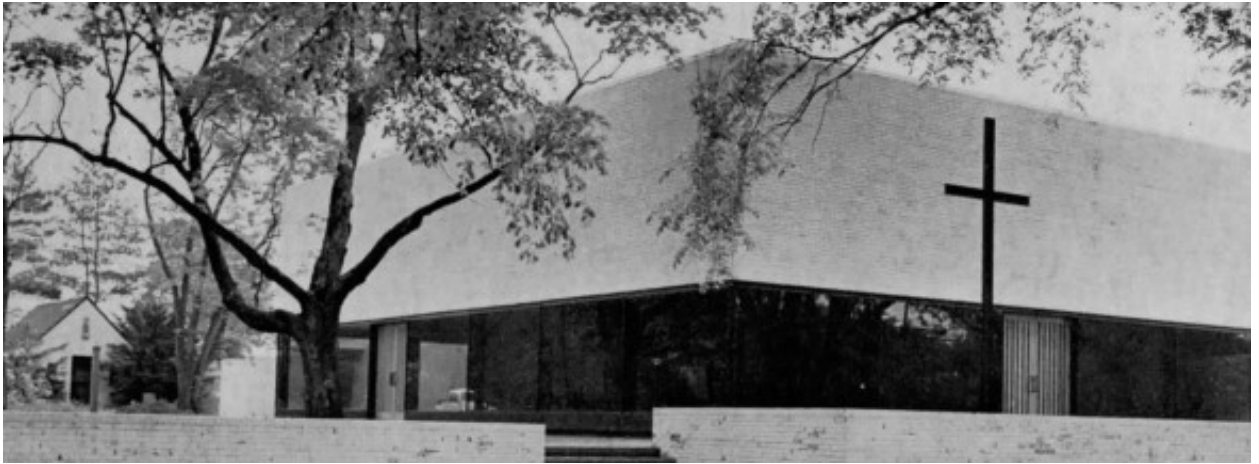


# St. Clare's Home in Genesis

## 1 The Inception of Genesis

The Mission Church was founded on Packard Street in 1953 and named for St. Clare of Assisi, who was a friend and disciple of St. Francis. In choosing to be named after St. Clare, the Church signaled its determination to search for diversity in the Christian faith and to view the life of the spirit through open and challenging eyes. As the congregation grew, becoming a Parish in 1965, it undertook several building expansion projects, culminating in the construction, under the Rev. Colin Campbell, of a large, modern, non-traditional, open sanctuary in front of the original church building in 1968.



Meanwhile, Temple Beth Emeth (House of Truth), a local reformed Jewish congregation, had been formed in Ann Arbor. They held their first service in August 1966 in the First Congregational Church but soon moved to the Unitarian Church where they held Friday night services and Saturday morning religious school classes. In 1969 Bruce Warshal was installed as their first rabbi. As the congregation grew to almost 100 families, it was clear that they would need more room. In 1970 Rabbi Warshal approached the Rev. Campbell and the church Vestry to ask if the temple could rent the new sanctuary on Friday nights for Sabbath services. On Friday July 17 the temple held its first service at St. Clare's (STC) under a 3-year lease.

Over the next few years, the coming together of the Christian church and Jewish temple was the beginning of an unusual ecumenical experience. The two congregations learned to help each other raking leaves, washing windows, keeping the kitchen clean, held joint education classes and celebrated a seder together during the week of Passover. With the installation of The Rev. Douglas Evett as Rector in 1972, the idea grew that they might share the building more completely than as landlord and tenant.

In April 1974, the Temple Beth Emeth (TBE) Board sent a letter to St. Clare's indicating an interest "a joint study of the feasibility of joint-ownership of the existing building and a potential classroom-social hall facility addition." By August both STC and TBE had overwhelmingly approved the proposal. By December 17, the Genesis Agreement, drawn up by Rabbi Warshal, Rev. Evett, Bob Creal Jr. (STC Sr. Warden) and Steven Young (TBE Board President), created a non-profit corporation, **Genesis of Ann Arbor**, the purpose of which was to "own, maintain and improve the real estate, buildings and personal property ... for the use and benefit of the religious corporate parties hereto, their respective parishioners and congregants, and the larger community". The church's land, buildings, and personal property located at 2301-2309 Packard Street were transferred to Genesis of Ann Arbor by Warranty Deed and Bill of Sale for the consideration of \$100,000 and the promise of TBE to construct (at its own expense) a classroom, library and social hall addition to the parish hall within 1

year. The church retained the use and sole responsibility for the St. Francis Chapel and the Anderson-Wisdom House and an area 5ft wide around each structure.

The corporation was to be managed by a Board of six members, 3 each elected by the two congregations. The first board consisted of:

President: Bob Creal

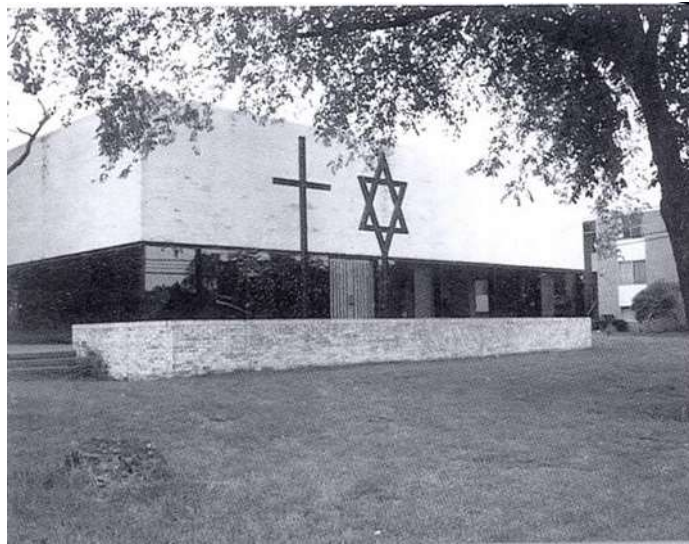
Vice President: Sheldon Berry

Secretary: Allyn Kantor

Treasurer: Stephen Bostwick

Other Members: Alida (Peg) Patterson and Malverne Reinhart

This board filed Articles of Incorporation with the State of Michigan on December 23, 1974. On May 28, 1975 the Star of David was raised next to the Cross in front of the property.



## **2 The Implementation of Genesis**

The current 2018 Genesis By-Laws lay out the operation of the corporation to manage the property and building staff.

### **2.1 Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors shall consist of 8 members, 4 each from each congregation. Three Candidates for the Board, members in good standing of and proposed by their respective congregations shall be elected to 3-year terms at an Annual Meeting to fill any positions being vacated on the Board. The remaining 2 members are members of and liaisons to the STC Vestry and TBE Board. The clergy of each congregation are ex officio members of the board.

Following the Annual Meeting the Board will select a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Regular meetings of the board will be held at least every 3 months to conduct the business of the corporation.

The current Genesis Board of Directors is:

President: Mark Davis-Craig (STC Liaison)

Vice President: David Lewis

Secretary: Loren Ryter

Treasurer: Tom Rich

Board Liaisons: Murray Rosenthal (TBE)

Other Members: Jim Downward, Abram Wagner, PF Anderson

## 2.2 Finances

A budget for the following fiscal year (July 1 – June 30) shall be prepared by the Board and presented at the Annual Meeting. The budget shall reflect the anticipated expenditures necessary for debt maintenance and reduction, utilities (excluding telephone), salaries of secretarial and janitorial personnel, insurance, upkeep and maintenance, (including supplies), repairs, replacements, and improvements to the property.

The Budget shall also state the total amount of revenue required to meet the budgeted expenditures and the amount thereof to be assessed to each of its member congregations. As currently agreed to by the two congregations, the operating expenses are apportioned 70% to TBE and 30% to STC based on their respective usage of the building. Annual assessments to fund the Building System Replacement Plan (BSRP) are the same for each congregation, reflecting their equal ownership of the property.

## 2.3 Committees

The by-laws provide for 5 permanent committees: Budget & Finance, Building, Grounds, Memorial & Gifts, Bridge. Other hoc committees also exist within Genesis to address specific issues and interests of the membership: e.g. Security, Green, Design, Events. Interested members are always welcome.

## 2.4 Facility Rental

Beyond the congregational assessments, significant financial support for Genesis comes from renting our beautiful space to members of the community.

Our major, long-term tenants are the Ann Arbor Children's House Montessori school for children birth through 6 years old, which uses classrooms on Floor 1 during the school year, and Blue Ocean Faith Church, which, following in the TBE tradition, worships in the Social Hall space on Sundays at 11am.

Other Genesis rentals include use of the Social Hall for events such as Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations and wedding or funeral receptions, and use of the Sanctuary for musical events.

Space is also provided for local non-profit meetings like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI).

## **3. The Impact of Genesis**

The aspiration of Genesis is captured in the preamble to the original 1974 Genesis Agreement that states in part:

“Understanding that both congregations will maintain their unique, separate, ethnic identities, and will continue to worship and be fruitful in ways which are unique to both understandings of the nature of God, and while both congregations pledge to respect the theological integrity of both the Jewish and Christian view, each believes that their actions herein will stand as a symbol of the power of reason and love to overcome distrust and the prejudices of our separate histories”

and the 2015 Genesis Covenant Renewal's Vision Statement "By daily embracing mutual trust and respect, we partner with God and one another to heal a broken world."

The creation of the Genesis partnership was such an astounding event that it became a national phenomenon: featured on a 1975 NBC News (video link-1) broadcast, in Parade Magazine in 1988 (below) and on CNN in 1994 (video link-2).



With the obvious benefit of providing a worship space bigger than either organization could support alone, comes the challenge of each congregation sharing the same space as each moves through the annual cycle of its faith: Yom Kippur and All Saints, Hanukkah and Christmas, Passover and Easter. Between congregations, guests, renters and tenants, the Genesis property continually houses a vast array of groups, requiring talented administration to make it all run smoothly.

The cooperation of the two congregations enables significant social justice outreach to the community. Projects worked together include:

Operation of the Back Door Food Pantry "Providing Hunger Relief with Dignity since 2007"



The building of a Habitat for Humanity home (the House of Abraham) in celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> Genesis Anniversary



Holding joint Mitzvah Days to assist local non-profits like the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living



Hosting 25 men in the Shelter Association's Men's Rotating Shelter for Thanksgiving week each year





Providing a week of meals and support to Interfaith Hospitality Network's Alpha House shelter for families experiencing homelessness FOUR times a year



Additionally, joint worship at the Erev Thanksgiving service each November with the combined STC's Adult and TBE's Kol Halev choirs, joint Grounds Work Days, Genesis Events like a presentation by the League of Women Voters on 2024 Voting Rights changes, and Genesis Tri-Board (Vestry, TBE Board and Genesis Board) meetings where the future of the partnership is envisioned create and build personal relationships among members of the congregations.

In the past several years, in the face of concerns over threats arising from an increase in antisemitism, members of each congregation have volunteered to provide additional security for the other during major celebrations, like the temple's High Holy Days and the church's Christmas Eve luncheon and service for those experiencing homelessness.

The recent celebration of Genesis' 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was a wonderful testament to the strength of the bonds formed between these two communities of differing faith traditions.



For more information and stories about current Genesis activities check out the Genesis [blog](#).

#### 4. Importance of Genesis

During the St. Clare's 2020 Clergy Search Discernment, a recurring theme in the Holy Conversations was how many parishioners felt that their answer to "*Why have you made this church your faith community? What brought you here and why do you stay?*" was the value they ascribed to the Genesis relationship.

Genesis has created a flexible space that parishioners of St. Clare's think of as their church and the members of Beth Emeth regard as their temple. It is a vibrant place, a good and happy place. With this spirit of working and worshipping together, side by side, Genesis remains as a visible symbol of the power of reason and love.

For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples - Isaiah 56:7