

## 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.

### Melissa Celnik

**3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Sunday & Hebrew; 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday Hebrew; 6<sup>th</sup> Grade 1:1 Hebrew Tutoring**  
[mrsclnik@yahoo.com](mailto: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

**1<sup>st</sup> Grade Sunday**  
[Standingon1foot@gmail.com](mailto: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**

**6<sup>th</sup> Grade 1:1 Hebrew Tutoring**

[stacyidudek@gmail.com](mailto: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”???

**Rabbi Debbie Helbraun**

**Hebrew Coordinator**

[helbraun@aol.com](mailto: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 OSRUI 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.

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.

**Benjamin Herst**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday & Hebrew; 6<sup>th</sup> Grade 1:1 Hebrew Tutoring**  
[benjaminherst@gmail.com](mailto:benjaminherst@gmail.com)



My name is Benjamin Herst. I have been teaching in religious school and day school settings for several decades. As a true Southsider, I grew up in the city. I eventually left Chicago in the '80s to spend time living in Boston and Silver Spring, Maryland. During those years, I helped open Capital Camps and served as the Executive Director of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington. Currently, I serve as the Rabbinic Advisor to the Keshet Day School and work as the Judaic Coordinator for Jewish Children and Family Services in their Group Homes Division.

Growing up I attended OSRUI, first as a camper and then as a staff member. My real claim to fame was directing CFTY (currently known as NFTY-CAR) and being the Assistant Director at OSRUI many, many, years ago. I have a BA in Music from Berklee College of Music in Boston and Rabbinic ordination from Yeshivas L'Rabbonus in Pretoria, South Africa, and New York. We have 9 children who of course live everywhere BUT Chicago, and many more than a baseball team of grandchildren.

Temple Jeremiah is an incredible place to work, and I have found the students to be interested, inquisitive and very smart. The school administration is amazing! I look forward to getting to know your children better and meeting you as well.

**Jackie Maris**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade 1:1 Hebrew Tutoring**  
[jackie.qmaris@gmail.com](mailto:jackie.qmaris@gmail.com)



Jackie Maris (she/her) is a queer, South African Pisces who has worn various facilitator hats throughout her career in education and community-building. She served as madricha (camp counselor) and Rosh Chinuch (Head of Education) with Netzer South Africa, taught as a cheder teacher for almost a decade, and coordinated Roundabout theatre's intern and apprentice program for early-career Broadway professionals. In her current role as Keshet's Chicago Education & Training Manager, she strives for LGBTQ+ equality and belonging in Jewish spaces. When she's not working, Jackie sings with the Windy City Treble Choir, volunteers with Midwest Books to Prisoners (mailing books to incarcerated folks) and collects zines on fat liberation (shoutout to Etsy).

**Suzanne McAulay**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday**  
[smcaulay23@gmail.com](mailto: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.

**Andrea Neiman**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday**  
[andracneiman@gmail.com](mailto:andracneiman@gmail.com)



My name is Andrea Neiman. I recently graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia with a degree in theatre and kinesiology. I grew up in Deerfield, IL and have been very active in the Jewish community. I am also a photographer and personal trainer! I'm excited to be a part of Temple Jeremiah. I currently work for IsraelLINK, which is an organization that distributes and promotes Israel education curriculum to middle school students. We also plan and host events throughout the Midwest. We host workshops with teachers so that they can be compelled to inspire their students to learn as well as be inspired to continue their Israel education and involvement. It is important to have a strong educational foundation so that students can continue to support Israel throughout their lives.

**Traci Reisberg**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday**  
[traci.stratford@gmail.com](mailto:traci.stratford@gmail.com)



My name is Traci Reisberg. This is my first year teaching at Temple Jeremiah. I grew up in Buffalo Grove where my family belongs to Congregation Beth Am. I attended OSRUI from grade 3 through the summer after graduating from college when I was a unit head. I was very active in NFTY, serving as NFTY Chicago Regional President and professionally as the NFTY-Southern Regional Advisor for four years. I am a graduate of Indiana University where I studied Jewish Studies and Nonprofit Management and St. Mary's University of Minnesota where I received a MA in Organizational Leadership. After 12 years away living in Jackson, Mississippi and Boston, Massachusetts, I moved back to Illinois in 2017. My husband and I moved from the Lakeview neighborhood in Chicago to Northbrook this past summer. Professionally, I am the Director of School Services and Catalyzing Resources at Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day Schools - the North American network of Jewish day schools and yeshivas. I'm looking forward to a wonderful year of 6th grade at J-Quest!

**Karen Rohrbach**  
**Kindergarten & 7th Grade Sunday**  
[lefty214@aol.com](mailto: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**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Sunday; 6<sup>th</sup> Grade 1:1 Hebrew Tutoring**

[alexisruda@gmail.com](mailto:alexisruda@gmail.com)



Hi! My name is Alexis Ruda, and I have been a teacher at Temple Jeremiah for 10+ years. I have had the pleasure of working with first graders, fifth graders, and everyone in between. 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**

**5<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday & Hebrew; 6<sup>th</sup> Grade 1:1 Hebrew Tutoring**

[jshacter2000@yahoo.com](mailto: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**

**4<sup>th</sup> Grade Hebrew; 6<sup>th</sup> Grade 1:1 Hebrew Tutoring**

[marinas25@gmail.com](mailto: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!

**Ronna Steinbeck**

**6<sup>th</sup> Grade 1:1 Tutoring**

[stickbss@aol.com](mailto:stickbss@aol.com)



My name is Ronna Steinbeck and I am excited to be a 1:1 Hebrew tutor. I am a B'nai Mitzvah tutor and I have taught all grades of Hebrew at Temple Jeremiah for the last 19 years. I grew up in Evanston and raised my family (and dogs) in Deerfield for over 30 years. I enjoy spending time with my husband, son and our extended family, who tend to gather with us for most holidays. I enjoy taking long walks, hikes and bike riding during the summer months. I take great pride in teaching children and watching them grow and gain confidence in themselves.

**Judy Tatar**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Sunday**  
[jbtatar@gmail.com](mailto:jbtatar@gmail.com)



Hello!! My name is Judy Tatar and I am so excited to be teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 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 [jbtatar@gmail.com](mailto:jbtatar@gmail.com).



**Mindy Tibbetts**

***3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Sunday & Hebrew; 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday Hebrew; 6<sup>th</sup> Grade 1:1 Hebrew Tutoring***

[mmtibbetts@comcast.net](mailto:mmtibbetts@comcast.net)



Hi, my name is Mindy Tibbetts and I have been teaching at Temple Jeremiah since 1999. 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!

**Ros Wolfe**

***5<sup>th</sup> Grade Hebrew; 6<sup>th</sup> Grade 1:1 Hebrew Tutoring***

[Ros8080@aol.com](mailto: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.