of doors before the Ark...because the Bible calls not for doors but for a veil," in "Paradox of Percival," *American Judaism*, Vol. IX, No. 3, 1960, p. 9.

¹² When the ark doors are open, several Torah scrolls, on two rows of shelving, are visible, and the design of the ark covers continues on the Torah scroll covers.

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The ark sits atop the carpeted bimah, or raised platform used in prayer services; it extends from the eastern wall most of the way to the western wall, stopping at an alcove set aside for an organ and chairs for a choir. There are two wooden railings on the five steps leading up to the bimah. Various pieces of furniture used in the service sit atop the bimah, including four built-in chairs, one built-in bench, a pulpit and a reader's table (Photo 24). The wall holds an ornamental menorah similar to the one on the south elevation.

The sanctuary's seating consists of in-built wooden pews with "theater-style" pull-down seats, which are separated by the center and side aisles.

The east wall has a narrow band of windows that meet a tall window above the secondary exit, as is seen on the west wall of the social hall. The sanctuary wall also has five irregularly placed steel-sash windows, in various shades of blue textured glass. The wall is lined with various memorial plaques (Photo 25).

The west wall has the same narrow band of windows at the top below the ceiling, but it joins a narrow triangular window next to the choir-and-organ alcove, also in various shades of blue glass. At the far end of the wall is an exit leading to a concrete-block-walled staircase which provides access to the rabbi's study (Photo 26).

The north wall is a mirror of the social hall's south wall (Photo 27).

Lounge and social hall

From the foyer, one enters the lounge, which connects to the social hall on the left (north) and to the sanctuary on the right (south). The lounge is separated from the primary spaces by a faux-wood accordion partition so that, when the partitions are opened, the three spaces form one large space. When closed, the lounge is a long, narrow space, leading to the east balcony and staircase with swinging doors to provide access to the sanctuary and social hall (Photo 28).

The social hall is a wide-open space. Its most notable feature is the laminated-beam and wood-slat ceiling which rises as one of the two wings of the butterfly roof. The hall's concrete-block walls have been recovered twice. The first time, they were covered in deeply-textured carpeting, complete with macrame window treatments, which have since been replaced with vinyl wall covering and vertical blinds (Photo 29).

The east wall has three tall, narrow, rectangular windows that alternate with small rectangular windows, two of which retain their original blue glass. There is a single doorway leading out to the balcony, above which is a large glass pane that rises to the ceiling, connecting there to the band of narrow windows at the roofline. Cylindrical down-lights like those in the foyer are suspended from the wooden beams (Photo 30).

The north wall, which separates the social hall from the kitchen and the custodian's apartment, has a deep central recess that originally enclosed a stage, which has been removed. A door on the left (west) end leads to the kitchen, a door on the right (east) leads to a storage area. A narrow band of textured, blue-tinted windows runs along its top beneath the ceiling.

A pair of double-doors on the west wall leads to the vestibule, where the ADA accessible bathroom is located. The brick of the exterior chimney was utilized as the west wall of the vestibule (Photos 31 & 32).

The south wall, which includes the accordion partitions, is lit by a narrow band of clear glass panes at its top. Originally the social hall had a central wooden dance floor, but this was replaced by carpeting that continues into the sanctuary (Photo 33 & 34).

Kitchen

A door at the west end of the social hall's north wall leads to the kitchen. It is a utilitarian space with walls of unfinished concrete blocks, and irregularly placed windows similar to those in the sanctuary (Photo 35).

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The former custodian's apartment, now in use as a school space, shares the north end of the building with the kitchen. It includes two rooms and a bathroom. The rooms, though somewhat altered, continue the concrete-block construction and wooden plank ceilings used throughout the synagogue (Photo 36).

Rabbi's study

The rabbi's study has the same ceiling as throughout and concrete-block walls. It is carpeted and has a large expanse of window at one end, besides the stairway and entrance from the sanctuary, it also has an entrance connecting to the synagogue office (Photo 37).

Lower story: school rooms and ancillary spaces

The lower story includes various meeting rooms, administrative offices, a boiler room, and other ancillary spaces, as well as ten classrooms and a library (Figure 12. These are located on either side of a long corridor leading to the entrance from Gregg Place. The classrooms are connected by movable partitions.¹³ Some of the rooms share concrete-block walls with the rest of the synagogue (Photos 38-40). The original windows have been replaced (see above in the description of the eastern elevation). There is little architectural significant detail in either the classrooms or the ancillary spaces.

¹³ The partitions were added to accommodate a later tenant.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1961-1964

Significant Dates

1964

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Percival Goodman

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance extends from 1961 to 1964. It begins with the construction of the building beginning in 1961 and extends to 1964, the year the temple was completed

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Although the temple is owned by a religious institution and used for religious purposes, the nomination recognizes the building for its architectural significance.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Temple Israel, at 315 Forest Avenue in the West New Brighton section of Staten Island, is architecturally significant at the local level under Criterion C as an example of an intact, early-1960s, mid-century-modern synagogue. Designed by prominent architect and synagogue specialist Percival Goodman and constructed between 1961 and 1964, the building served as a new home for the first (and currently sole) Reform Jewish congregation in the borough. Temple Israel was the last synagogue to be built before the completion of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge in 1964, which led to the doubling of the borough's population generally and its Jewish population in particular.

Percival Goodman designed more than fifty synagogues – making him, at that time, the most prolific synagogue architect in the United States. He became active in the field during the late 1940s, just as the United States was entering a post-World War II building boom, which included hundreds of synagogues for Jewish communities, many of which were relocating to the suburbs of American cities. Goodman became particularly involved in the design of synagogues for the Reform movement, participating in the creation of an architectural guide book for Reform congregations, and serving on an architectural panel of The Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the official arm of Reform synagogues.¹⁴ The Guide Book promoted the adoption of frank, Modernist design for new synagogues, not only to visually distinguish synagogues from churches and mosques, but also to address the specific needs of Jewish congregations.

In planning, choice of materials, and overall visual effect, Temple Israel has much in common with other Goodman synagogues, and reflects the guidance of the UAHC guide book. On the other hand, Temple Israel differs from his other designs in that it reflects the influence of two recently built and internationally renowned major modernist works by Le Corbusier in France: the Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp and the Monastery of Sainte-Marie de La Tourette, both of which Goodman visited shortly before accepting the Staten Island commission.

Temple Israel today survives as a distinctive architectural and religious landmark of the Jewish community in Staten Island and New York City.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Staten Island: Forest Avenue, West New Brighton, and Silver Lake¹⁵

West New Brighton (or West Brighton) occupies a portion of the former township of Castletown, “one of the original four subdivisions of the County of Richmond.”¹⁶ Castletown originated from a 1687 land grant to Governor Thomas Dongan, whose manor there, occupying several thousand acres, took its name from Dongan's ancestral manor of Castletowne in County Kildare, Ireland.¹⁷ Castletown's area today occupies much of the island's north shore, directly opposite Lower

¹⁴ The organization today is known as the Union for Reform Judaism.

¹⁵ This section is based in large part on Barnett Shepherd, “West New Brighton” (p.1396) and Marjorie Johnson, “Silver Lake” (p. 1071) in the *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2d edition, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (Yale University Press, 1991).

¹⁶ Martha S. Bendix, “Castleton,” in the *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2d edition, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (Yale University Press, 1991), p. 214 (2d ed).

¹⁷ Martha S. Bendix, “Castleton,” in the *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2d edition, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (Yale University Press, 1991), p. 214 (2d ed).

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Manhattan across the harbor, and includes the neighborhoods of Brighton Heights, Castleton Corners, Four Corners, New Brighton, Randall Manor, St. George, Silver Lake, Tompkinsville, and West New Brighton.¹⁸

New Brighton, as the area of Staten Island closest to Manhattan - to which it has long been connected by a ferry connection - was the first section of the island to develop as a suburb of New York City.¹⁹ Following Richmond County's incorporation into the City of Greater New York as part of the Consolidation of 1898, the area in and around St. George, located within New Brighton, evolved as the island's cultural, commercial and governmental hub.²⁰ Randall Manor, due west of New Brighton, developed around Sailor's Snug Harbor (National Register listed 1972), the early-nineteenth century retirement home for mariners. Due west of Randall Manor is West New Brighton, and south of West New Brighton lies Silver Lake.

West New Brighton, once the site of Governor Dongan's hunting lodge, remained rural for longer than many areas near St. George.²¹ In the nineteenth century, the northern portion of the neighborhood, close to the Kill van Kull, became an industrial district known as Factoryville; and later the waterfront became home to shipping-related services.²² The neighborhood's southern area, however, away from the waterfront, evolved as a "wooded residential area," and the name Forest Avenue is said to be derived from its one-time location at the forest edge.²³

Forest Avenue today forms the unofficial border between West New Brighton and Silver Lake. For half a dozen blocks, between Randall Avenue and Victory Boulevard, Forest Avenue runs along the northern edge of Silver Lake Park.²⁴ Although the synagogue's site is generally considered part of West New Brighton, it is sometimes also referred to as being in Randall Manor or in Silver Lake.²⁵

Temple Israel's history is closely tied to Silver Lake Park: its first home, at 800 Victory Boulevard, was in the Silver Lake neighborhood, directly across the street from the eastern edge of the park, while the current site sits half a block from the park's northern edge.

Shortly after annexation, a number of Staten Islanders began lobbying the new City of Greater New York for a public park – to be the new borough's first. Staten Island writer and resident John De Morgan appealed to the State Assembly

¹⁸ Martha S. Bendix, "Castleton," in the *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2d edition, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (Yale University Press, 1991), p. 214 (2d ed).

¹⁹ New Brighton's origins as such date back to the 1830s; by the 1840s and 1850s it had become a fashionable summer resort, and in 1866 it incorporated as a village. For a history of the development of New Brighton as a commercial and cultural hub for Richmond County, see the National Register Nomination of New Brighton Village Hall, prepared by Barnett Shepherd.

²⁰ For an overview of the history and architecture of Staten Island with emphasis on the neighborhoods surrounding the Staten Island Ferry landing in St. George, including New Brighton, see the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission's *St. George Historic District* designation report, LP-1883 (New York: City of New York, July 19, 1994), pp. 3-20.

²¹ West New Brighton borders on the Kill Van Kull to the north, Randall Manor to the east, Port Richmond to the west, Sunset Hill to the south, and Silver Lake on the southeast.

²² Barnett Shepherd, "West New Brighton," in the *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2d edition, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (Yale University Press, 1991), p. 1396.

²³ Barnett Shepherd, "West New Brighton," in the *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2d edition, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (Yale University Press, 1991), p. 1396.

²⁴ Forest Avenue, considered a major road in West New Brighton, is part of a series of roads – for several decades during the 20th century designated as New York State Route 439 – that connect the Staten Island Ferry terminal to the Elizabeth Ferry near the Goethals Bridge. Further west from the synagogue site, Forest Avenue forms the border between West New Brighton and Sunset Hill.

²⁵ New York City has no official set of neighborhood names or boundaries.

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Committee on Cities in February 1900 to appropriate funds to establish Silver Lake Park. By 1939, the park consisted of 207 landscaped acres around the Silver Lake Reservoir.²⁶

By 1947, Silver Lake Park marked a dividing line between the more developed north shore and the more rural area to the south. Along the north shore, lined with shipyards and factories, and on the east coast, with its long piers and its Free Port, the island appears to be very much an urban community, but five minutes after climbing the hill at St. George to the Silver Lake Reservoir, the illusion is lost and the rural nature of the island is apparent.²⁷ In 1951, a year after Temple Israel's first home opened, the *New York Times* ran a feature called "The Uncrowded Retreats of Near-By Staten Island," which listed just one park –Silver Lake.²⁸

The Jewish community of Staten Island

Staten Island, while geographically comparable in size to Queens and Brooklyn – the city's largest boroughs – nevertheless has a population today of just under half-a million, roughly one fifth the size of either of those two.²⁹ Until 1964, the island's population reached no more than 200,000 residents. That year, construction of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge connected Staten Island to Bay Ridge in Brooklyn and thereby to the web of highways knitting the five boroughs together into the greater metropolis. The island's Jewish population has always been similarly small compared to the city's.

New York boasts the world's largest and most diverse Jewish population of any city in the world outside of Israel, and second in size only to Tel Aviv's. With roots in the early-seventeenth century Dutch colony of Nieuw Amsterdam, the city's Jewish community grew through immigration over the next two centuries. Beginning in the 1880s and reaching its peak in the early decades of the twentieth century, a major wave of immigration of Eastern European Jews fleeing poverty, religious discrimination, expulsion and massacres, led to a Jewish population in New York of some two million people by the mid-twentieth century.

By far the greater part of that population has always lived in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Growth spilled over into the Bronx, and later Queens, reaching Staten Island relatively late. While Manhattan's Jewish population dates back to the seventeenth century, Brooklyn's to the mid-nineteenth century, and that of the Bronx and Queens to the early-twentieth century, Staten Island's Jewish population remained small until after the opening of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. As Professor Amy F. Stempler, of the College of Staten Island, wrote:

Staten Island, though part of America's largest Jewish city, has not received the scholarly attention awarded to Manhattan and the other outer boroughs. This distinction further solidifies the Island's reputation as the "forgotten borough." ... Richmond County...accounts for only 6 percent of New York City's total population and only 2 percent of its Jews...a 1932 map that showed percentages of Jewish residents in New York City neighborhoods did not even mention the existence of Staten Island.³⁰

²⁶ Guilds' Committee for Federal Writers' Publications, Inc., *New York City Guide* (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 618.

²⁷ "Father Knickerbocker's Other Island," *New York Times*, February 2, 1947, p. SM22.

²⁸ "The Uncrowded Retreats of Near-By Staten Island," *New York Times*, May 13, 1951, p. X13.

²⁹ According to the 2010 New York State Census, New York City's population was 8,175,133, while Staten Island's was 468,730. *NYC2010 Results from the 2010 Census*, Department of Planning, City of New York,

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/census2010/pgrhc.pdf>, cited by Professor Amy F. Stempler, College of Staten Island, City University of New York, in "Communal Reflections: The Jewish Historical Society of Staten Island Oral History Project," *New York History*, Winter 2015, p. 67 fn. 3.

³⁰ Professor Amy F. Stempler, College of Staten Island, City University of New York, in "Communal Reflections: The Jewish Historical Society of Staten Island Oral History Project," *New York History*, Winter 2015, p. 67 fn. 3.

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Though small, the Staten Island community put down early roots around the north shore. Its first congregation, B'nai Jeshurun, was organized in 1884 and built its first home on Victory Boulevard, in Tompkinsville, in 1891 (it moved to West New Brighton in 1971).³¹ In 1893, a Jewish cemetery opened in Silver Lake, an indication that that area was already an important center of Jewish life.³² Staten Island's second synagogue, Temple Emanu-El, opened in 1907 in Port Richmond, the neighborhood due west of West New Brighton. The Island's first Jewish Community Center was founded in 1928 at 475 Victory Boulevard, at the intersection with Forest Avenue, facing the northeast corner of the park.³³

Despite the community's small numbers, in 1930 several of Staten Island's Jewish residents had achieved sufficient notice to merit inclusion in the multi-volume *Staten Island and its People: A History 1609-1929*. Among them were several with connections to the neighborhood of West New Brighton, and specifically to Victory Boulevard or Silver Lake and the Jewish Community Center.

[I. Meyerowich], a resident of Staten Island for nearly forty years... is a large realty holder on the Island, was the builder of the first motion picture house at New Brighton, and is now actively interested in the promotion and general welfare of the Borough of Richmond... [and] an active member of... the Jewish Community Center of which he is a member of the advisory board.³⁴

[Samuel Gross:] The firm "The Stanly [sic] Style Shops Incorporated," a chain of stores headed by Mr. Gross, have come to be known as an institution in the business life of Staten Island... Mr. Gross's success... is perhaps the more startling when one considers that he came from Hungary at the age of eighteen, without resources or friends, knowing no English... [His third store was] situated on Castleton Avenue, West New Brighton.³⁵

[Elias Bernstein:] Few members of his profession on Staten Island have engaged in more varied activities than Mr. Bernstein. He is official counsel to the sheriff of Richmond County, trustee and vice-president of the Richmond County Bar Association... [and] president of the Tompkinsville Board of Trade... He is a trustee and chairman of the finance committee of the new Staten Island Jewish Community Center... The family residence is [in] West New Brighton.³⁶

In 1951, an estimate of the Jewish population nationwide put the figure in New York City at 2,100,000, of whom 8,000 lived in Staten Island.³⁷ As noted in a 1954 guidebook to Jewish sites in the United States, "Staten Island's Jewish population in 1954 was about as big as that to be found in many square blocks of Brooklyn or the Bronx."³⁸ Ten years

³¹ Oscar Israelowitz, William Aron, *The Changing Face of New York Synagogues 1730-1974*, catalog of an exhibition held at Yeshiva University Museum, 1974. "Synagogue Corner Stone Laying," *New York Times*, June 19, 1891, p. 6 – note that the *Times* article identified the neighborhood as Edgewater rather than Tompkinsville.

³² "Staten Island's Silver Lake cemetery tells the tale of NYC Jewish immigrants," *Staten Island Advance*, January 4, 2013.

³³ *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Institutions, United States and Canada* (Mosadot Publications, Inc., 1983), p. 324.

³⁴ Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and its People: A History 1609-1929* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1930), Vol. IV, p. 341.

³⁵ Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and its People: A History 1609-1929* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1930), Vol. IV, p. 360.

³⁶ Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and its People: A History 1609-1929* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1930), Vol. IV, p. 429-430.

³⁷ "Jewish Population Estimates," *American Jewish Year Book, 1951* (New York: American Jewish Committee and Philadelphia Jewish Publication Society of America), p. 19.

³⁸ Bernard Postal and Lionel Koppman, *A Jewish Tourist's Guide to the U.S.* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1954), pp. 462-463.

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later, the city's overall Jewish population had dropped to 1,936,000 while Staten Island's had increased by 20% to roughly 10,000.³⁹

With the opening of the Verrazano Narrows bridge in 1964 the island's population grew much more rapidly. As recently as 1960, over half the land on Staten Island was still rural. At that time, the Island's 222,000 residents were mostly concentrated along the Island's north and north-eastern shores, leaving the rest of the Island only sparsely populated and with large tracts of undeveloped and often inaccessible land. A dramatic change was marked in November 1964 when the Verrazano Narrows Bridge opened, providing, for the first time, quick and easy access between the Island and the rest of New York City. By 1970, nearly 300,000 people lived on Staten Island, a ten-year increase of almost 35%. During the same ten years, the Jewish population nearly doubled from 11,000 to 21,000 persons.⁴⁰

By 1980 Staten Island's population had increased by some 60 percent, while its Jewish population had grown even more quickly. Moreover, though small by comparison to the Jewish population of the city's other four boroughs, Staten Island's community had become larger than many others elsewhere in the country.

The 1981 Federation Jewish Population study found that there were 31,000 Jews living on Staten Island, representing 9% of the general population of Staten Island and 2% of the Jews in the New York eight-county area.... [However,] taken in an isolated fashion, Staten Island Jewry would be one of the larger Jewish communities in the United States, larger, for example, than the Jewish populations of Atlanta, Phoenix, San Diego or Houston.⁴¹ Its growth continued in the following decades, "By the end of the twentieth century, Staten Island had the fastest growing Jewish community in New York City."⁴²

In 2004, the citywide Jewish population had dropped to 973,200, while Staten Island's total had risen to 42,700.⁴³ Even as the borough's post-bridge population grew and spread out across the entire island, as of 1981 the Jewish population "...tended to concentrate in three geographic areas. The oldest, most established Jewish community is located on the North Shore, centered around Silver Lake Park. It is the primary site of the Jewish Community Center of Staten Island."⁴⁴

Since 1948 that area has also been home to Temple Israel, at both its first site and its current home.

Temple Israel, first Reform Synagogue on Staten Island

Staten Island's synagogues reflect the varied modern history of Judaism, representing Reform, Conservative and Orthodox movements. Seven of these were established prior to the Verrazano Bridge: Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in 1891, Conservative synagogue Temple Emanu-El in 1907 (NR listed 2007), Orthodox Agudath Achim Anshe Chesed

³⁹ "Jewish Population in the United States, 1960," *American Jewish Year Book, 1961* (New York: American Jewish Committee and Philadelphia Jewish Publication Society of America), p. 59.

⁴⁰ Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Communal Planning Committee, Subcommittee on Geographic Services Coordination, "The Staten Island Jewish Community in Perspective," May 1985, p. 9.

⁴¹ Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Communal Planning Committee, Subcommittee on Geographic Services Coordination, "The Staten Island Jewish Community in Perspective," May 1985, p. 13.

⁴² Professor Amy F. Stempler, College of Staten Island, City University of New York, in "Communal Reflections: The Jewish Historical Society of Staten Island Oral History Project," *New York History*, Winter 2015, p. 67 fn. 3.

⁴³ "Jewish population in the United States," *American Jewish Year Book, 2004* (New York: American Jewish Committee and Philadelphia Jewish Publication Society of America), p. 133.

⁴⁴ Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Communal Planning Committee, Subcommittee on Geographic Services Coordination, "The Staten Island Jewish Community in Perspective," May 1985, p. 13.

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Congregation in 1900, Temple Tifereth Israel in 1916, Congregation Ahavath Israel in 1926, B'nai Israel, founded in 1930 (relocated 1968), and the sole Reform synagogue, Temple Israel, founded in 1947.⁴⁵ While Staten Island is now home to twenty-three congregations, the first seven synagogues were known as the “Old Jewish Community.”⁴⁶ A 1985 listing of synagogues on the island counted eight Orthodox synagogues, seven Conservative synagogues, but still just one Reform synagogue.⁴⁷

The first official meeting of the Staten Island Reform Temple was held on June 9th, 1948, at Svea Hall, 789 Post Avenue, Staten Island.⁴⁸ As recorded in the minutes of the meeting, a motion was made and seconded that “there be established on Staten Island a liberal progressive Reform Synagogue.” When concern was expressed about “the possibility of the New congregation” drawing away members of “the Old Established Orthodox Congregation[s]” on the island, it was answered that “this was not the purpose of the New Synagogue” which “sought to bring” services to “those who were presently attending no Synagogue whatever,” offering religious services, a school, and social events.⁴⁹

Plans were adopted to find a meeting place and a temporary location for upcoming holiday services, while temporary officers were appointed. The executive committee included Mrs. Elias Bernstein, whose husband had been profiled two decades earlier in *Staten Island and its People*; the following year Mr. Bernstein became a synagogue trustee.⁵⁰

By August of 1948, fifty-five families had signed up for membership in the synagogue, and the congregation had hired Reverend Jay Brickman as a rabbi.⁵¹ In October of that year, the congregation held its first High Holy Day services.⁵²

The following January, the synagogue incorporated as “Temple Israel, Reform Congregation of Staten Island.” The Certificate of Incorporation stated the corporation’s purposes:

...to establish a Congregation in Israel, to perpetuate Judaism, to serve the Jewish people by providing a place where they may worship and where the teachings of Judaism may be made known, to advance the welfare of all those who may come under its influence and to promote Judaism in all relations of life by means of public and private worship by religious education, and through social welfare activities and such other means as shall serve to convey the teachings of Judaism.⁵³

As described retrospectively in a 2023 article in the *Staten Island Advance*:

In 1948, a group of Staten Islanders came together with the dream of starting the borough’s first Reform synagogue. All were still experiencing the terror of the Holocaust, and all were very committed to having their

⁴⁵ The date 1904 appears to be a typographical error, picking up the date from the book’s next sentence. See “Synagogue Corner Stone Laying,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1891, p. 6 – note that the *Times* article identified the neighborhood as Edgewater rather than Tompkinsville.

⁴⁶ Jenny Tango, *The Jewish Community of Staten Island* (Arcadia Publishing, 2004), p. 19.

⁴⁷ Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Communal Planning Committee, Subcommittee on Geographic Services Coordination, “The Staten Island Jewish Community in Perspective,” May 1985, pp. 34-35. The listing also included a nascent Reform congregation, “Bnai Zion,” which counted just 20 members and had no building (“Meets in members [sic] homes”). As of 2024, Temple Israel remains the sole Reform synagogue on the island.

⁴⁸ Its name, Temple Israel, had not yet been adopted.

⁴⁹ Cited in “Temple Israel Reform Congregation of Staten Island,” undated typescript in the synagogue’s files.

⁵⁰ Minutes of the first meeting of the Staten Island Reform Temple, June 9th, 1948, in the synagogue’s files.

⁵¹ Letter from Temple Israel’s officers to interested parties, August 12, 1968, in the synagogue’s files; “Temple Israel Names Rabbi,” *Staten Island Advance*, August 14, 1948.

⁵² “Jews to Observe Rosh Hashonah Eve Tomorrow,” *New York Tribune/Herald Tribune*, October 2, 1948, p.12. “Rosh Hashonah Services to Start At Sunset Oct. 3,” *New York Tribune/Herald Tribune*, September 25, 1948, p. 12.

⁵³ Certificate of Incorporation of Temple Israel, Reform Congregation of Staten Island, January 21, 1949.

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reform Jewish faith survive.... Their goal was to find unaffiliated Jews who were looking for a Jewish identity and to be ready to offer services for the High Holy Days, which that year fell in October. They reached their goal.⁵⁴

Temple Israel's first home on Victory Boulevard

After two years of holding services in temporary quarters, Temple Israel bought the former Gans residence, at 800 Victory Boulevard, directly across the street from Silver Lake Park.⁵⁵ While their new home was being built, the congregation planned to convert the existing building to a synagogue, modifying the residence to include "a chapel and pulpit on the first floor."⁵⁶

Nevertheless, rather than replace the building immediately as initially planned, Temple Israel continued to use the Gans house until 1959, when, having grown in size, the congregation announced plans to build an addition, rather than a replacement, for the existing building. Albert Melniker, a congregant who was an architect, was retained to plan the new building.⁵⁷ As of February 4, 1959, the Building Committee had met twice, and at a Board meeting it was announced that "working plans are about 80 per cent completed. By the next meeting they will be in a position to look for bids."⁵⁸

At the April 1st, 1959, Board Meeting, the Building Committee chairman, "...brought with him the latest plans for the final inspection by the Board members. He stated that with in [sic] several weeks response to bids should be forthcoming...."⁵⁹

And at the May 6th, 1959, Board Meeting, the Building Committee announced that, "...plans had been filed in the Building Department and that copies of the plans and specifications had been sent to builders for bids."⁶⁰

The project, however, was unexpectedly upended on May 19, 1959, when a fire broke out and destroyed the existing building. At an emergency Board meeting the following evening, the rabbi reported that the larger Jewish community, as well as the general community, were offering support for the Temple in its hour of need.⁶¹

Search for a New Site

After much discussion, Temple Israel decided that, rather than rebuild the heavily damaged building and then construct the planned addition, it would build a completely new home.⁶²

As recounted later, in the dedication booklet for the new building:

⁵⁴ "Temple Israel Marks 75 Years...," *Staten Island Advance*, May 28, 2003, p. 13.

⁵⁵ "Buys Site for Temple," *New York Times*, November 18, 1950, p. 26.

⁵⁶ "New Synagogue Dedicated," *New York Times*, September 17, 1951, p. 18. Accompanying photo of the building is in the synagogue's files.

⁵⁷ Letter from Morris Singer, president of Temple Israel, to Albert Melniker, August 1, 1960, in Temple Israel's files.

⁵⁸ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," February 4, 1949; in the synagogue's files.

⁵⁹ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," April 1, 1959.

⁶⁰ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," May 6, 1959.

⁶¹ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," May 20, 1959.

⁶² Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," May 26, 1959.

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The future of our congregation was brightened by fortuitous developments. The real estate values in Staten Island had been raised by the culmination of plans to build the Verazzano-Narrows Bridge. We were able to sell our charred land for a considerable sum.⁶³

By the following week, Albert Melniker had produced a preliminary plan for a new building, and a new Building and Fund Raising Committee had formed. Initially, the congregation considered selling an unoccupied portion at the rear of the site to raise funds to construct a new building on the remaining portion.⁶⁴ As late as August, the plan was still to build a new home on the Victory Boulevard site.⁶⁵ But by early September, the congregation had decided to sell the entire site and find a new location.⁶⁶ An auction was held on October 2nd for the Victory Boulevard property, and the Board agreed to accept the highest bid.⁶⁷

The Board initially considered a site near Sailors Snug Harbor for its new home.⁶⁸ It then identified a site on the far side of Silver Lake Park, on the block bounded by Randall Avenue, Hart Boulevard, Elwood Place and Delafield Avenue, two blocks north of the current site. An offer from the site's owners was accepted by the Board on November 4th.⁶⁹ The transaction fell through, however, and the Real Estate Committee continued to search for a suitable site.⁷⁰

Towards the end of January 1960, the Board began to consider the synagogue's current site, including a portion owned by the City of New York and an adjoining privately owned parcel, at the corner of Forest Avenue and Hart boulevard.⁷¹

The City initially planned to put the property up for auction in March 1960, but postponed the auction first to July and finally to September 8th, 1960, when the Congregation bought the property now known as 315 Forest Avenue.⁷² During the auction, Rabbi Marcus Kramer requested to make a short address to Temple Israel congregants attending the event, explaining the reasoning behind this particular purchase, "His presentation was brief, and impressive, so much so, that the Audience responded with a very warm applause. The property was obtained at the upset price of \$39,000.00."⁷³

The Architect Search

Negotiations with the owner of the adjoining property were concluded in November. In the meantime, the Board instructed the new Building Committee to begin a search for an architect.⁷⁴ Over the next two months the Building Committee made several visits to recently constructed synagogues and interviewed several architects.⁷⁵

The committee was particularly taken with three of the synagogues in New Jersey—B'nai Israel, Temple Emeth, and the Jewish Community Center of Paramus, and discovered that they had all been designed by the same architect, Percival Goodman. The committee wrote, "The man is really an artist. We were impressed by the fact that all of the structures

⁶³ *Temple Israel Dedication*, booklet, 1964, n.p.

⁶⁴ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," June 3, 1959.

⁶⁵ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," August 5, 1959.

⁶⁶ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," September 2, 1959.

⁶⁷ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," October 7, 1959.

⁶⁸ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," December 14, 1959.

⁶⁹ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," November 4, 1959.

⁷⁰ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," January 6, 1960.

⁷¹ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," January 24, 1960.

⁷² Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," February 3, 1960 and May 4, 1960.

⁷³ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," September 13, 1960.

⁷⁴ Temple Israel, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel," October 5, 1960.

⁷⁵ Temple Israel Building Committee Report, December 7, 1960, in the synagogue's files.

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showed a flair for many inspiring distinctive designs and yet there was no repetition of any stereotyped style.” They remarked at Goodman’s familiarity with the essential needs of a synagogue, and his ability to readily provide a quote based on his previous works.⁷⁵

By the time of his meeting with the Temple’s representatives, Goodman’s C.V. included a list of thirty-four synagogues, three Jewish Community Centers, a YM-YWHA, the Jewish Museum in New York City, and a Hillel Building at Brooklyn College.⁷⁶

Impressed by Goodman’s long experience, as well as by the quality of his work, the Committee asked him to submit a proposal. The Committee also spoke with Goodman about the work that Albert Melniker had done for the congregation and asked that Melniker be considered “associate architect” of the project. The Committee then unanimously recommended that the congregation engage Goodman to be the architect for the new building, despite his fee being somewhat higher than they had expected.⁷⁷

The synagogue Board approved the Building Committee’s recommendation on December 7, and at a special meeting on February 16, 1961, the congregation voted unanimously in favor of hiring Percival Goodman to design Temple Israel’s new home.⁷⁸ The chairman of the congregation’s legal committee wrote to Goodman the following day stating, “We are confident that you will design a building for us that will be a source of pride to our congregation and to our community.”⁷⁹

Percival Goodman and the post-World War II American synagogue

In hiring Percival Goodman in 1960, Temple Israel put the design of its new home in the hands of an architect who was not only a prolific synagogue designer, but also a pivotal figure in the development of post-WWII American synagogue design itself, especially within the Reform movement.

Percival Goodman (1904-1989) had a long career as an architect and planner, as well as a writer, artist, and educator. As summarized in his obituary by *New York Times* architecture critic Paul Goldberger:

[He] was as well known for his social thought as for his architectural work. He believed passionately that the architect had a responsibility not merely to create physical forms but also to serve as an advocate for improved social conditions.... His synagogues were assertive, modernist structures, reflecting Mr. Goodman’s belief that the vocabulary of modern architecture could be transformed into something rich enough to express powerful religious feeling.⁸⁰

Aside from his professional work, Goodman, together with his younger brother Paul, wrote about contemporary architecture and synagogue architecture in particular, publishing in numerous architectural journals.

⁷⁶ Percival Goodman, Curriculum Vitae; in the files of Temple Israel.

⁷⁷ Percival Goodman, Curriculum Vitae.

⁷⁸ Temple Israel, “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel,” December 7, 1960; minutes of a Special Meeting of the Congregation of Temple Israel, February 16, 1961, in Temple Israel’s files.

⁷⁹ Chairman, Legal Committee to Goodman, February 17, 1961.

⁸⁰ Paul Goldberger, “Percival Goodman, 85, Synagogue Designer,” *New York Times* October 12, 1989, p. B12.

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Goodman's architectural career falls into two major periods, separated by World War II.⁸¹ After taking an apprenticeship at age 13 in the architectural office of an uncle, he studied at Cooper Union in New York City and the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design before winning the Paris Prize in 1925, which in turn allowed him to complete his studies at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In his early, pre-War work, Goodman took commissions for storefronts, commercial interiors and homes. Perhaps through the influence of a mentor, architect John Peterkin (designer notably of the Style Moderne 1939 East Side Airlines Terminal Building, formerly at 42nd Street and Park Avenue), his early work reflected an Art Deco version of modernism. Together with his brother Paul, he wrote about city planning and urban life, the most important product of that partnership being the highly influential 1947 study, *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life*.⁸² Goodman also had a parallel career as an educator, teaching at New York University from 1930, and at Columbia University, where he taught at the architecture school from 1943 until his retirement in 1972.

Following the end of World War II, the destruction of European Jewry wrought by the Holocaust had a huge impact on the development of Goodman's Jewish identity, something which had been only a peripheral influence in his earlier years. The killing of six million Jews had awakened in [Goodman] a deep sense of belonging to a larger Jewish community. Until this time, he had lived a wholly secular existence in New York and Paris, with little concern for organized religion. The end of the war signaled a profound and urgent shift in Goodman's architectural and theoretical output. His heartfelt commitment to sustaining Jewish community life in America now superseded the earlier dedication to social housing and ameliorative city planning proposals that had characterized his work during the 1930s.⁸³

Goodman devoted the rest of his career to work on synagogues and other Jewish communal buildings. He eventually designed more than 50 synagogues, making him, in the words of synagogue historian Samuel Gruber, "the most prolific synagogue designer in history."⁸⁴

The history of New York City synagogues extends back to 1729, with the construction of the original "Shearith Israel," or Mill Street synagogue (demolished) in lower Manhattan. Surviving New York synagogues, which number in the hundreds if not more, include many distinct types, ranging from "stieblach," or store-front synagogues; to vernacular "tenement synagogues," long narrow structures suited to the 100x20 foot lots typical of the Lower East Side (e.g. the NR-listed Stanton Street Shul); to grand, high-style "cathedral" synagogues (e.g. the NR-listed Central Synagogue). Pre-World War II synagogue designs generally reflected contemporary North American and European architectural trends, which resulted in designs based on historic European ecclesiastical styles. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries congregations turned to first Moorish models, and then to Art Deco or Moderne.

The post-war years in America saw a major boom in synagogue construction, fueled in part by the relocation of many Jewish communities to the suburbs outside major American cities. That period also saw a major shift in synagogue architectural fashions towards the International Style and what is now called "mid-century modernism." While this shift

⁸¹ For an excellent and thorough account of Percival Goodman's life and work, see the National Register nomination of Temple Emanuel, 51 Grape Street, Denver, Colorado, prepared by Alan Golin Gass, FAIA and Diane Wray, September 9, 2002. For a more wide-ranging account see Kimberly J. Elman and Angela Giral, editors, *Percival Goodman: architect – planner – teacher – painter* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), the catalog of an exhibition at Columbia University on Goodman's life and work, which includes essays by various authors including many who knew and worked with him. There is also an interview with Goodman, entitled "The Architect From New York," in *Creators and Disturbers: Reminiscences by Jewish Intellectuals of New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) pp. 311-329, and many hours of a recorded interview, conducted by Suzanne O'Keefe, on file at Columbia University's Oral History collection.

⁸² Percival and Paul Goodman, *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, 1947 and 1960).

⁸³ Kimberly J. Elman, "The Quest for Community: Percival Goodman and the Design of the Modern American Synagogue," in Kimberly J. Elman and Angela Giral, editors, *Percival Goodman: architect – planner – teacher – painter* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), p. 53.

⁸⁴ Samuel D. Gruber, *American Synagogues: A Century of Architecture and Jewish Community* (New York: Rizzoli, 2003), p. 93.

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was certainly in line with the general evolution of American architecture of the period, it took on added significance for synagogue design. Synagogues in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries followed the stylistic lead of the larger surrounding culture, tending to be, at least in their exteriors, more or less indistinguishable from churches or – in the case of Moorish-inspired design – from mosques. The turn to Modernism represented a chance to develop synagogue designs free of those influences.

The year 1947 saw growing discussions about the appropriate design for contemporary American synagogues. In March of that year, *Commentary* magazine, founded two years earlier by the American Jewish Committee, published an article by historian Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein on “The Problem of Synagogue Architecture: Creating a Style Expressive of America.” Her article, which traced the history of synagogue design in Europe and the United States, was the first in a series intended by the editors to offer a “discussion of the principles that must concern those who will decide what shape new houses of worship are to take.”⁸⁵

The June issue included responses on the prompt “Creating a Modern Synagogue Style,” with replies from one art historian, Franz Landsberger (“Expressive of America”), and three architects: Eric Mendelsohn (“In the Spirit of Our Age”), Ely Jacques Kahn (“No More Copying”), and Paul and Percival Goodman (“Tradition from Function”).⁸⁶

Mendelsohn wrote that a modern synagogue should incorporate three elements: a sanctuary for worship, an “assembly hall” for socializing, and a religious school, and that its architect should use “contemporary building styles and architectural conceptions to make God’s house a part of the democratic community in which he dwells.” Landsberger agreed, noting that the new modernism “avoids over-ornamentation” to focus on a synagogue’s function, and suits the Jewish community’s “striving toward clarity and truth in our religious thinking.” Kahn wrote of “the absurdity of becoming mere copyists” of historic styles, while noting that “there is no modern style” and warning synagogue architects to avoid copying modern styles as much as historical ones.

The Goodman agreed with all the above, but took a different view.⁸⁷ Rather than looking for a tradition of synagogue style – or breaking away from one – they advised architects to look for a different kind of inspiration based on past synagogues: not their style, but their purpose, arguing that “a tradition of synagogue-building can be drawn from the tradition that exists, i.e., *the service and the congregation*.” The “fundamental act” of a synagogue service is “the reading of the Law” in which the scrolls of the Torah are removed from the Ark, read aloud to the congregation, then returned to the ark, all in a carefully defined ritual. “The point,” they proclaimed, “is that an inventive solution of the manifold parts of this action cannot help being profoundly expressive architecture.” Goodman also called for the inclusion of artists in any synagogue design. “In every synagogue the Ark is a focus of attention; why should not the sculpture of it be given to a master?”⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein, “The Problem of Synagogue Architecture: Creating a Style Expressive of America,” *Commentary*, March 1947, pp 51-55. On her 95th birthday, in 1979, the *Journal of Jewish Art* dedicated an issue to Professor Wischnitzer that styled her as “The Doyenne of Historians of Jewish Art.”

⁸⁶ *Commentary*, June 1947: Paul Goodman, pp. 542-544; Ely Jacques Kahn, pp. 539-541; Franz Landsberger, pp. 537-539; Eric Mendelsohn, pp. 541-542.

⁸⁷ Though the article’s by-line is Paul Goodman’s alone, Percival was an architect and Paul was not, and the text makes clear that the article was the work of both Goodmans, e.g.: “The authors are functionalists,” and see the authors’ ‘Notes on Neo-Functionalism’ in Percival and Paul Goodman, *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, 1947 and 1960).

⁸⁸ Two years later Paul and Percival Goodman followed up on this question in the January 1949 issue of *Commentary*: “Modern Artist as Synagogue Builder: Satisfying the Needs of Today’s Congregations” pp. 51-55.

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The turn towards modernism resonated especially within the Reform movement of Judaism, which, perhaps more than other denominations, considered itself a progressive movement. The UAHC, to which Temple Israel has always belonged, formally adopted this turn to modernism, with Percival Goodman as a major figure in its development.

In the same year that the *Commentary* series appeared, the UAHC sponsored a two-day conference in New York City (as well as a second one in Chicago) on the subject of modern design for synagogues. Goodman was invited to speak at the conference. As he later recalled:

I was invited and I accepted because I had something to say. My topic was “The Holiness of Beauty.” Out of that talk, I became an instant expert on synagogues. The speech apparently conveyed what people wanted to hear on “the holiness of beauty” and the importance of designing Jewish places of worship that represented not what Christians or Moslems or Asians thought proper but what an American Jew might think proper... And I felt and I still pretty much feel that the imitation of churches and even of old synagogues is a great mistake. Most of all I was pushing for what I considered to be a modern architecture. I felt, and my brother agreed on this, that the act of creation is a holy act.⁸⁹

As recounted in a later article in *American Judaism*, Goodman’s presentation led to his first synagogue commission, for a Reform congregation in Lima, Ohio, and began his involvement as a major participant in the Architects Advisory Panel created in 1949 by the UAHC.⁹⁰ The UAHC’s president, Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, later called the panel, composed of some forty architectural firms, “the only synagogue architectural service extant.”⁹¹ In a retrospective article in 1967, the *New York Times* would later describe Goodman and the panel as having “played a leading role in a 20-year boom in construction of synagogues, helping to shape projects throughout the nation...”⁹²

The panel’s work led to the UAHC’s 1954 publication, *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow: A Guide Book to Synagogue Design and Construction*.⁹³ Tellingly, the author chosen for the book was architect and writer Peter Blake, a Berlin-born Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, who was thoroughly embedded in the world of post-war Modernism in art and architecture – at various times he served as curator at the Museum of Modern Art and editor-in-chief at *Architectural Forum*, and also wrote monographs on half-a-dozen major modernist architects.⁹⁴

In his acknowledgments in the UAHC book, Blake cited as resources the recently created Jewish Museum (which in 1963 would host an exhibition devoted to contemporary synagogue design) but also the Museum of Modern Art, and the “outstanding” assistance of architects Ely Jacques Kahn and Percival Goodman.⁹⁵ The book included essays by rabbis, artists, critics, engineers and architects including – besides Kahn, Goodman and Mendelsohn – such luminaries as Wallace K. Harrison and Philip Johnson. The book cited Goodman as “one of the leading modern architects in the United States... [with] years of experience in modern synagogue design.”⁹⁶

⁸⁹ “The Architect From New York,” in *Creators and Disturbers: Reminiscences by Jewish Intellectuals of New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 316.

⁹⁰ “Paradox of Percival,” *American Judaism*, Vol. IX, No. 3, 1960, p. 8.

⁹¹ “Introduction,” in Peter Blake, ed., *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow: A Guide Book to Synagogue Design and Construction* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1954), pp. xiv-xv.

⁹² “Architects’ Panel Helps to Shape Synagogue Evolution,” *New York Times*, October 8, 1967, p. R1.

⁹³ Peter Blake, ed., *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow: A Guide Book to Synagogue Design and Construction* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1954).

⁹⁴ “Peter Blake, Architect, 86, Is Dead...,” *New York Times* December 6, 2006 (online, retrieved January 7, 2024).

⁹⁵ “Acknowledgments,” in Peter Blake, ed., *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow: A Guide Book to Synagogue Design and Construction* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1954), n.p.

⁹⁶ Peter Blake, ed., *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow: A Guide Book to Synagogue Design and Construction* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1954), p. 87.

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Aside from offering “outstanding assistance” to Peter Blake in preparation of the book, Goodman had the distinction of being the only architect to write an essay for it – an overview of synagogue architecture, “The Character of the Modern Synagogue” – and to have his synagogues cited in several of the book’s other essays – his Millburn, New Jersey synagogue appears both in “Selecting a Site for the Synagogue” and in “Design and Function.”⁹⁷ He was also included in a “round-table” on “Contemporary Art in the Synagogue,” as one of three architects (including Ely Jacques Kahn) together with critics, academics and artists.

The UAHC’s guidebook enthusiastically embraced the turn in synagogue design to mid-century modernism. As UAHC President Eisendrath wrote in his introduction, the book’s goal was to promote a modern “progressive” architecture for a modern “progressive” religious movement. He felt that such an approach particular befitted “Reform or Liberal Jews,” and that it would “convey the simple essence of our progressive faith...”⁹⁸

The guide then laid out a history of the synagogue; the ritual, educational and social activities of Reform Judaism; issues of remodeling vs. new buildings, site selection, and hiring an architect; examples of sanctuaries designed by Eric Mendelsohn, Percival Goodman, Harrison & Abramovitz, Philip Johnson and others; music, choir lofts and organs; art in the synagogue; technical details including seating, lighting, acoustics, and HVAC; the “legal and financial problems of synagogue building” and finally, “synagogue maintenance, materials, utilities and services,” complete with a “synagogue building check list.”

Synagogues were not alone in the transition away from the historicist designs of the past but seemed to be leading the way. In 1955, the *Christian Science Monitor* published an article entitled “Traditional Styling Fades as Churches Adapt Modern Trend in Design” – but focused almost exclusively on its prime exemplar, a synagogue in Tulsa, Oklahoma, designed by Percival Goodman.⁹⁹

In 1957 – three years after publication of its Guide and ten years after the UAHC’s first conference – that organization put together an “exhibit and national conference on synagogue architecture and art” at New York City’s Barbizon-Plaza Hotel, which attracted “135 Jewish leaders and architects.” The UAHC chairman, Harry M. Prince, was quoted in the *New York Times* as declaring that Judaism, having no specific design tradition, was now “making greater use of contemporary design...in an effort to adopt and express itself in American terms.”¹⁰⁰

By 1963, New York’s Jewish Museum could devote an exhibition to “Recent American Synagogue Architecture” and include examples by such leaders of the modern movement as “Pietro Belluschi, Marcel Breuer, Philip Johnson, Louis Kahn, Eric Mendelsohn, Minoru Yamasaki and Frank Lloyd Wright.”¹⁰¹

That same year, Percival Goodman – co-author in 1947 and 1949 of *Commentary* articles on the future of synagogue design, a major contributor to the 1954 UAHC guide, long-time member of the UAHC architects’ panel, and regularly cited in lists of architects leading the way in modern synagogue design – was putting the finishing touches on his newly designed synagogue for Temple Israel of Staten Island.

⁹⁷ Peter Blake, ed., *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow: A Guide Book to Synagogue Design and Construction* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1954), pp. 87 ff, p. 75, and pp. 103 ff.

⁹⁸ “Introduction,” in Peter Blake, ed., *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow: A Guide Book to Synagogue Design and Construction* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1954), p. xiii ff.

⁹⁹ “Traditional Styling Fades as Churches Adapt Modern Trend in Design,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 29, 1955, p. 15. The article did not identify Goodman as the architect, but the building appears in lists of Goodman’s commissions.

¹⁰⁰ Stanley Rowland, Jr., “Synagogues Here Hailed on Design,” *New York Times*, December 2, 1957, p. 47.

¹⁰¹ Ada Louise Huxtable, “Architecture: Designs for American Synagogues,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1963, p.17.

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Goodman's Synagogue Designs and Their Appraisal

Goodman's work in synagogue design quickly outpaced that of other architects. When the Architectural League of New York announced its 1960 "National Gold Medal Exhibition of the Building Arts: Achievement in the Building Arts," it honored twenty-four churches and synagogues. Of the twelve synagogues named, six were designed by Goodman, comprising a quarter of all works in the exhibition.¹⁰²

Samuel Gruber has summarized Goodman's work and approach, "Goodman...is one of the least-known best American architects of the 20th century. He was a technical master in design and drawing, and a visionary and seeker in his quest for knowledge and understanding of the built world and human condition."¹⁰³

Goodman himself described his design philosophy as "neo-functionalism." His work appeared to observers to be a modernist approach to tradition.¹⁰⁴ Although many saw Goodman as an innovator, Goodman saw himself as a traditionalist stating, "What makes some of the things I do appear novel," he says, "is the neo-functionalist attitude of stressing why we are doing them, what does it mean, is it worth doing and, if the answers are yes, how shall it be done so that it has meaning for our time and our people?"¹⁰⁵

Goodman wrote that modernism in architecture was uniquely suited to the design of synagogues. Flooding a space with light would suit a service focused on reading holy texts. Abstract art would fit a religion frowning on representation of the human figure.¹⁰⁶ Goodman's approach was characterized by a connection to foundational religious texts. Rather than including two menorahs in his synagogues, he used a single menorah, because "the letter of the Bible...calls for only one." Goodman was unsatisfied with the use of electric light to represent the eternal light, instead advocating the use of an actual flame. He also rejected the use of doors before the Ark, because "because the Bible calls not for doors but for a veil." One commentator remarked that, "despite this fundamentalist attitude, his synagogues make a distinctly modern impression."¹⁰⁷

A 1966 UAHC publication reviewing twenty years of American synagogue design praised Goodman's work for preferring "the intimate scale of the human, rather than the monumental and overpowering... [His] modest, rustic and tentlike structures... [evoke] the memory of the meeting place of a wandering people...."¹⁰⁸ A 1976 history of American synagogue architecture characterized Goodman's designs as featuring "flexible plan[s]... [and] intrinsic interrelationships between the spaces for worship, study, and assembly.... His chief concern rests in the search for a Jewish aesthetic."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰² The Architectural League of New York, *1960 National Gold Medal Exhibition of the Building Arts* (New York: The Architectural League of New York, 1960), p.85. Of other architects, only Pietro Belluschi, with four entries, approached Goodman's total, while such well-known practitioners as Davis Brody, Harison & Abramovitz, Philip Johnson, and Kelly & Gruzen had one apiece.

¹⁰³ Samuel D. Gruber, "Happy Birthday Percival Goodman," blog entry, January 13, 2015, <http://samgrubersjewishartmonuments.blogspot.com/2015/01/happy-birthday-percival-goodman.html>, retrieved February 7, 2024.

¹⁰⁴ The Goodmans had originally discussed "neo-Functionalism" in Percival and Paul Goodman, *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, 1947 and 1960), pp. 17 ff.

¹⁰⁵ As quoted in "Paradox of Percival," *American Judaism*, Vol. IX, No. 3, 1960, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Percival Goodman, "Remarks on Art for Religious Buildings and the work for the Fairmount Temple," October 29, 1956, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ "Paradox of Percival," *American Judaism*, Vol. IX, No. 3, 1960, p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Avram Kampf, *Contemporary Synagogue Art; Developments in the United States, 1945-1965* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1966), p. 37.

¹⁰⁹ *Two Hundred Years of American Synagogue Architecture*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, 1976.

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Goodman's synagogues still have admirers within the ranks of the Reform movement, witness a review published in the *Reform Jewish Quarterly* in 2011 that describes one of his synagogues as a "masterpiece," and quotes Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, a revered spiritual leader in the non-Orthodox world, as praising two of Goodman's synagogues as "eliciting a rare sense of awe and holiness."¹¹⁰

As summarized by Kimberly Elman, co-editor of the 2001 retrospective on Goodman's work:

Although stylistically many of Goodman's synagogues can be seen as products of their own time, his effort to find an appropriate vocabulary for the design of Jewish ritual space elevates his project above the mere search for a suitable style for the synagogue. His quest was for an architecture that would complement, yet not overshadow, the congregation and their celebration of the liturgy, the two aspects of Jewish community life that always remained at the center of Goodman's understanding of his faith.¹¹¹

The Design of Temple Israel

Samuel Gruber has written that given the proliferation of Goodman's synagogues, many important examples of his work have gone unnoticed.¹¹² Temple Israel of Staten Island is one such synagogue, in part, perhaps, because of its location in what Staten Islanders often refer to as New York's "forgotten borough." Though less well known than other works by Goodman, it reflects many of his own design principles, as well as those laid out in the UAHC's architectural guidebook. It also stands out thanks to the influence of a pair of modern monuments designed by Le Corbusier.

The Design Process

In early November, 1960, in a letter to the synagogue's Building Committee, Goodman laid out his understanding of the congregation's programmatic needs: 150 seats in a "Chapel," and 450 in a "Social Hall" able to be combined into a single space seating 600; a school for 160 Sunday-school students, eight classrooms for eight grades; and ancillary spaces including administration offices, the Rabbi's study, lobby, coat room, gift shop, kitchen furnishings, rest rooms, storage, mechanical rooms, library, custodian's apartment, "youth lounge," landscaping and terraces, and a parking lot. And he closed with a suggestion about the building's height stating, "Considering the small size of your land and the shape you described, it is my belief that the planning should consider a two story building, class rooms being on the lower level. I believe this will be the most economical...."¹¹³

Temple Israel's Building Committee met with Goodman to discuss the project on January 19, 1961. Goodman also contracted separately, as "Goodman Interiors, Ltd." – a subsidiary of his company, under the direction of his wife, Naomi – to design all decorative elements of the building's interiors.¹¹⁴ Goodman then asked the Committee to fill out a questionnaire about the congregation's needs, and requested a "topographical survey of the property."¹¹⁵ He received both

¹¹⁰ Elliot B. Gertel, "The Architecture of Louis Kahn and Percival Goodman: A Review Essay," in *Reform Jewish Quarterly*, Spring 2011, pp. 130-131.

¹¹¹ Kimberly J. Elman, "The Quest for Community: Percival Goodman and the Design of the Modern American Synagogue," in Kimberly J. Elman and Angela Giral, editors, *Percival Goodman: architect – planner – teacher – painter* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), p. 59.

¹¹² Samuel D. Gruber, "USA: Fine Modernism at Percival Goodman's Temple of Aaron in St. Paul, Minnesota," blog post at <http://samgrubersjewishartmonuments.blogspot.com/2021/03/usa-fine-modernism-at-temple-of-aaron.html>, retrieved January 29, 2024.

¹¹³ Percival Goodman to Jules Avins of the Building Committee, November 8, 1960; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹¹⁴ Percival Goodman to Jules Avins of the Building Committee, January 10, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹¹⁵ Percival Goodman to Jules Avins of the Building Committee, February 20, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

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by March 6th.¹¹⁶ By April, Goodman had submitted several sketched proposals, of which the Board believed that one “will serve the Temple’s needs very well.”¹¹⁷ On April 19th, the Board voted to approve the sketch, which included “ten class rooms and a combination Chapel and social hall that could provide 600 seats.”

Despite Goodman’s initial suggestion that the congregation consider a two-story building, this first plan called for a one-story structure, typical of the spread-out suburban Reform synagogues being built during the period. As originally laid out, the plan matched the program suggested by the 1954 UAHG guide and the flexible floorplan that Goodman generally adopted. There were to be three principal components: sanctuary, social hall and school that formed an expansive, single-story complex surrounded by a garden and open space. Within, the sanctuary and social hall were to be separated by a lounge, but the walls of the lounge, on either side, would be accordion screen dividers which could be opened in order to create a single larger space as needed. The synagogue office and Rabbi’s office would be located just west of the sanctuary. The school would extend due west from the sanctuary and lounge (on land now occupied by the parking lot), while the main entrance lobby would sit between the school and the lounge, opening onto a lobby garden to the north.¹¹⁸ (Figure 13)

It was agreed that the building would be built in two stages, the second to “consist of additional classrooms.”¹¹⁹ The Building Committee met with Goodman on April 23rd, and made plans for Goodman to present a complete sketch to the congregation.¹²⁰ The meeting was held on June 7th.¹²¹ All was set to move forward, when the results of the test borings forced a major change in plans. The borings showed that the entire western half of the site (the portion that had been acquired from a private owner) consisted of fill, which made construction on top of it impractical.¹²²

Goodman’s solution to the problem was to return to his initial recommendation of a two-story structure. The proposed chapel, lounge and social hall would remain in their originally proposed location, but raised up, while the school corridor would effectively be swung around and placed beneath them; the parking lot, initially conceived as a narrow stretch running north from the complex would in turn effectively be swung around and placed over the fill, running west. The resulting plan was both more compact and, internally, more complex than the original version. (Figure 2)

The Board approved the new sketches at their July 10 meeting, as did the congregation at a meeting on July 18.¹²³ By September initial construction bids had been received.¹²⁴ In December the Board voted to instruct Goodman to complete the plans and specifications and “submit the same to various contractors for [additional] bids.”¹²⁵ Work, however, continued for several more months. On April 9th, 1962, the plans were ready to be sent out for bids to six contractors, to be

¹¹⁶ Percival Goodman to Jules Avins of the Building Committee, March 6, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Building Committee to Morris Singer, President Temple Israel, April 7, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹¹⁸ This original proposal is shown in the attached plan; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹¹⁹ Temple Israel, “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel,” April 19, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹²⁰ Temple Israel, “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel,” May 3, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹²¹ Temple Israel, “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel,” June 7, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹²² Temple Israel, “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel,” June 14, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹²³ Temple Israel, “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel,” July 10, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹²⁴ Temple Israel, “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel,” September 25, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹²⁵ Temple Israel, “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel,” December 11, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

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returned by May 16.¹²⁶ By June 3rd, the low bidder, Massetti Building Contracting Company, had been selected for the job. Work on the foundations was underway by October 1962.¹²⁷ A year later work was largely done, but the building was not yet ready for occupancy. Finally, by March 1964, though work still remained to be done including the parking lot and landscaping, the congregation had moved into the new building.¹²⁸ The synagogue was formally dedicated on September 27, 1964. As described in the “Dedication booklet” prepared for the synagogue’s official opening:

The process of building is slow, despite earnest will and devoted effort. Five years of tenancy in scattered places passed before the completion of our new sanctuary... We were patient and our patience was rewarded!¹²⁹

The Final Product

Like most of Goodman’s synagogues, Temple Israel is modern and modest. The interior layout follows his standard flexible plan: a sanctuary with a lounge and a social hall which can be converted easily, via accordion screen dividers, into a single large space, with additional spaces for administration, rabbi’s office, kitchen and custodian’s apartment. Both sanctuary and the social hall are spacious and well lit. The separate but connected school wing is located beneath the sanctuary and social hall.

The synagogue’s major space, the sanctuary, is focused on the bimah and the ark of the covenant. It has a high, angled ceiling that rises in height as it approaches the pulpit and bimah; yet the design is spare and uses simple materials: walls of concrete block and a wood ceiling supported on laminated wood beams.

Goodman’s use of glued, laminated wood had attracted notice in some of his earlier work. The *Christian Science Monitor* article of 1955, which admired Goodman’s design for Temple Israel in Tulsa, noted that the use of such wood had become common for religious structures, as it “has freed church construction from costly, cumbersome building methods of the past.”¹³⁰

Goodman described his approach to the roof design in a letter to the Staten Island congregation’s building committee:

I have been experimenting with the so called “boomerang” beam made of laminated wood and have discovered that it is of much greater efficiency when used as I show it on the sketch rather than in the usual fashion in which it has been used in the past (that is to make a standard pitched roof). Hence, the unusual shape of the main hall roof.¹³¹

And in a letter two weeks later he wrote, “The main effect is based on the use of a butterfly roof which gives an interesting character, reduces cubage, yet provides height where it is important: at the platform and Bema ends of the Main Hall.”¹³²

¹²⁶ Temple Israel, “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel,” April 9, 1962; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹²⁷ Temple Israel, “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel,” October 9, 1962; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹²⁸ Temple Israel, “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel,” March 9, 1964; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹²⁹ *Temple Israel Dedication*, booklet, 1964, n.p.

¹³⁰ “Traditional Styling Fades as Churches Adapt Modern Trend in Design,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 29, 1955, p. 15.

¹³¹ Goodman letter to the Building Committee, June 1, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹³² Goodman letter to the Building Committee, June 15, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

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The synagogue's exterior reflects the approach of "low-lying simplicity" which the 1955 article attributed to Goodman's Tulsa synagogue – though the plan for Staten Island was slightly complicated by the necessity of locating the school on the first story (Photo 41).

Like the interior, the synagogue's exterior uses simple materials, predominantly "used brick." In general, the exterior is simple and functional in appearance, with the notable exception of the elevation facing Forest Avenue – the most publicly visible elevation (though not the façade). It is designed to express the ark – the major focus of the sanctuary – that sits directly behind it. As one historian explained:

Goodman designed his synagogues to achieve spacious interiors without a massive façade. Perhaps his most lasting contribution to synagogue architecture, however, was the emphasis of the ark as a conspicuous external feature of the synagogue.... Goodman believed that the ark, used in a manner comparable to a church steeple, could explicitly define a building as a synagogue.¹³³ As Goodman explained to Temple Israel's Building Committee, "The view shown in my preliminary sketch is taken going east on Forest and shows the sanctuary end; a strong expression of the Ark as a projecting bay with two walls suggesting the [twin tablets of the] Ten Commandments flanking it."¹³⁴ (Figure 13)

Though in many ways typical of Goodman's approach, Temple Israel looks like no other design of his. In the case of Temple Israel, the influence of two internationally renowned works in France designed by Le Corbusier, is evident.

Goodman's interest in Le Corbusier dates back to his student days in France. As one historian noted, "...while abroad [Goodman] was exposed to the International Style of architecture. Though largely oblivious to Gropius's Bauhaus and its impact, Goodman was deeply impressed by the work of Le Corbusier..."¹³⁵

Le Corbusier's career was still in its early days during Goodman's student days in the 1920s. But when he travelled to France in the summer of 1960, just months before taking on the Temple Israel commission, Goodman visited Le Corbusier's two late masterpieces, the Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp, completed in 1955, and the Monastery of Sainte-Marie de La Tourette, completed (after Goodman's visit) in 1961. As recounted in a brief memoir by architect Rudolf Guyer, a former staff member of Goodman's firm to whom Goodman paid a visit while on vacation and who took him to see both sites, "I remember the deep impression that the brute force of the two buildings made on Percy."¹³⁶

Finished five years before Goodman's visit, the chapel at Ronchamp was very much a *cause célèbre* among American architects, covered in American and European architectural journals as well as the regular press.¹³⁷ A week after the chapel's dedication, the *New York Times* published a photo essay on the topic, one that Goodman almost certainly would have seen.¹³⁸

¹³³ Paula E. Hyman, "From City to Suburb," in *American Jewish History* (New York: Routledge, 1998), Volume 5, p. 1250. Footnote 19 names as the source for Goodman's belief about the ark the entry on "Percival Goodman" in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 7, col. 782.

¹³⁴ Goodman letter to the Building Committee, June 15, 1961; in the files of Temple Israel.

¹³⁵ George M. Goodwin, "The Design of a Modern Synagogue: Percival Goodman's Beth-El in Providence, Rhode Island," *American Jewish Archives* 45 (Spring/Summer 1993, 31-71), p. 49.

¹³⁶ Rudolf Guyer, "Reminiscences of Percival Goodman," in Kimberly J. Elman and Angela Giral, editors, *Percival Goodman: architect – planner – teacher – painter* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), p. 140.

¹³⁷ See, for instance, *Architect and Building News* (vol. 208) 1955, pp 173-175; *Architectural Record* (vol. 118, issue 4), October 1, 1955, p. 167; the *Architectural Review* of March 1958, p. cxiv.

¹³⁸ "A Church by Le Corbusier," *New York Times*, July 3, 1955, p. SM14.

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In a 1958 review of Le Corbusier's own book on the chapel, Donald A. White of the American Institute of Architects wrote, "Le Corbusier is undoubtedly one of the great modern architects. His influence on modern design...has been tremendous.... If Le Corbusier desires to amaze and awe the pilgrims, his building is a success.... However, I am sure that an actual visit would be required to reach a proper evaluation of the structure itself and of its spiritual impact."¹³⁹

In 1960, retrospective essays on the past decade featured Ronchamp as one of the most important buildings of the period. That summer, the same summer as Goodman's visit, *Progressive Architecture* published an account of its editor's "study tour of contemporary European architecture." Though not terribly impressed by most of what he saw, the editor was taken with two new structures important for their influence on architecture in the United States as well as Europe: the UNESCO headquarters in Paris and Ronchamp. Of the latter, he wrote: "As architectural space, inside, I think it one of the greatest successes any architect has yet achieved."¹⁴⁰

The chapel caught the attention of many American architects designing houses of worship -- at least one such group organized a special visit shortly after Goodman's.¹⁴¹ Besides Temple Israel, other American synagogues believed to show Ronchamp's influence are Max Abramovitz's Temple Beth Zion, 1964, in Buffalo, New York¹⁴²; and Louis Kahn's unbuilt Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia of the early 1960s.¹⁴³

The Monastery at La Tourette was still under construction when Goodman visited, but already equally well-known and covered in the press nationally and internationally.¹⁴⁴ In July 1960, the summer of Goodman's visit, Ada Louise Huxtable described the monastery in an article Goodman would most likely have seen, "A man who admires the visual impact of stripped-down structure, primitive surfaces and abstract forms, Le Corbusier...built a severely rectilinear monastery of great serenity and strength, adjoining a church as rugged and plain as a box."¹⁴⁵

A major part of that rugged and plain look was Le Corbusier's use of what one author described as "a monolithic block of concrete... brute concrete, which he preferred to all other building materials."¹⁴⁶ A comparison of the interiors of Temple Israel's sanctuary and the monastery's church show the similarities – walls of concrete block with narrow bands of window running along the ceiling of La Tourette:

[The upper church is] in the form of the [a] long-shaped hall.... Concrete walls rise from this ground plan to form an austere box-shaped space closed by a flat ceiling.... The rear part has narrow horizontal windows.... Between the short wall and the roof there is a band of light... and... a light-giving slit between the short east and the long

¹³⁹ Donald A. White, "Chapel of Controversy," *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1958, p. N56.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas H. Creighton, "European Diary," *Progressive Architecture*, August 1960, p. 124.

¹⁴¹ Jay M. Price, *Temples for a Modern God: Religious Architecture in Postwar America* (Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 147.

¹⁴² See the National Register nomination for Temple Beth Zion, Buffalo, Erie County, section 8 page 18: "Architecturally, the sanctuary represents a bold departure from earlier Modernism; forsaking the style of earlier metal and glass constructions, the architect embraced the expressive sculptural concept of form recently pioneered by Le Corbusier (1887-1965) in his design for the concrete and stone Chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Haut (1955) at Ronchamp, France. There Le Corbusier had set aside the International Style in favor of raw concrete cast in massive, sculptural shapes."

¹⁴³ See Peter Kohane, "Columns of Light: Louis Kahn's Design for Sanctuary Of The Mikveh Israel Synagogue (Philadelphia, 1961-62)," SAHANZ (Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand), Annual Conference Proceedings, July 6, 2017: "The three chapels of the building at Ronchamp influenced Kahn's design for the sanctuary."

¹⁴⁴ In 1960, write-ups appeared in the *Architectural Forum*, *Art Journal*, and *Architect and Building News*; others, including *Progressive Architecture*, waited until 1961 for the building's completion.

¹⁴⁵ Ada Louise Huxtable, "Monastery by 'Corbu,'" *New York Times* July 10, 1960, p. SM38.

¹⁴⁶ Anton Henze, *La Tourette: The Le Corbusier monastery* (New York: George Wittenborn, Inc., 1966), p. 9.

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south walls.... The dim light increases the power of the [poured] unsurfaced concrete....[that] alternates on the walls with roughcast areas which come from a spray-gun.¹⁴⁷

Goodman's concrete blocks are smooth by comparison; they also run in a particular pattern: pairs of rows of concrete blocks with aligned mortar joints, separated by a single row with unaligned joints; Le Corbusier's blocks follow no exact pattern. But the overall effects seem clearly related. (Figure 14)

The exteriors of the synagogue and La Tourette show no particular connections. The links between the synagogue and Ronchamp, however, extend to both the interior and the exterior. Though Goodman eventually sheathed the synagogue primarily in used brick, his initial proposal was different – concrete block sprayed to resemble stucco.

Though he did not specify the color, stucco is often white, as are the walls of Ronchamp. Eventually Goodman's designed changed – the concrete block is faced in "used brick." Had Goodman used white stucco, the resemblance to Ronchamp would have been more pronounced. And in a few instances, a whitened concrete does appear, notably on the ground floor on the east elevation where the school windows are set between upper and lower thick lines of concrete, and especially that elevation's staircase leading to the social hall.

What the exterior also shares with Ronchamp is the dramatic roof overhangs (Figure 15), as well as the bands of glass, but it is through the interiors that the synagogue and the chapel appear most connected, with the combination of slanted roof, randomly scattered windows with colored glass, and narrow band of glass separating the wall from the roof (which Le Corbusier used both at Ronchamp and La Tourette). (Figures 16 & 17)

Here is Le Corbusier's description of how the roof of Ronchamp sits above the walls separated from them by "a crack of light":

The shell has been put on walls which are absurdly but practically thick. Inside them however are reinforced concrete columns. The shell will rest on these columns but it will not touch the wall. A horizontal crack of light 10 cm. wide will amaze.¹⁴⁸

And he describes the colors of his windows:

Vitrages, and not stained glass windows.... wonderfully prepared by Alazard, a craftsman in mirrors, who cut, classified, set and sealed them without a single mistake. I was able to paint these transparent windows in two days at the works of Boussois at Bobigny.¹⁴⁹ (Figure 18)

The influence of Corbusier's two buildings might also be responsible for a notable absence: Goodman commissioned no major works of art for the synagogue. While that might be attributable to budgetary issues, it might also reflect the lack of such commissions – aside from attention to craftsmanship – in Ronchamp and La Tourette. It's also true that Goodman's sense of modesty in design – including simplicity and lack of unnecessary ornament – is notable in a conversation he had with Rabbi Marc Wilson:

¹⁴⁷ Anton Henze, *La Tourette: The Le Corbusier monastery* (New York: George Wittenborn, Inc., 1966), p. 14-16.

¹⁴⁸ Le Corbusier, *The Chapel at Ronchamp* (New York: Prager, 1957), n.p.

¹⁴⁹ Le Corbusier, *The Chapel at Ronchamp* (New York: Prager, 1957), n.p.

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I had the privilege of asking the late Percival Goodman, the dean of American synagogue architects, what he considered the most beautiful synagogue in the world. Significantly he reminisced not of New York's Temple Emanu-El or London's Bevis Marks, but about a plain whitewashed room in Jerusalem, the last rays of daylight streaming through the windows, the only appointment a simple table around which a group of Chasidim sat, singing the doleful melodies that bid the Sabbath farewell. Had there been even one more element or adornment in the room Goodman insisted, the perfection of the moment would have been entirely lost.¹⁵⁰

Goodman apparently did not make a point of discussing the influence of Le Corbusier's work on his design for Temple Israel. In his own notes on the project, he described the "aesthetics" of the design in typical mid-century modern language:

Exterior designed to frankly express the various elements. The lower level of class rooms with its concrete construction is clearly expressed by the horizontal concrete lintel beam over the windows and piers. The wood beams and plank ceiling of the Lobby-office part, with its wide overhangs, is expressive of this simple construction. The Main Hall with its tripartite division is marked by the flat center roof section and the two butterfly roofs at its sides.

He does call out his notion of making the Ark a visible marker on the elevation, as well as the effect of color, stating, "The Ark of the Sanctuary forms a prominent projecting bay on the main street façade... The concrete is left exposed and unfinished, the brick in a range of warm reds and dark browns creates a color harmony with the dark stained wood members of the roofs." But he ascribes his interior design to simple functionalism: "The interior of the Main Hall carries out this same frankness of treatment. The walls in exposed unpainted concrete block, the ceilings in stained wood, are simply functional, a functionalism relieved by the colored glass in the windows and the decorative pattern used in the block work."¹⁵¹

There is no explicit reference in these notes of "the deep impression that the brute force of [Le Corbusier's] two buildings made on Percy" noted by his friend and former employee.

Critical Response

The congregation of Temple Israel was delighted with the final result, as expressed in the dedication booklet which describes the new building as, "Its interior has proved to be spacious and most attractive. The sanctuary, itself, is awe-inspiring. Ours is a thing of beauty, a true house of God."¹⁵²

Staten Island certainly noticed the new synagogue: the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce third annual awards program gave Temple Israel and Goodman one of eight awards for "excellence in design" (another went to the new Verrazano Narrows Bridge) – and the award was noted in the *New York Times*, "The building was given the award as an example of religious architecture."¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Marc Wilson, "Concretizing Spirituality: Reflections on Building the New Temple Israel," in *Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art & Architecture* (Fall 1990), p.33.

¹⁵¹ All three comments are from "Temple Israel Reform Congregation of Staten Island, Staten Island, New York," marked "Goodman, 10.8, series IIiv, Temple Israel Reform Congregation # 760" and held at Columbia University's Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Drawings and Archives, "Goodman, Percival Acc.#1994.006" Box 10. Though the write-up doesn't specify that it was written by Goodman, the level of detail and the language does make his authorship seem likely.

¹⁵² *Temple Israel Dedication*, booklet, 1964, n.p.

¹⁵³ *New York Times*, December 6, 1964, p. R1.

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As reported in the *Staten Island Advance*, the Chamber's awards committee was struck by both the landscaping and the structure's functionalism:

This building evoked strong feelings of enthusiasm from the committee. It is unmistakably a temple of brick whose interior and exterior planning presents, among many other ingenious features, the amenity of a brook passing through the property. Floor plans shows well-thought-out, optimum utilization of space for functioning as a temple, a community center and a school.¹⁵⁴

In 1974, a retrospective study of New York City synagogues, with examples in all five boroughs, included Temple Israel and described it as follows:

This contemporary suburban synagogue designed by Percival Goodman exemplifies the main tenets of the "International School" of architecture: its smooth unornamented walls are noteworthy for their contrast of brick and concrete: the structure arouses interest through its balanced asymmetry and the intensity of the angles as one wall meets the next (note the lines of the roof); the horizontal is emphasized in order to maintain a human scale and so that the synagogue might blend into the purposefully natural landscaping. It projects a feeling both of airiness and of sculptural refinement.¹⁵⁵

Unfortunately, however, the synagogue was largely ignored by the architectural press – a not uncommon fate for buildings in New York's "forgotten borough."

Recent History

Temple Israel remains the only Reform Congregation on Staten Island, and continues to thrive as a synagogue, school and community center. With the exception of a few minor changes, the building's historic fabric remains intact.

Temple Israel reflects the history of the small but growing Jewish community of Staten Island. It also reflects changing tastes in synagogue design, the Reform Movement's embrace of post-World War II mid-century modernism, and the work of architect Percival Goodman – as well as demonstrating the influence on American architecture of Le Corbusier. As such, Temple Israel remains a vital part of the living history of its neighborhood, its Jewish community, and Staten Island, as well as an unusual work of architecture in New York City.

¹⁵⁴ "Chamber of Commerce Names Winners," *Staten Island Advance*, November 18, 1964, p. A1.

¹⁵⁵ Nancy Ungar, *The Changing Face of New York Synagogues 1730-1974*, catalog of 1974 show at Yeshiva University Museum, New York City; entry no. S4 (n.p.).

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.4 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 40.631699 | Longitude: -74.099474 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary reflects the current legal parcel associated with the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anthony W. Robins, Thompson & Columbus, Inc., edited by Campbell Higle, Survey/NR
organization _____ date 10/1/2024
street & number 50 W 67th St, 1-F telephone 917-494-5982
city or town New York state NY zip code 10023-6227
e-mail Anthony.w.robins@gmail.com

Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

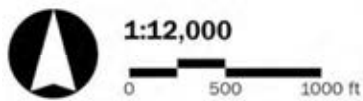
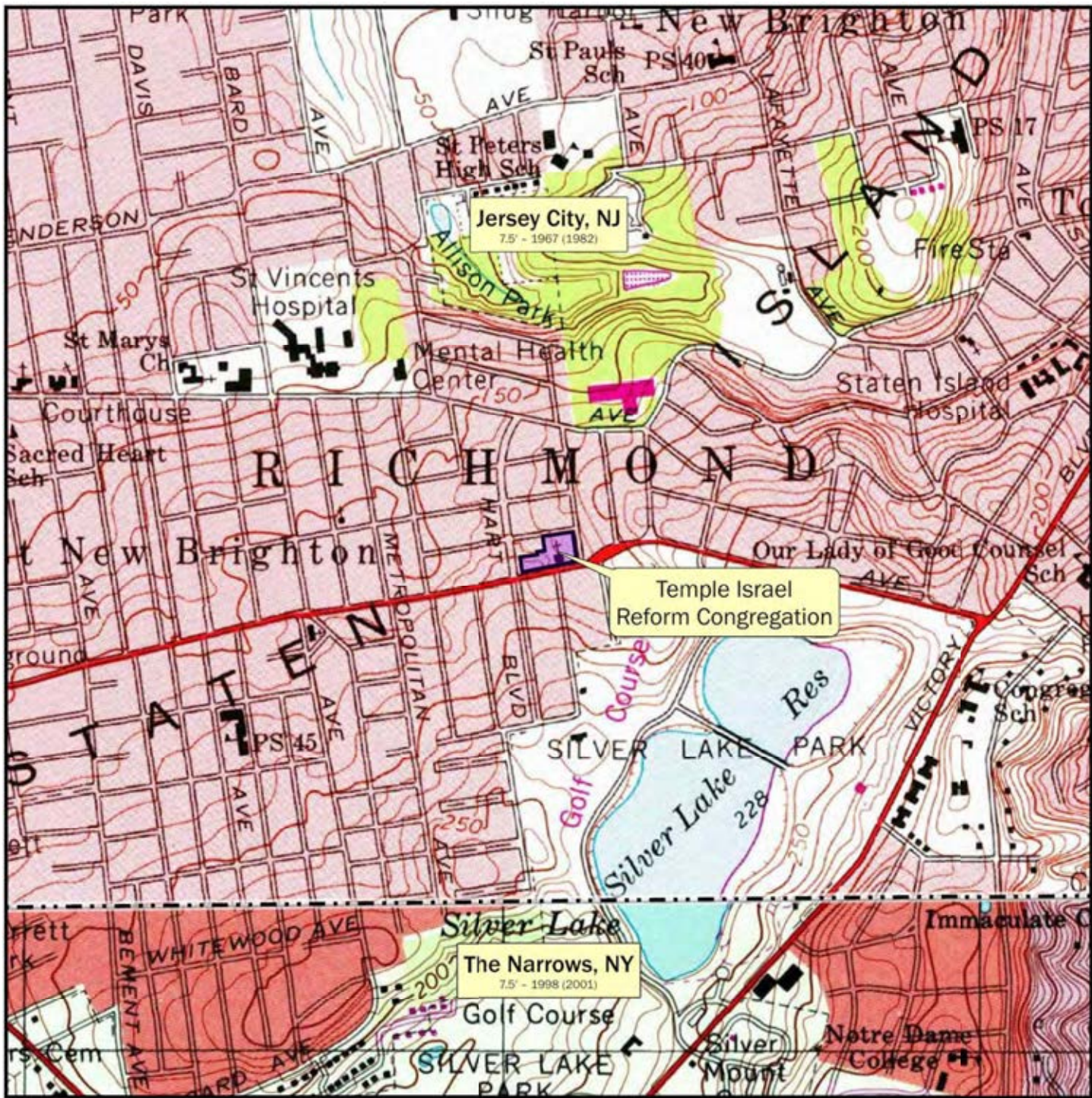
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

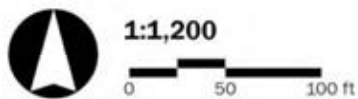
Mapped 11/14/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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 Nomination Boundary (1.40 ac)



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

New York State Orthoimagery Year: 2021

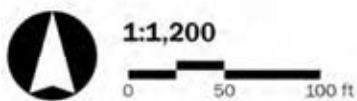
Mapped 11/14/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

 Nomination Boundary (1.40 ac)  Tax Parcels

Richmond County Parcel Year: 2023



Mapped 11/14/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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Figure 1: Aerial view of Temple Israel, Google Earth 2024

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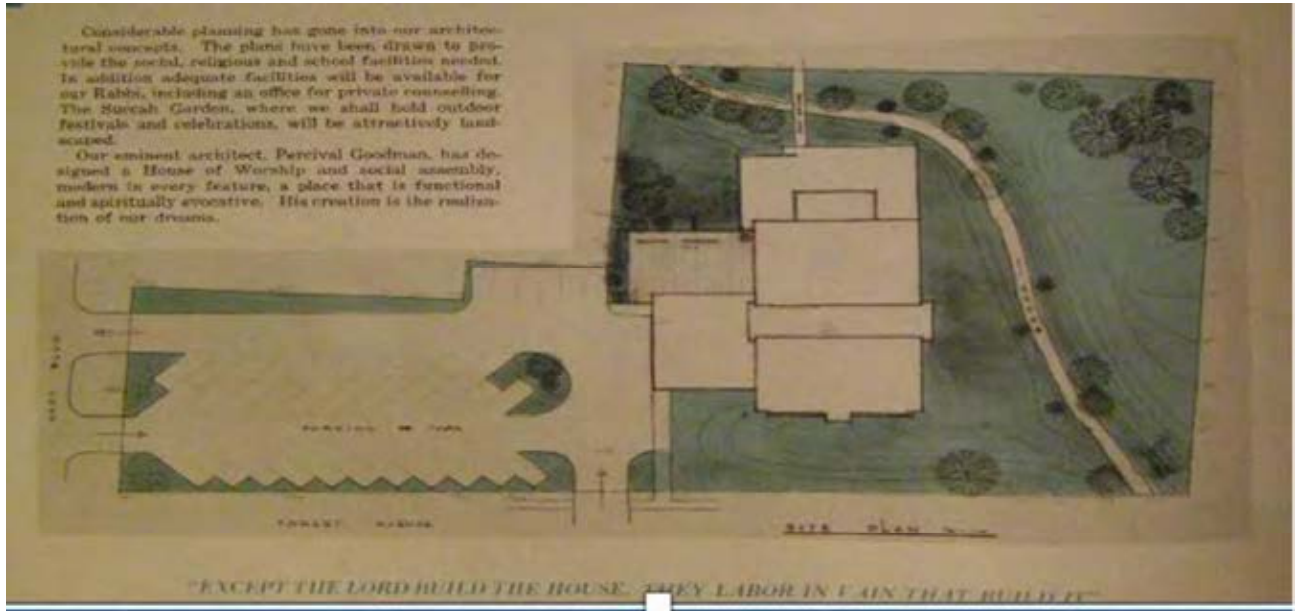


Figure 2: Revised plan as per a Congregational brochure in the synagogue's files



Figure 3: Staten Island Advance, November 18, 1964, p. A1

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Figure 4: 1963 construction photo



Figure 5: Construction photo

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Figure 6: Construction Photo

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Figure 7: Construction Photo

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Figures 8 & 9: Construction Photos

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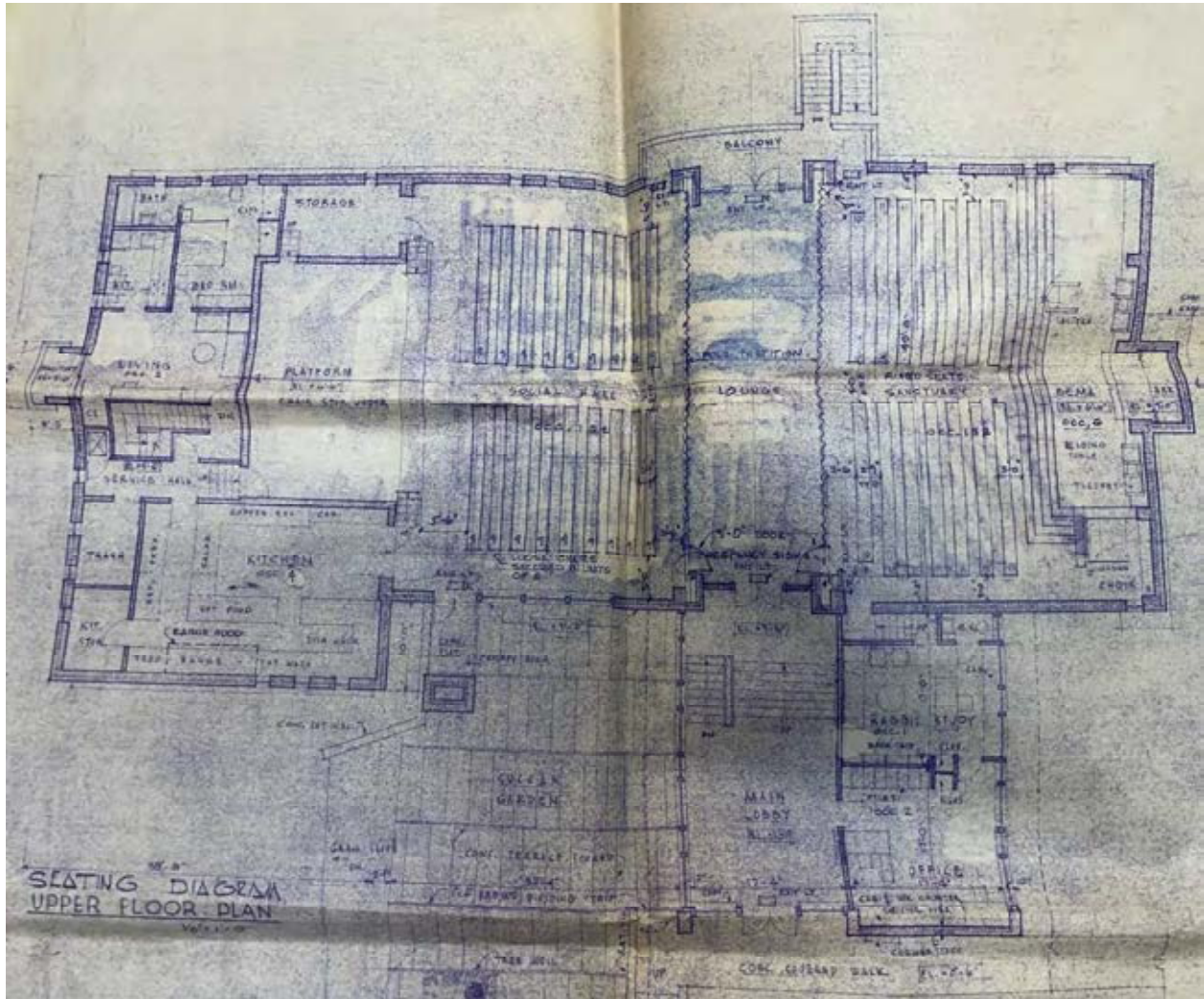


Figure 10: Plan of upper floors, showing foyer level and stairs to upper level

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Figure 11: Photo of sanctuary c. 1960s, in Temple Israel's files, showing the original curtain and light fixture

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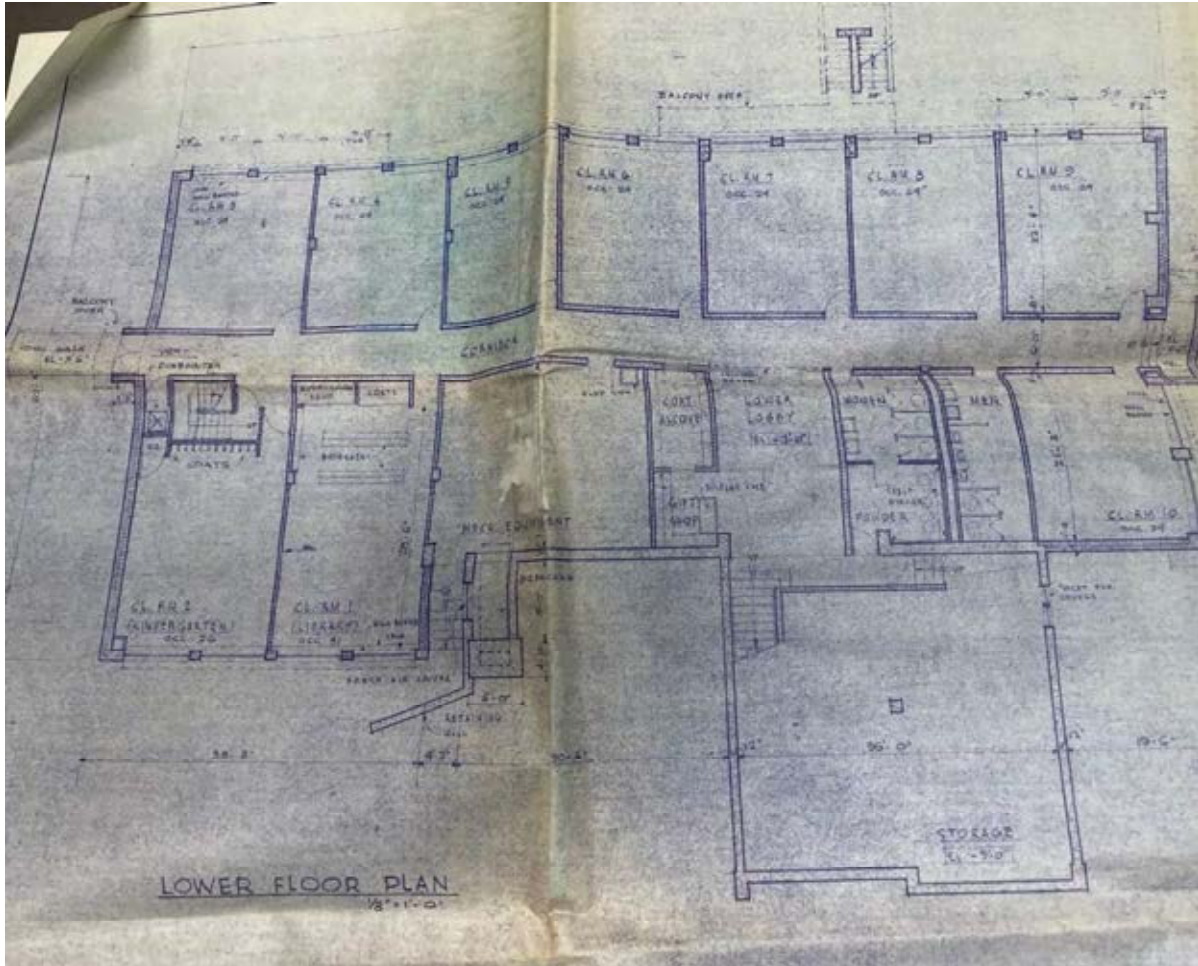


Figure 12: Plan of lower story – school rooms, storage, in Temple Israel’s files

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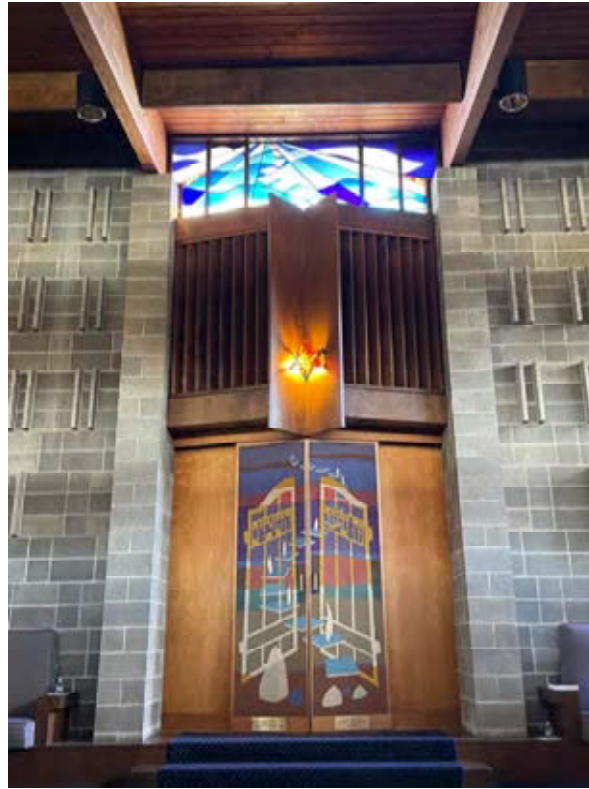


Figure 14: Ark inside sanctuary (top); Architect's sketch of the exterior (left); Exterior as built (right)

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Figure 15: Entrance portico of Temple Israel (top) and Ronchamp (bottom)

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Figure 16: La Tourette interior

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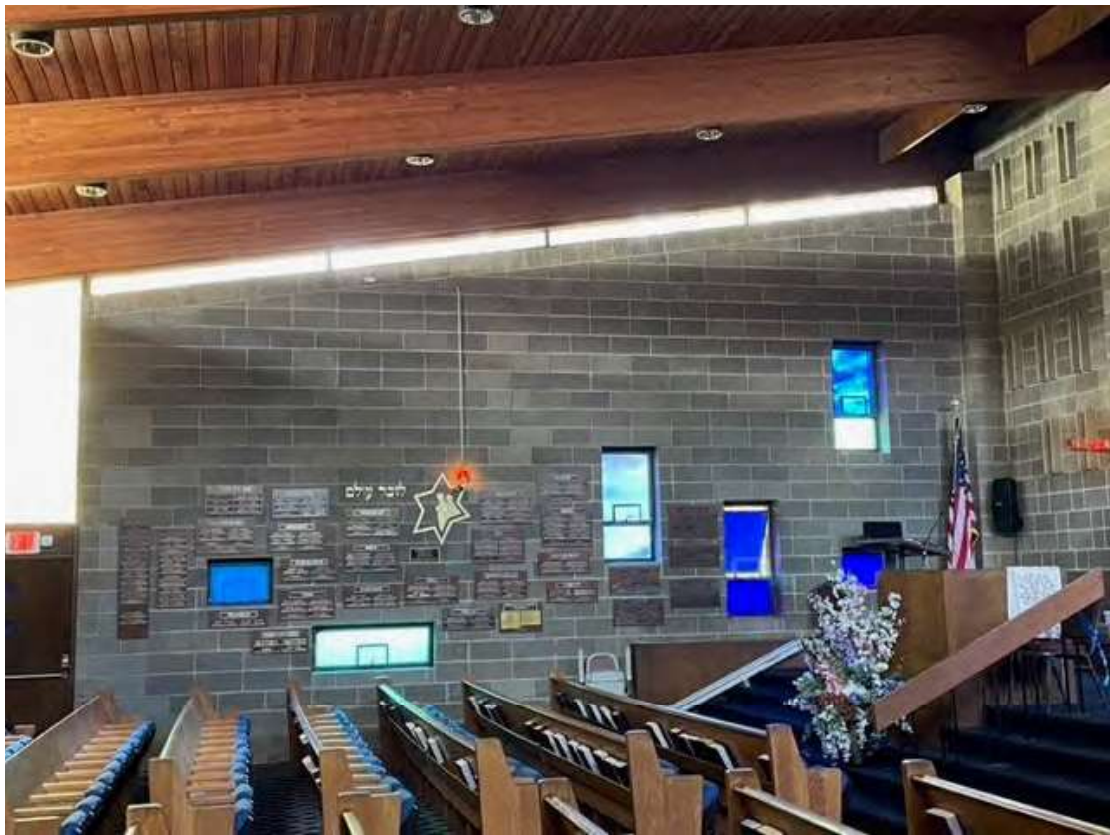


Figure 17: Comparison between the interiors of La Tourette, Temple Israel, Ronchamp

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Figure 18: Vitrages, Ronchamp (left) and Temple Israel (right)

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Temple Israel Reform Congregation

City or Vicinity: Staten Island

County: Richmond State: NY

Photographer: Anthony Robins, New York Landmarks Conservancy

Date Photographed: AWR, November, 2023. NYLC July, 2023.

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 0001 of 0041: Overhanging roof of entrance wing, west elevation (NYLC)
- 0002 of 0041: Plaque on entrance wall, west elevation (AWR)
- 0003 of 0041: Entrance detail, west elevation looking east (AWR)
- 0004 of 0041: Entrance wing, north side, looking south (NYLC)
- 0005 of 0041: Entrance wing, south side, looking north (NYLC)
- 0006 of 0041: West elevation of the synagogue, looking east (NYLC)
- 0007 of 0041: West elevation, social hall entrance with 1999 vestibule addition (NYLC)
- 0008 of 0041: West elevation, kitchen wing, looking northeast (NYLC)
- 0009 of 0041: South elevation, detail ornamental Menorah (AWR)
- 0010 of 0041: South elevation looking north (NYLC)
- 0011 of 0041: South elevation looking north, detail (NYLC)
- 0012 of 0041: South elevation, secondary entrance to school (AWR)
- 0013 of 0041: East elevation looking northwest (AWR)
- 0014 of 0041: East Elevation, balcony
- 0015 of 0041: East elevation, external staircase (AWR)
- 0016 of 0041: North elevation, looking south, with school entrance below and custodian's apartment
- 0017 of 0041: Foyer, looking west to entrance (AWR)
- 0018 of 0041: Foyer, looking east to gift shop and doors to lounge, sanctuary and social hall (AWR)
- 0019 of 0041: Synagogue office (AWR)
- 0020 of 0041: Sanctuary, looking southeast (AWR)
- 0021 of 0041: Sanctuary, east wall, looking east – concrete block pattern (AWR)
- 0022 of 0041: Sanctuary, south wall, looking south – concrete block pattern
- 0023 of 0041: South wall, the ark (AWR)
- 0024 of 0041: Sanctuary, bimah, built-in seating (AWR)
- 0025 of 0041: Sanctuary, east wall, looking east (AWR)
- 0026 of 0041: Sanctuary, west wall, looking west (AWR)
- 0027 of 0041: Sanctuary, southeast corner at juncture of south wall (partition) and east wall
- 0028 of 0041: Lounge with partitions closed, looking east (NYLC)
- 0029 of 0041: Social hall, east wall, looking east (AWR)
- 0030 of 0041: Social hall, north wall, looking north (AWR)
- 0031 of 0041: Social hall, west wall, looking west, with south wall (partition opened) partially visible at left (AWR)
- 0032 of 0041: New vestibule with restroom (AWR)
- 0033 of 0041: Social hall, south wall, looking south (NYLC)
- 0034 of 0041: Social hall, looking east at east wall, with south wall (partition open) on the right (AWR)

DRAFT Temple Israel Reform Congregation

Richmond Co., NY

Name of Property

County and State

- 0035 of 0041: Synagogue kitchen (NYLC)
- 0036 of 0041: Former custodian's apartment (AWR)
- 0037 of 0041: Rabbi's study (AWR)
- 0038 of 0041: School corridor looking south (AWR)
- 0039 of 0041: Typical classroom (AWR)
- 0040 of 0041: Library (AWR)
- 0041 of 0041: Sanctuary, ceiling, looking south at ark (AWR)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

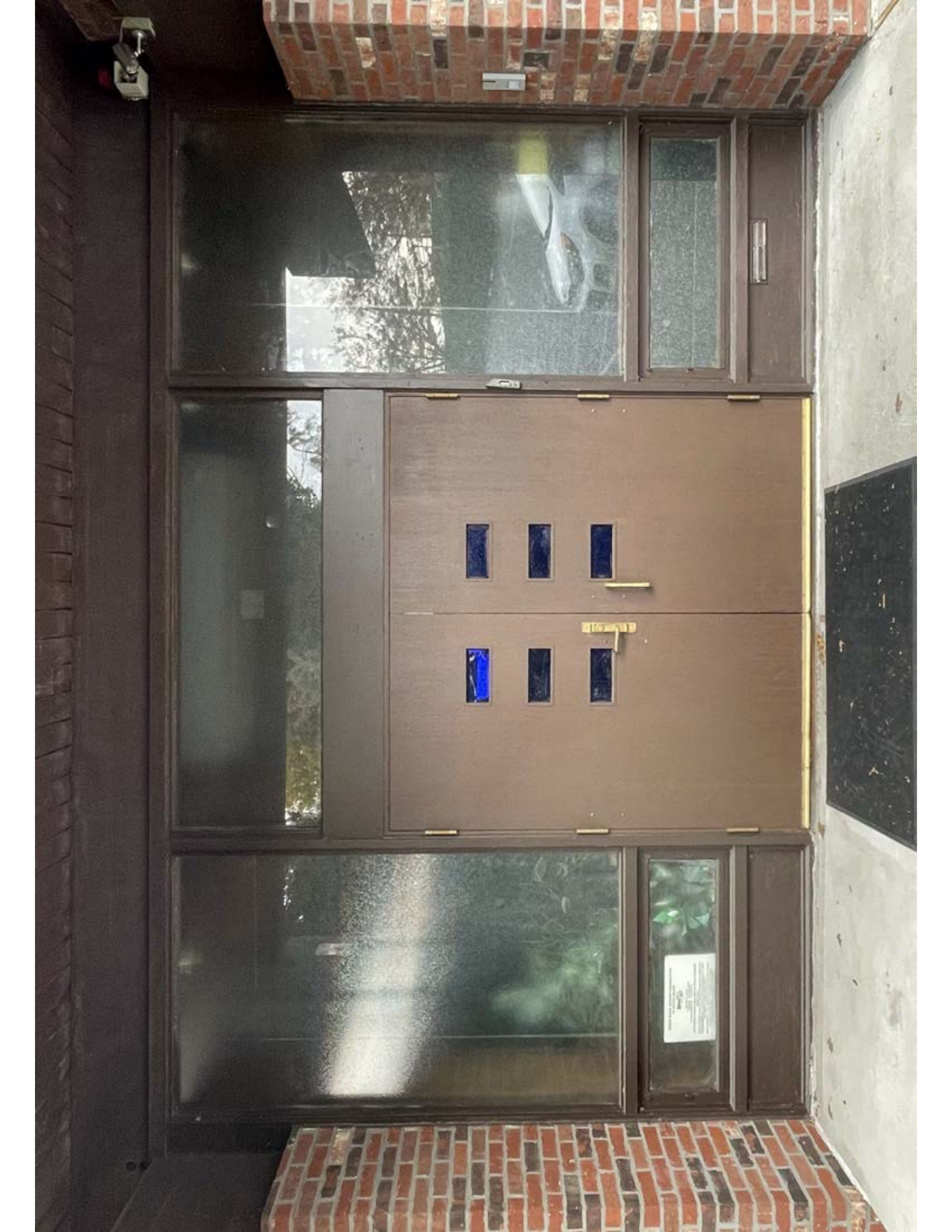


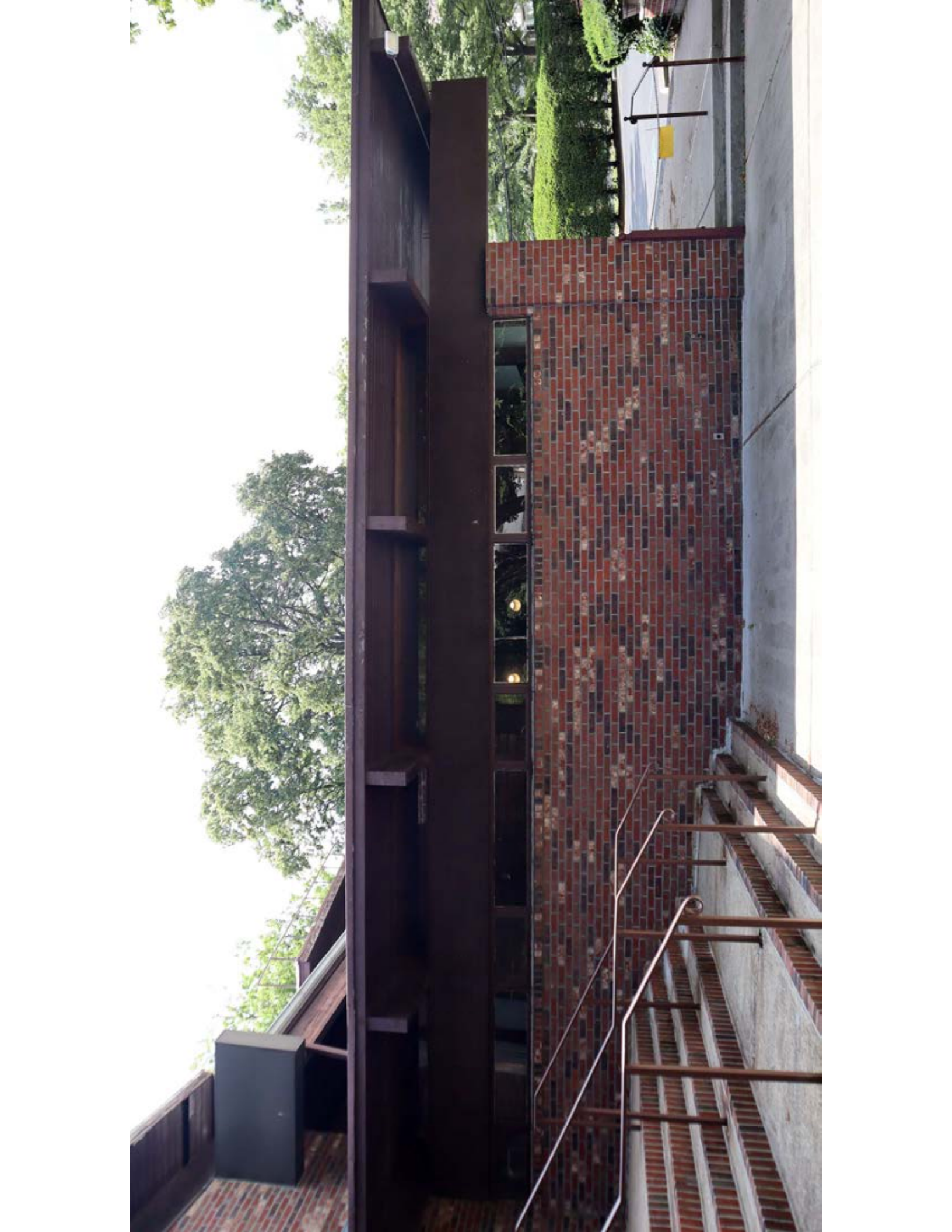
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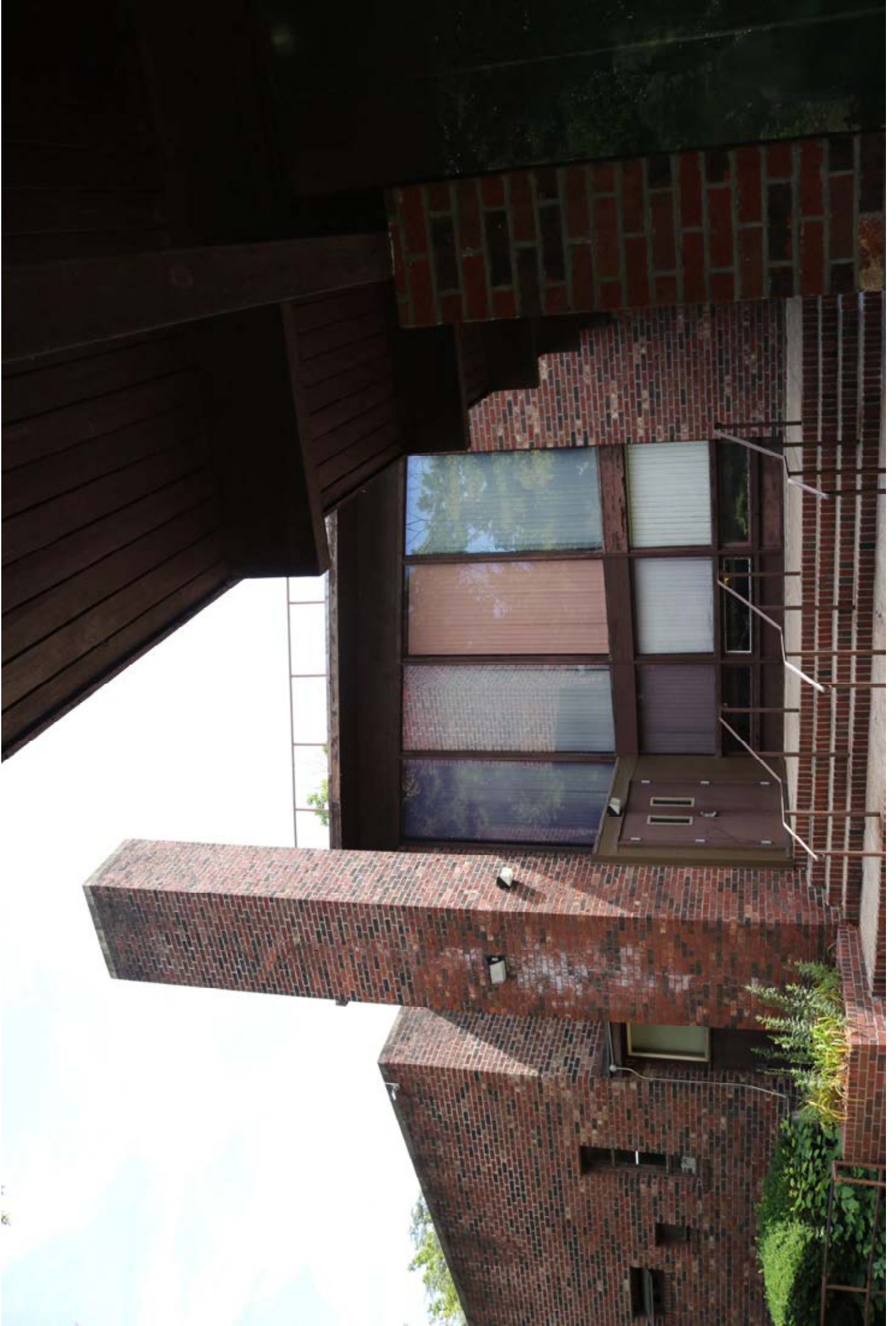
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CONGREGATION OF ST. ALLEN ISLA

TEMPLE ISRAEL

REFORM CONGREGATION OF EASTON, INDIANA



HEBREW SCHOOL
STARTS IN SEPTEMBER
REGISTRATION NUM • 718-727-2231





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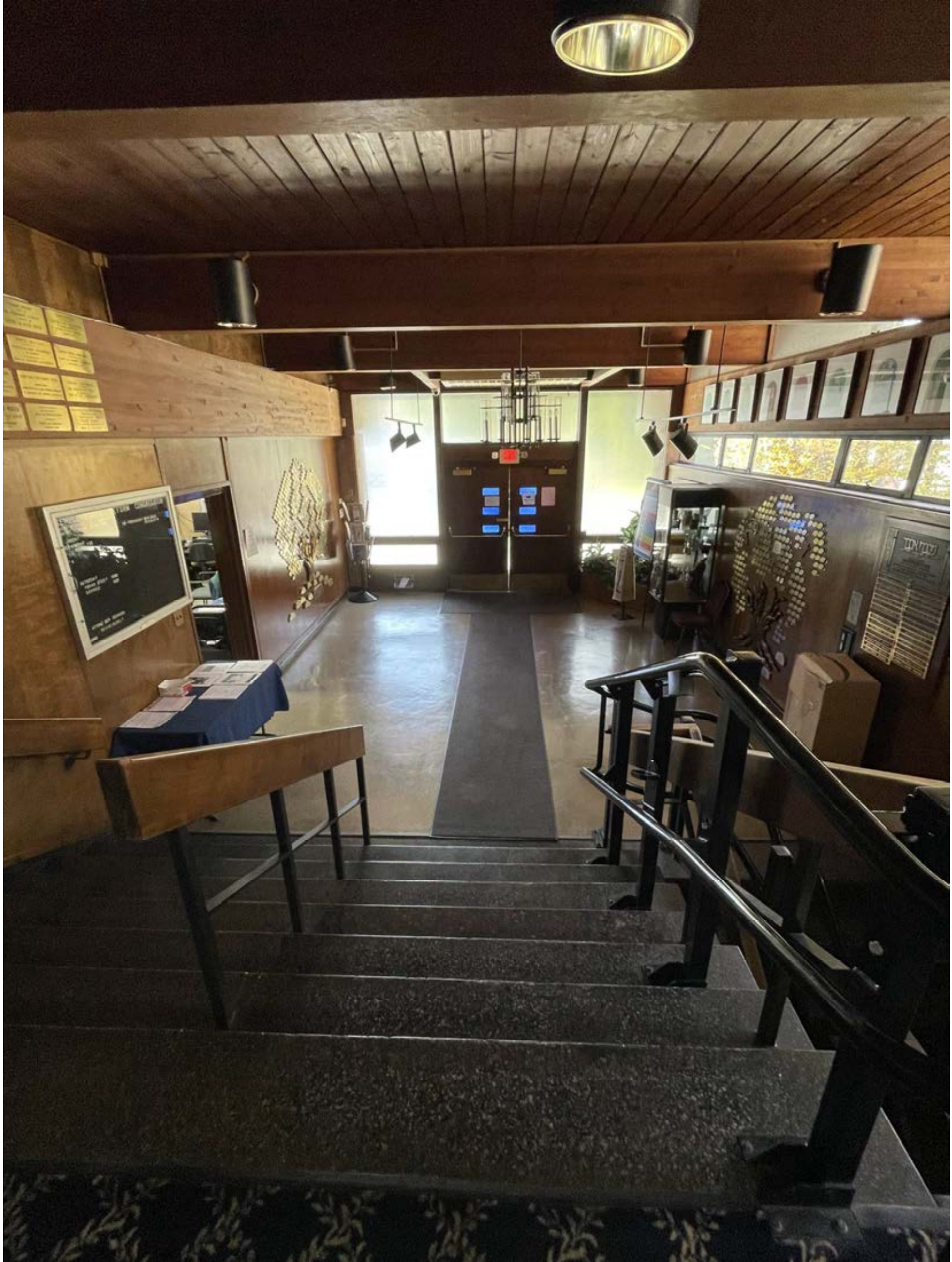


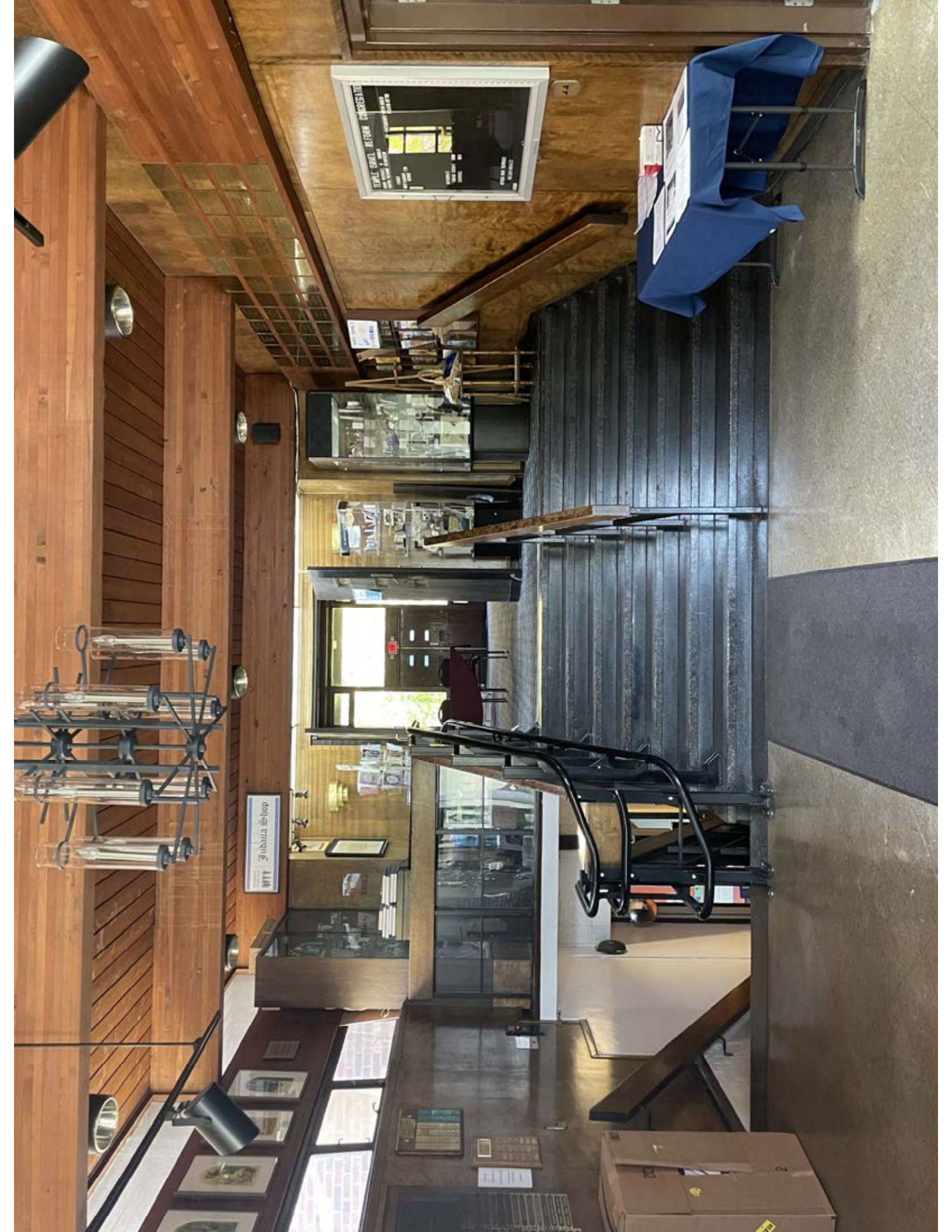



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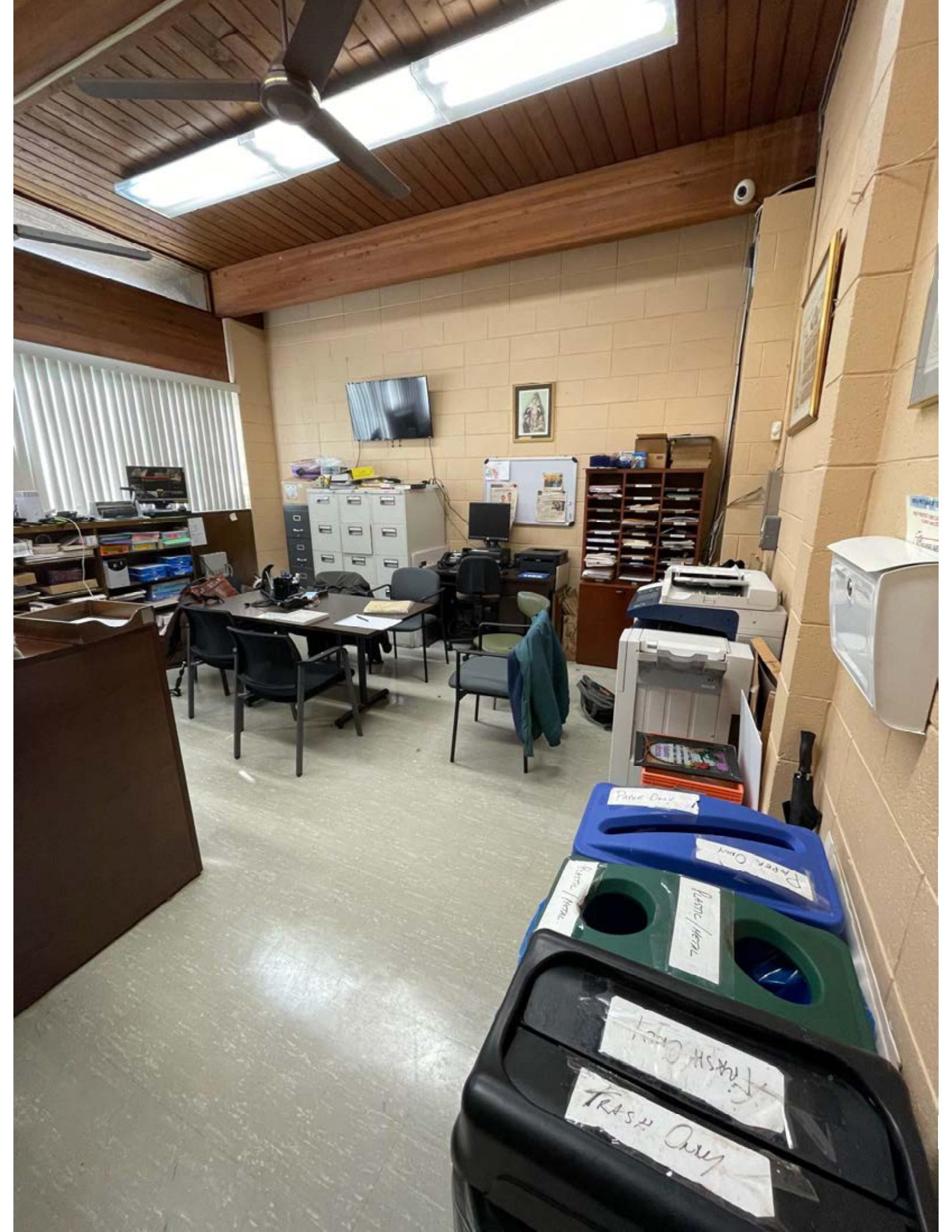






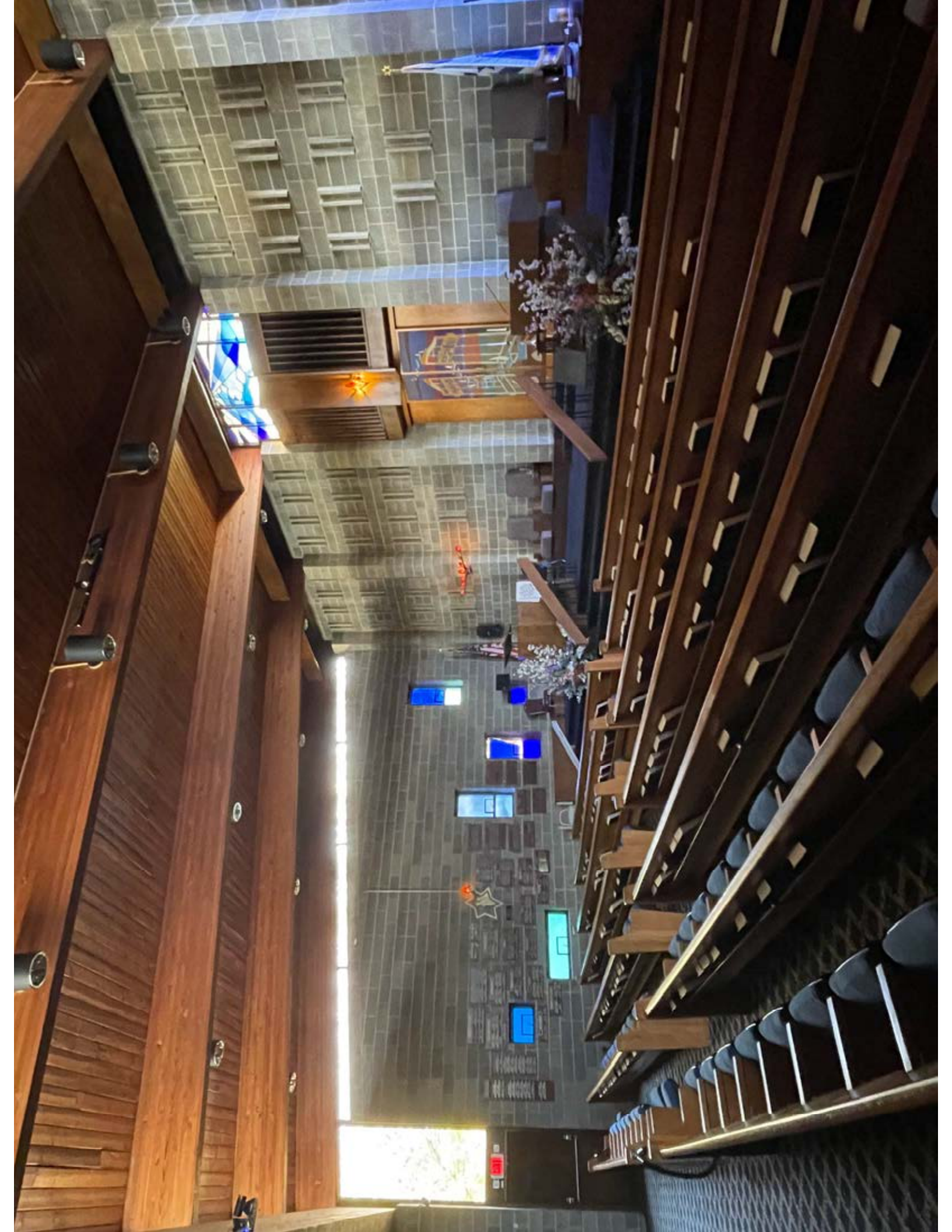
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Subaru Shop



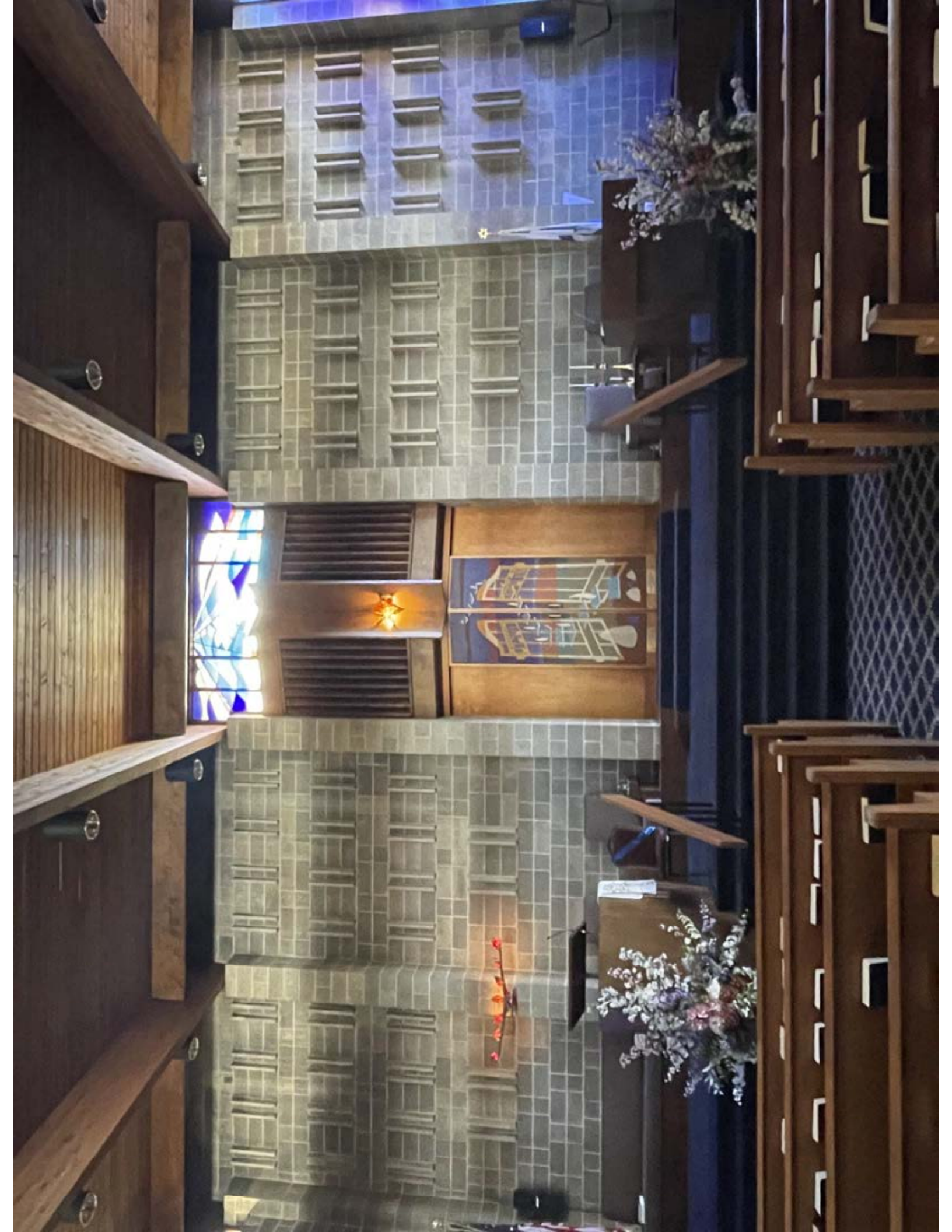
Window with white blinds.

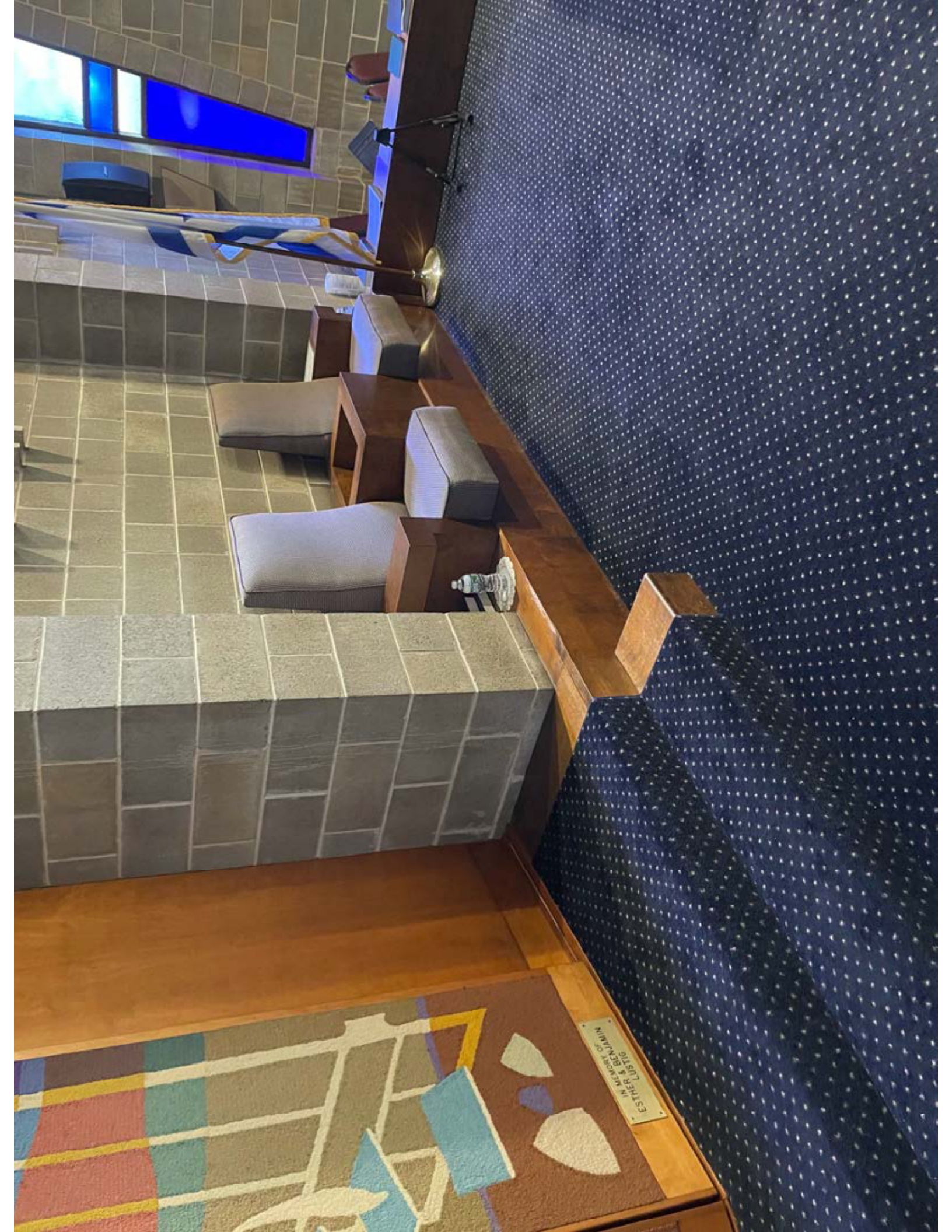




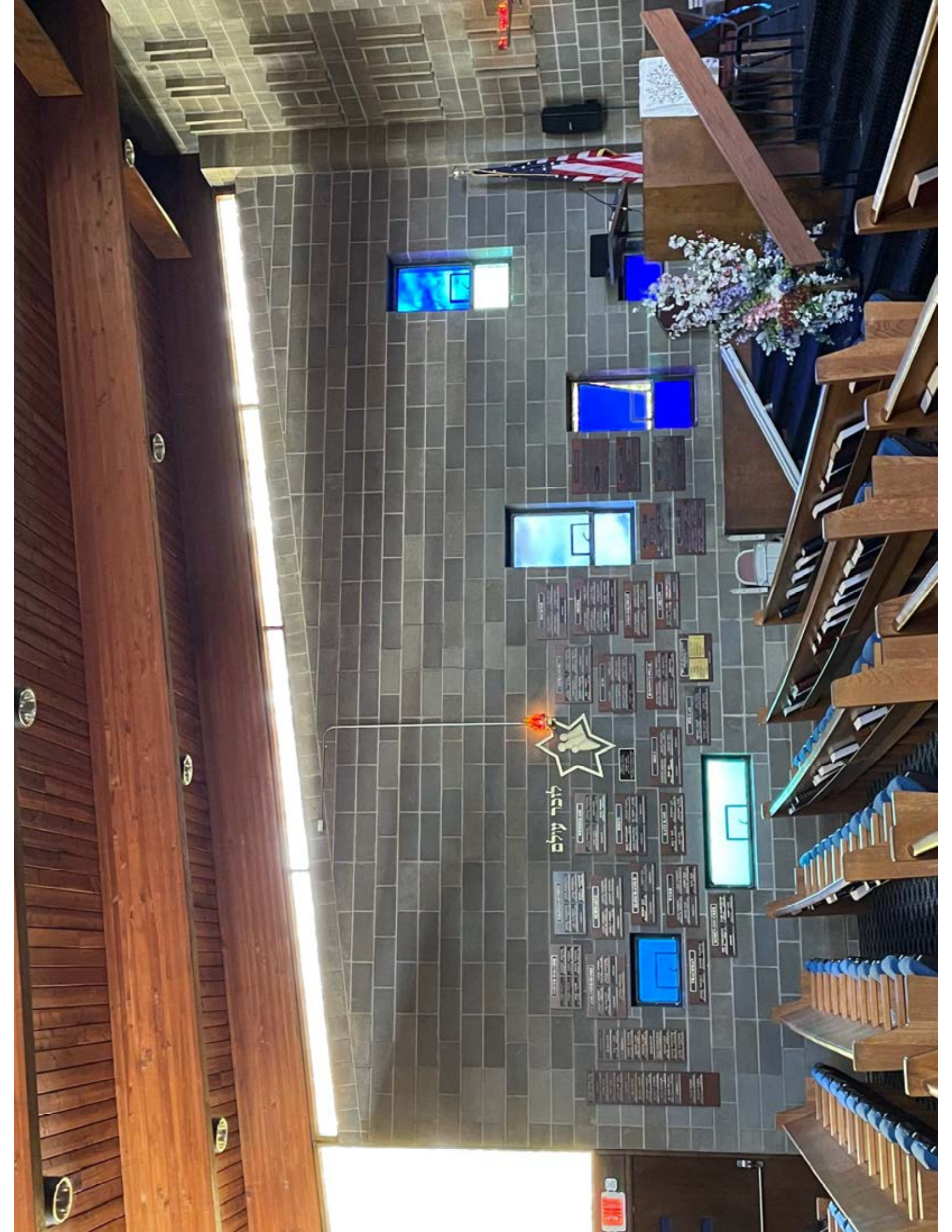


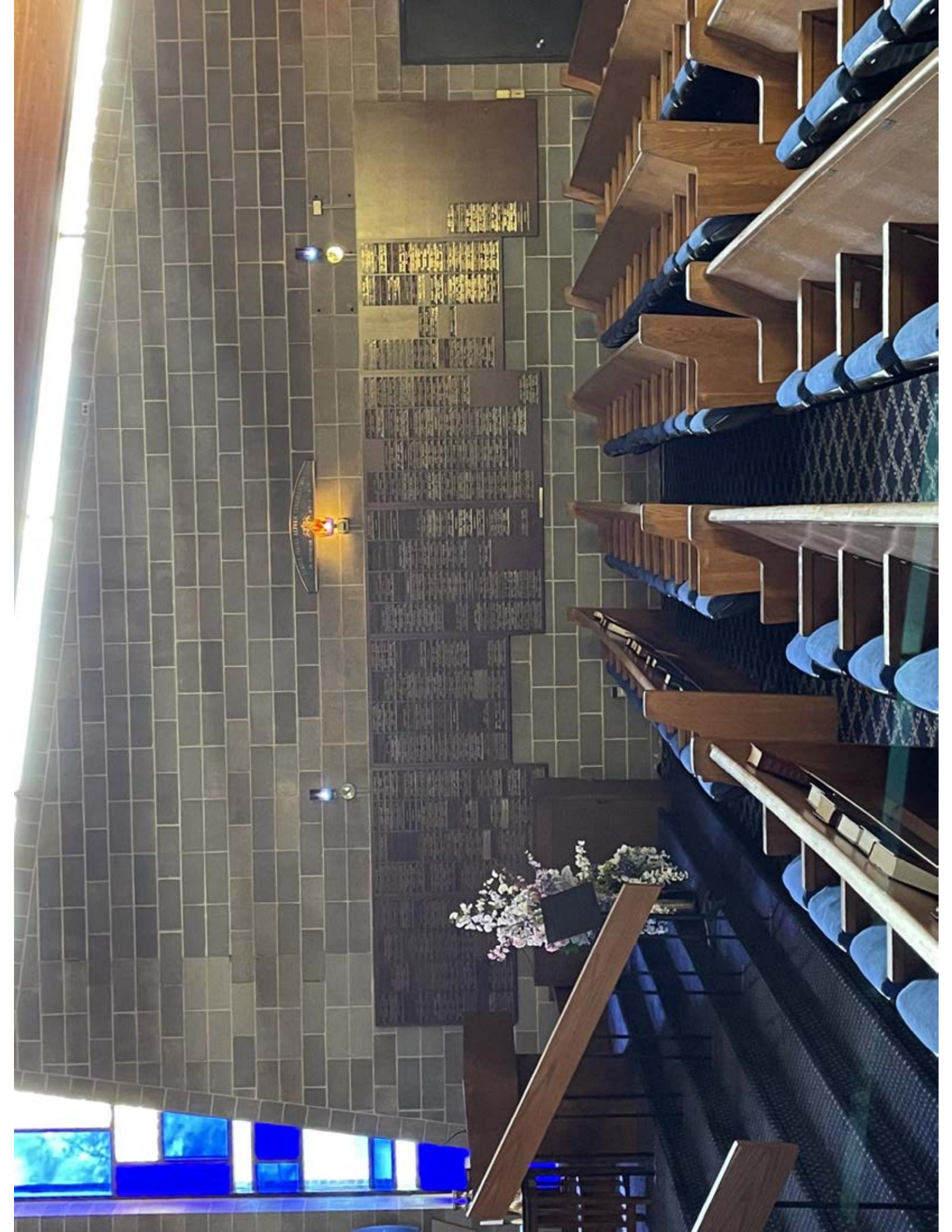


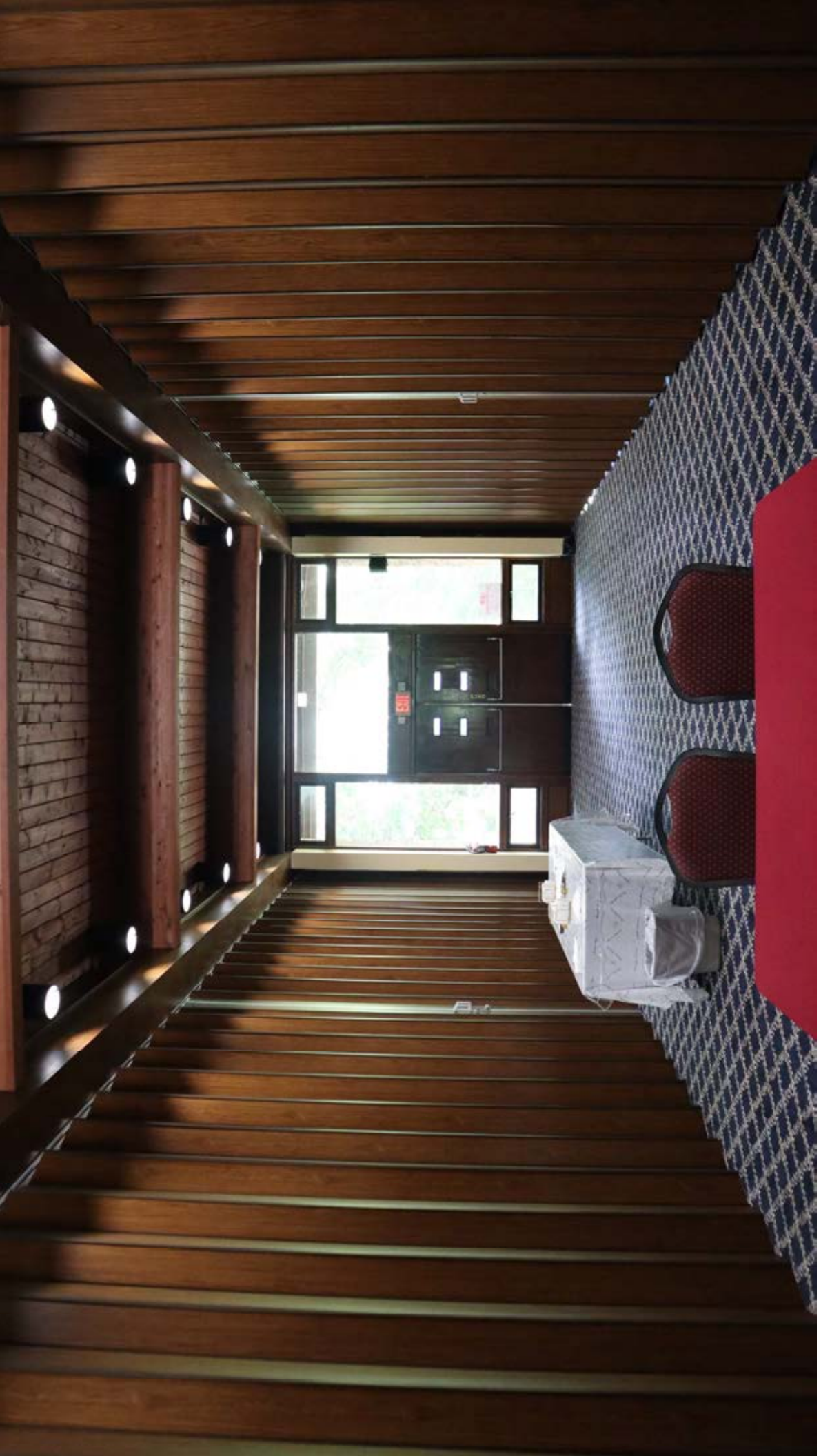


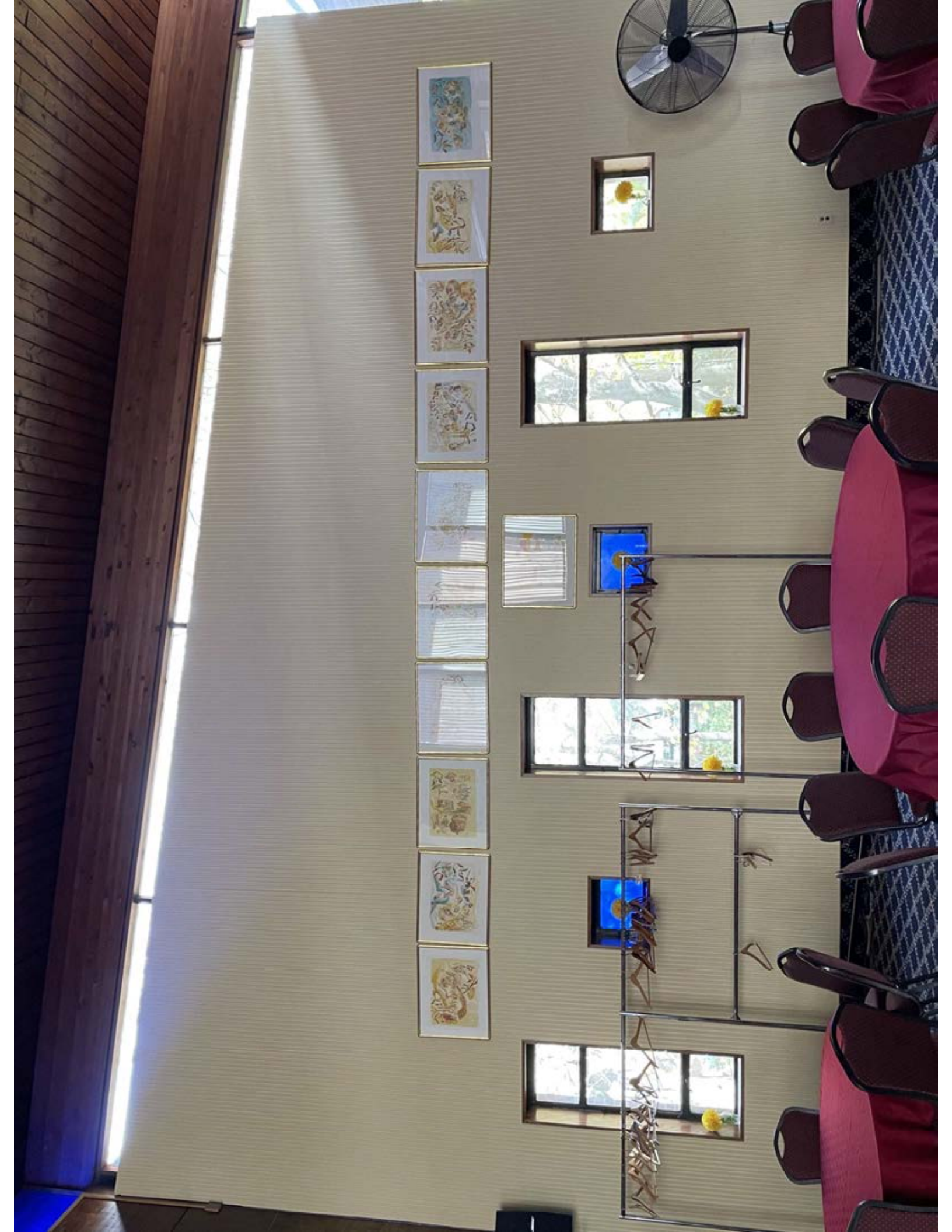


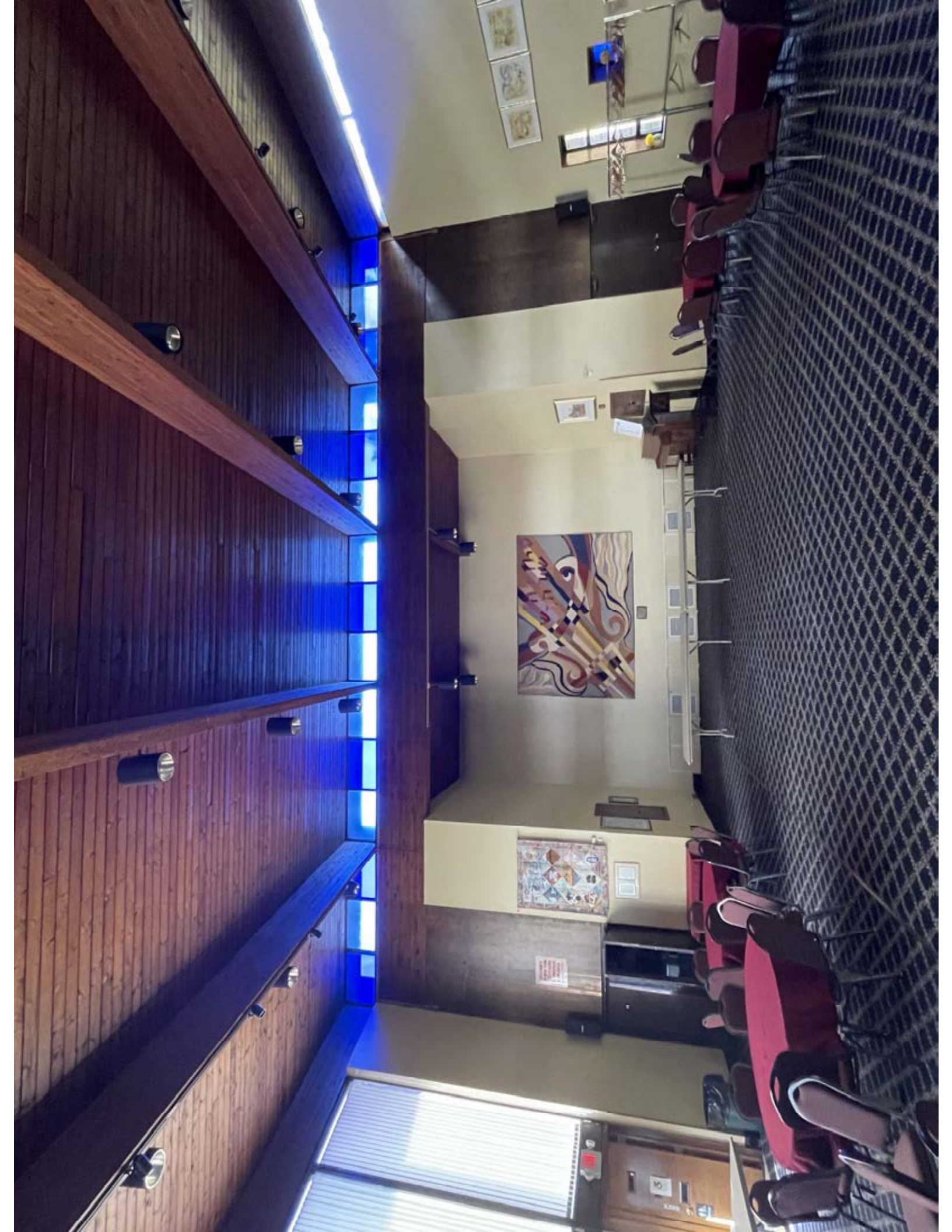
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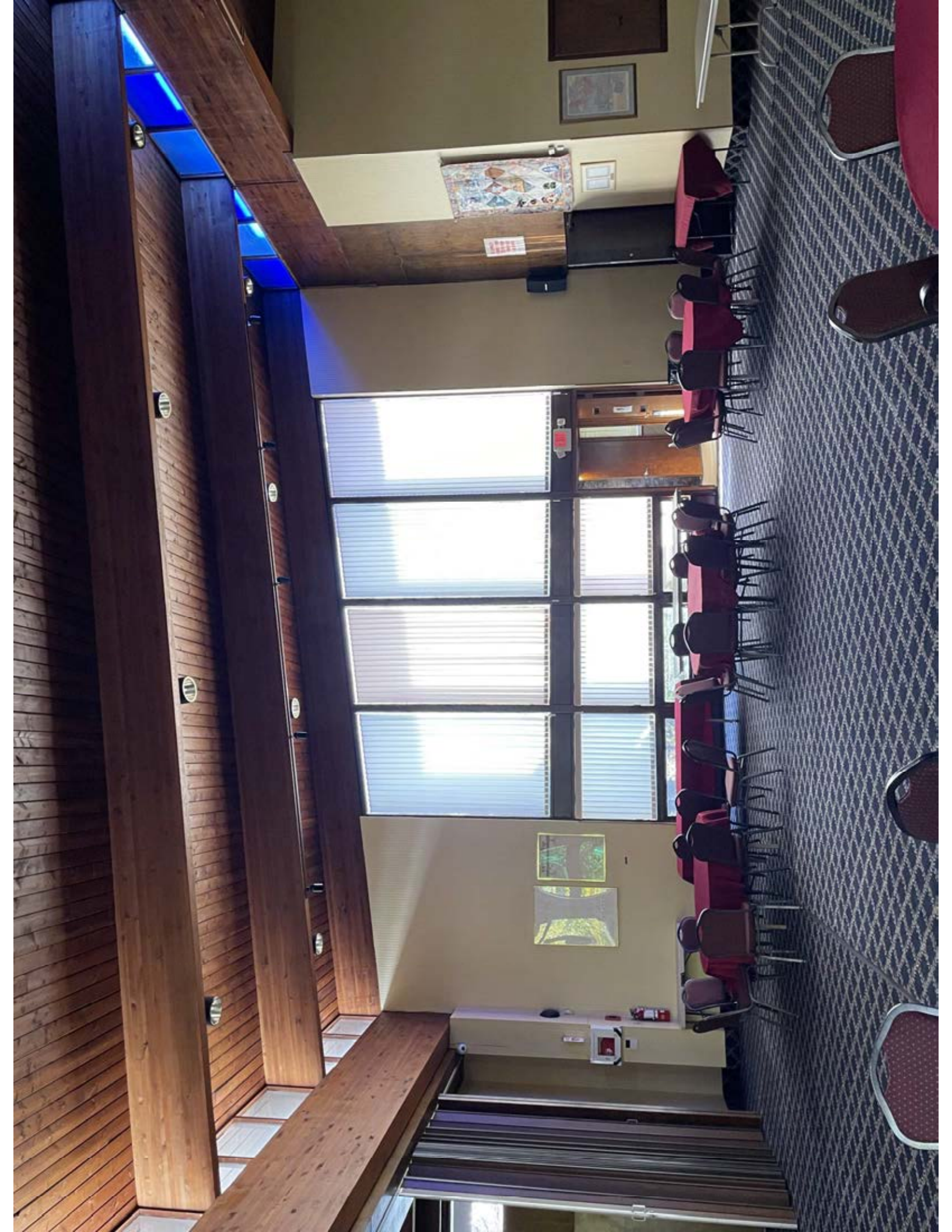












EXIT

