

The perimeter of the worship space at Temple Beth-El in Stamford reminds me a great deal of the worship spaces at St. Francis. Large, clear windows comprise the majority of the sides of the sanctuary, offering parishioners literally a window into the wonder of creation that surrounds this synagogue. I suspect that Rabbi Joshua Hammerman's folks end up daydreaming a bit because of those windows as do a number of people from St. Francis. You can't not! With foliage changing from season to season, the clouds shape-shifting at other times, and the brilliance of the sun and sky calling you out to play, whose mind would not be drawn in? While at the weekly Wisdom Literature program last night, I spied a placard that not only recognized the architectural makeup of the sanctuary but translated it into the identity of the parish. Paraphrased, the statement read: *Our sanctuary reflects our congregation. We are a community of windows not walls.*

What a wonderful statement. What a wonderful posture. What wonderful food for thought.

Our congregation is one of windows not walls. Our religious life is not meant to wall us in and prevent us from engaging the world. Our religious life is meant to help us see into the world, clearly and honestly so that we might be able to respond to the grace and goodness that confronts us as well as react to the injury and the injustice that also meets us in the world. Our religious practice is not meant to separate us from the world, wall us off if you will as a fortress that keeps the worthy in and the unworthy out. Our religious practice is meant to help us see the "other" in our very midst and recognize that we are all God's children, thus the windows allow us to see who may be on the outside precisely so that we can meet their need or welcome them in. Our life together is not meant to be defined by a barrier where only a few may participate and enjoy the benefits of God's love. Rather our life together is meant to be surrounded by windows that continually remind us that there is a world out there sore in need of love and we move easily between sanctuary and world to share that love.

You may need to check with Joe Mygatt and JoAnne Cone--the architects of the church at 2810--but the story that I have been told about the creation of that sanctuary is that is a contemporary reflection of the Historic Church. Simple. Natural light. Windows! The story also is told that while searching for potential architects to design the new sanctuary, the committee was adamant: they did not want a red door, stone, stained-glass window Episcopalian sanctuary. The architects, however, came back with red door, stone, stained-glass window Episcopalian. Thus, Joe and JoAnne began their work, and the rest is history. Beautiful history. Holy history. History with a lesson. We have windows (in both sanctuaries) and not walls.

The trick, of course, is not simply to recognize this reality and articulate it--windows not walls--but to also then embody this reality and live into it. I know many of us share the gift of daydreaming with our brothers and sisters at Temple Beth-El because of the windows that allow

us to travel while remaining rooted. I also know that affirmation of windows over walls is something fundamental to our DNA as a parish. Indeed, it is not just our parish, but all of those religions and communities that seek to see and to know and to engage the world as it is--not to be cloistered away--that are a little bit closer to holy. For, when it comes down to it, we not only are able to see the world through the windows rather than the walls, what we see is a bit more of God also present in that world, and our reaching out is a desire to engage with God just a little more.