

Teachers

We are proud to have wonderful, caring teachers on our staff for J-Quest on Sundays and for Hebrew . Learn more about our teachers below.

Elisa Bailis

4th Grade Sunday

elisa.bailis@gmail.com



Hello,

My name is **Elisa** Bailis, and I am so excited to be teaching fourth grade this year. I have been part of the Temple Jeremiah community since 1996. In my time here I've had the amazing opportunity to teach a variety of grade levels, including fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and Alef Hebrew. I am a teacher by profession, and during the week I substitute teach in a variety of districts close to my home in Vernon Hills. I am the mom of three, and in my free time I love fitness, reading the newest and best novels, watching British mystery series, spending time with my family and friends, and relaxing with a nice hot cup of coffee. I look forward to getting to know even more Jeremiah families this year!

Laura Bernstein

4th Grade Sunday

laurabernstein23@gmail.com



My name is Laura Bernstein and I am very excited to be teaching fourth grade each Sunday at Temple Jeremiah. I grew up at Temple Jeremiah and have celebrated many mitzvahs here. I feel very lucky to be back and part of the amazing team. I have been teaching special education for 21 years and during the week I currently teach special needs kindergarten. I am married to a wonderful man named Corey and we have 2 children, our 13-year-old son named Jack and our almost 2 year old Maggie who are both also growing up at Temple Jeremiah!

Melissa Celnik
3rd Grade Sunday and Hebrew
mrsclnik@yahoo.com



My name is Melissa Celnik and I've been teaching for over 25 years. During the school year, you will find me teaching Hebrew to Bet, Gimmel, and Dalet students and Sunday School lessons to 3rd graders. I grew up in Skokie and moved to GLENVIEW in 1996 after our wedding. When I'm not in the classroom, I could be spending time with my family or friends. My husband and I enjoy taking our 3 children (plus sometimes our dog) on adventures like blueberry picking, local tourist stops, and picnicking in Lake Geneva. I love cooking and baking and sharing it with others. I also enjoy planting flowers and vegetables in our garden. Someday, I hope to have a couple of fruit trees. By the way, I'm also a member of Temple Jeremiah where all of my children had their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs.

Jessica Don
1st Grade Sunday
Standingon1foot@gmail.com



My parents joined Temple Jeremiah when I was one year old. I've been here ever since then. (Needless to say, I'm a fan of Temple Jeremiah.) I'm thrilled to get to work with First Graders. I love their creativity and curiosity. This year we will investigate how to be Jewish – the people, places, and things that create our Jewish community. We'll also begin to explore the Jewish holidays and traditions. When I'm not hanging out at temple, I can be found hanging out with my husband, 2 kids, 1 cat ... and probably coffee. Yeah, odds are pretty good I'll have a cup of coffee with me.

Stacy Dudek
5th Grade Sunday and Hebrew
stacyidudek@gmail.com

My name is Stacy Dudek and I have been with Temple Jeremiah since 2008. I was a middle school Language Arts/Literacy teacher for 10 years before having children and deciding to stay home with them. I absolutely love teaching at Temple Jeremiah. I have learned so much more about my religion and my culture simply by being present at the temple. I have taught 5th, 7th, 9th, 10th, and Aleph, Bet and Gimmel Hebrew and have loved them all! Can I really call coming to temple and interacting with such a variety of great people "work"???



Sarah Gamoran
Kindergarten Sunday and Hebrew
sarah.gamoran@gmail.com

My name is Sarah Gamoran and I am so excited to be your Sunday School teacher this year! I am currently a student at the University of Denver where I study psychology and sociology, so I will be talking to you all the way from Colorado! I love to hike, travel, sing, and spend time with my friends and family.

Each week we will learn, grow, and have fun together! You can expect for us to share some great moments together and make some fun crafts while we learn all about our Judaic lessons. I am thrilled to be teaching you all and am excited to get to know you!



Becca Helbraun
5th Grade Sunday
beccahelbraun@gmail.com



Hello! My name is Becca Helbraun.

I grew up in Northbrook, IL and spent many of my formative years teaching at Temple Jeremiah's Hebrew school as a teacher's assistant. I also spent 11 summers at OSRU in Wisconsin, where I was able to grow up and learn about my connection to Judaism and form a love of nature.

I went to school for Occupational Therapy and upon graduating, decided to move to Colorado to fulfil my life with nature, hiking and exploring in the mountains. I still have a strong connection to Chicago Jewish Life and was pleased when I was asked to become a teacher once again at Temple Jeremiah.

As an Occupational Therapist, I work with children and their families on a daily basis, helping them accomplish their daily needs, learning how to become independent, play with their peers, help to identify how to get their body's needs met, love and cope through this difficult time we are all living in. I am truly looking forward to getting to work with you and your children.

Rabbi Debbie Helbraun
5th & 7th Grades Sunday and
Hebrew Principal
helbraun@aol.com



My name is Rabbi Debbie Helbraun. You can look at the [staff page](#) to see my professional skills and accomplishments. When not at Temple Jeremiah, I love spending time outdoors. I walk 25-30 miles a week, usually with my dog. I also like to read and listen to music. I am passionate about social justice and teaching. I look forward to two weeks at OSRU every summer, spending informal time with our youth. Much of the rest of my free time is spent with my family: my husband, Sid; daughter, Becca; and son, Jonah.

This year I will be teaching both Fifth and Seventh grades. Although I serve in an administrative role, getting in the classroom and interacting with the students continues to be a priority for me. I especially try to engage in informal, "camp-style" learning, helping students to discover about themselves, their heritage, and how they become active and caring Jews in our ever-changing world.

Alan Hirsch
7th Grade Sunday
ahirsch15@yahoo.com

Hi, my name is Alan Hirsch and I am thrilled to be teaching 7th grade at Temple Jeremiah this year. I have been a member of the Jeremiah Family for 10 years. My hobbies include cooking,



gardening, and coaching. When I am not teaching, I enjoy spending time with my wife Melissa and my two children Claudia and Emma. We have two amazing Labrador retrievers Chloe and Maggie that help fill our lives.

Suzanne McAulay
4th Grade Sunday
smcaulay23@gmail.com



My name is Suzanne McAulay. This is my second year teaching 4th grade. I have been an active member of Temple Jeremiah since 2014. I am the mother of one 10-year old son, Konrad.

During the week, I am the Deputy General Counsel of a global financial brokerage firm.

I am excited to be working with the other 4th Grade teachers and your children to create a fun learning environment.

Fred Oskin
6th Grade Sunday
FIOskin@aol.com



I hail originally from Buffalo, New York, but have been in Chicago for approximately 40 years. I am married and have three grown children. As a social worker, I have worked in the Jewish communal service field in New Orleans, Harrisburg, PA, as well as in Chicago.

I have been the Executive Director of two Chicago residential care facilities, the Association of the Jewish Blind and the Northwest Home for the Aged. Besides being privileged to be a religious school teacher at Temple Jeremiah for a long time, I am also a professor in the Dominican University School of Social Work, plus I serve as an adjunct faculty member of the University of Phoenix.

An especially avid sports fan, I'm a loyal supporter of the Bears, Bulls, Cubs, and White Sox, as well as of the University at Buffalo, the University of Illinois, the University of Wisconsin, Northwestern University, and the University of Southern California.

Our special interest is in our extended family which includes our three grandsons, Jacob, Avery, and Joshua, along with our granddaughter, Maddie (Madison),

I also particularly enjoy photography, graphic design with computers, exercising, long-distance running, and both stationary and outdoor bicycling.

Karen Rohrbach
Kindergarten & 7th Grades Sunday
lefty214@aol.com



Welcome to Sunday school at Temple Jeremiah; we are going to have a wonderful year! Our curriculum, via stories, videos and art projects, centers on our holidays, the rituals surrounding the holidays and our Jewish identity. We also focus on doing *mitzvot*, good deeds, that kids can do. In addition to all that, one of the most important lessons learned in Kindergarten is to become comfortable in our Temple and to become part of the temple community. At University, I learned that young children respond best with positive reinforcement; that's what they receive in class.

In 7th grade, we bring the class issues of the day. Through discussion, give our students a chance to give their opinions and insights on topics relating to their lives and how they are becoming Jewish young adults. When I joined the 7th grade team several years ago, the class has never ceased to amaze me with their thoughtfulness and insightful commentary.

My family has been members of Temple Jeremiah for more than 20 years. Both of our daughters have celebrated their Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation here; they both served as teacher's aides through high school. When I'm not at Sunday school I am an avid football fan. After Sunday school, I can be found watching a football game...any football game!

Alexis Ruda
2nd Grade Sunday and Hebrew
alexisruda@gmail.com



Hi! My name is Alexis Ruda, and I have been a teacher at Temple Jeremiah for 10. I have had the pleasure of working with first graders, fifth graders, and everyone in between. Currently, I teach second grade Sunday school along with Aleph and Bet Hebrew. My roots at Jeremiah run deep. As a child, the time I spent at Temple with my aunt and uncle inspired a lifelong love of Judaism. At the age of 23, while living and working in New York City, I studied Hebrew in earnest and celebrated my Bat Mitzvah right here at Temple Jeremiah (it's never too late!). Today, it is a privilege and a joy to be a teacher at this synagogue that has been so close to my heart all these years.

I live in Chicago with my big silly dog, Hercules.

Jordan Shacter
3rd Grade Sunday and Hebrew
jshacter2000@yahoo.com



I am looking forward to another year at Jeremiah! I am a certified K-9 teacher, but currently work as a full-time stay-at-home dad to my five children, 4 daughters: Dena, Penina, Aliyah and Malka and 1 son, Yitzi. We will also be G-d willing, expanding by one this Spring as my wife is expecting our sixth baby! We also recently had two other additions: a Syrian Hamster named Cocoa and a Lionhead Rabbit named Lionel. Along with my wife Devorah, we live in the West Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago. In addition to my responsibilities at home and at temple, I also act as a Chazan for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur services at Bay Shul in Buffalo Grove, where I grew up and my parents still live.

In my free time I enjoy spending time with my family, relaxing while playing the piano and cheering on the Chicago Cubs.

Marina Shubin
Hebrew
marinas25@gmail.com



My name is Marina Shubin and I have been a Hebrew and Religious School teacher for more than 20 years at several area synagogues, Jewish institutions, and public schools, in both formal and informal settings. I have been a B'nai Mitzvah tutor for Temple Jeremiah for the past five years and I am very excited to continue teaching Gimel and Daled classes in Hebrew School this year.

I moved here from Israel in 1999 to receive a B.S in Psychology from Loyola University Chicago and a Master's in Psychology from National Louis University. Prior to living in Israel, I grew up in Russia, moving to Israel when I was nine years old.

I now live in Highland Park with my husband and my wonderful children and we love spending time with our extended family, traveling and having fun outdoors!

Judy Tatar
2nd Grade Sunday
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Hello!!
My name is Judy Tatar and I am so excited to be teaching 2nd grade.

My undergraduate education was in marine biology and special education...how's that for diversity! I received my masters in reading consultation from the University of Chicago. I retired from teaching after 34 years at New Trier



Mindy Tibbetts
3rd Grade Sunday and Hebrew
mmtibbetts@comcast.net



High School and then Lincoln Hall Middle School in Lincolnwood. I love working with all age groups, watching my students' grow, and of course those "light bulb" moments.

I grew up in Evanston and at Beth Emet Synagogue and taught in their religious school for many years (Rabbi Cohen was one of my students!!) I live in Wilmette with my husband Jerry and our two big, hairy dogs, Ozzie and Bailey. My three children, Daniel, Michael, and Laura are all grown up and Laura made Aliyah (lives in Israel) in 2018.

My heart belongs to my granddaughter, Olivia Sophia.

I love to sing, travel, and spend time with my family doing whatever. I am an actress and have been in several commercials and completed two short films.

When we joined Jeremiah, I became a member of the choir with Cantor Friedman. I am also a member of the Inclusion Committee which focuses on programming for differently abled people.

I look forward to meeting my rising second graders and parents! Please feel free to contact me at jbttatar@gmail.com.

Hi, my name is Mindy Tibbetts and I have been teaching at Temple Jeremiah since 1999. I teach Third Grade Sunday school and Hebrew school during the week.

My husband, Mark, and I have three wonderful children and one big dog! Speaking of dogs, I have always had a special place in my heart for all animals. During my free time I enjoy spending time with my family, my pets, and my friends.

Not only do I teach at Temple Jeremiah, but I am a member as well!

Jacob Wallach
6th Grade Sunday
mojomax41@comcast.net

Shalom,
My name is Jacob Wallach. I grew up in Israel during the country's formative years. I had my primary and secondary education there, following which I served two and a half

Mount Olives



years in the IDF as Tank Commander. I completed college and graduate school in Chicago where I met my wife. We have a son and daughter, as well as four granddaughters, all wonderful. Two of our granddaughters attend Sunday Shool at Temple Jeremiah. During the years 1978-1985 I returned to Israel with my family. Our children had a chance to experience some of my childhood experiences and gained a love for Israel and a good command of Hebrew. I had more army service each year as a reservist which included a stint in Lebanon during operation "Peace for the Galilee." We returned to Chicago in 1985.

My personal interests include: Bible Study, History of Israel during the 2nd Temple period, World War II and the Holocaust. I also collect and deal in vintage prints and out of print books. I love soccer and played for six years in an Israeli soccer league. I have been teaching at Temple Jeremiah for over 15 years and also taught Hebrew, Bible and Jewish studies at other Chicago-area synagogues. I look forward to sharing knowledge with your children and instill in them an appreciation for continuing Jewish education.

Ros Wolfe

Hebrew

Ros8080@aol.com



Hello, my name is Rosalyn Wolfe and I have been a member of Temple Jeremiah for almost 40 years. I have taught religious and Hebrew school for over 30 years and I am one of Jeremiah's Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutors.

Along with teaching, I also serve as Executive Director of a Synagogue in Northbrook focusing on addiction in the Jewish community. I have varied experiences in congregations throughout the community teaching students with special needs, Adult Education, and Confirmation.

I currently reside in Northbrook and have three children that all became Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmed at Temple Jeremiah and two delightful grandchildren.

I look forward to working with your children.