Congregation Shaarey Zedek’s History

In 1861, at the beginning of the Civil War, seventeen followers of Traditional Judaism withdrew from the Beth El Society in Detroit to found the Shaarey Zedek Society. Then, in 1877 the membership constructed the first building in the Detroit area to be erected specifically as a synagogue, at Congress and St. Antoine.

Congress and St. Antoine – 1877 to 1903

Dedication of CSZ plaque located at site of Congress & St. Antoine:
Judy Cantor and Rabbi Irwin Groner
The membership continued to grow, and in 1913, as the first Conservative Jewish Congregation in the Detroit area, Congregation Shaarey Zedek became one of the founding congregations of the United Synagogue of America. Since the nineteenth century, members of the congregation have played leading roles in Michigan, the nation and in world Jewry.

Left to Right: Cantor Sidney Rube, U.S. Senator Carl Levin, Cantor Chaim Najman, Harold Berry, Harvey Weisberg, Louis Berry, Rabbi Irwin Groner, Honorable Avern Cohn, William Davidson, David Hermelin
Rabbi Morris Adler with Governor George Romney and Max Fisher

Rabbi Irwin Groner with Israel Prime Minister Menachem Begin – c.1974
Over the years, Congregation Shaarey Zedek has been located in a number of beautiful and picturesque buildings. These include Winder between St. Antoine and Beaubien Streets, Willis Street E and Brush, and Chicago Boulevard and Lawton, which is still standing.
Moving Torahs to Chicago Boulevard – c.1932
Middle to Right: President A. Louis Gordon, Chancellor Lewis Finkelstein of JTS, Rabbi Abraham Hershman
At the 100th annual meeting of the Congregation on April 12, 1961, more than 700 members approved the recommendation from the Board of Directors that a new synagogue be built on a forty-acre site in Southfield, where our congregation is presently located.

Groundbreaking ceremony – Bell Road – 1961
At the podium: Building Chairman Mandell "Bill" Berman.
Throughout its history, CSZ has a rich tradition of bringing together the community for the celebration of Jewish holidays, educational pursuits, as well as life cycle events.

Rabbi Irwin Groner with Russian immigrants in Sukkah at Bell Road – c. 1980

Rosh Hashanah – Cantor Sidney Rube with Shofar, and Cantor Frankel looking on.
Rabbi Morris Adler with Eleanor Roosevelt at Israel Bond event – 1956

Students attending CSZ Religious School on Seven Mile Rd. – 1950s
Rabbi Irwin Groner with Brian Hermelin at his Bar Mitzvah - 1978
CSZ has maintained active Sisterhood and Men’s Club groups for many years.

Sisterhood with Eleanor Roosevelt – 1956

Men’s Club at Traverse City retreat - 1956
Recently, the synagogue’s leadership initiated a strategic planning process that will take Congregation Shaarey Zedek into the future with a clear mission and vision of our growth and development for generations to come.