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## Christian group building replica of 'Wailing Wall'

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Evangelicals say they hope to show support for Israel

September 22, 2008 - 10:30PM

MARK BARNA  
THE GAZETTE

Locals who have longed to visit the Western Wall in Jerusalem but can't afford the trip soon will be able to mimic the experience without leaving town.

Every Home for Christ, which evangelizes in about 100 nations, will spend \$2.3 million on a replica of the Western Wall - also known as the Wailing Wall - and an auditorium to house it. Construction inside its Springs headquarters, the Jericho Center for Global Evangelism, is scheduled to begin Oct. 1, with a grand opening set for April 1.

"Evangelical Christians have very strong ties to Israel because of our Judeo-Christian tradition," said Dick Eastman, the international president of Every Home for Christ.

"This is a way for us to say, 'We support Israel.'"

For centuries, Jews have made a pilgrimage to the Western Wall to pray and leave written prayers in its cracks.

The wall, which was built around 20 B.C. and rises more than 100 feet in places, is all that remains of the ancient Jewish Temple.

Jews pray and mourn the destruction of the temple at the wall because they consider the area holy ground.

The replica will fill 2,500 square feet of an 8,000-square-foot, 300-seat auditorium, which will be



(The Larson Group)

The project's architects, the Larson Group, provided a rendering of what the Western Wall replica will look like.

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used to train missionaries and teach about prayer.

About 50 tons of stone will be used to construct the mini two-story wall that, along with the auditorium, is being financed by donations. Stones will be cut from an ancient mine outside Jerusalem used for thousands of years to build the city's most impressive structures.

"The stones connect the wall to Israel," said Gill Lobel, chief executive of the Jerusalem Stone Co., which is supplying the stones. "They have a holy feel to them."

Stones will be cut to 1/20th of their original size, said Gary Larson, head architect on the project.

The project is taking some creative license: Stone-paved stairways and a top walkway are part of design, and 13 prayer rooms will be inside the wall - none of which are features of the original wall.

As with the real wall, however, visitors can place prayer requests in the replica. Then, each year, the requests will be taken to Israel to go inside the Western Wall.

The wall will be free and open to the public 24 hours a day. The hope is to have Christians and Jews praying together, said Eastman, who thought up the replica-wall idea.

"It will be a very functional area for people who want to pray for others," Eastman said.

Although the Western Wall is one of the holiest shrines in Judaism, Rabbi Donald Levy of Temple Beit Torah in Colorado Springs said he has no objections to a faux wall being erected by a Christian organization.

"For evangelicals to be focused on the holy land is a good thing," Levy said.

But Elizabeth Van Bueren, who is Jewish, is concerned about ulterior motives.

"They are trying to get converts," said Van Bueren, who lives in Colorado Springs.

"They want to Christianize the entire world."

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