

RABBINIC SEARCH COMMITTEE BIOS

Andrea Pauls Backman (Committee Co-Chair)



Andrea and her sons Brian and Daniel joined Congregation Sukkat Shalom in 1998. As a Jew by choice (and single mother at the time), she knew this was the perfect spiritual home for them. Rabbi Gordon has been there to celebrate all of her family's life-cycle events: her and her sons' b'nai mitzvot, weddings, and loss of family members. She and her husband, Mick Siegel, live in Wilmette. She is a former board member and Treasurer, former member of the Building Committee and a former co-chair of the Long Range Planning Committee. Professionally, she is the CEO of the Les Turner ALS Foundation. She is honored to give back to the congregation as we search for our next rabbi. If she looks familiar, you've probably seen her in the soprano section of the choir!

Cathy Baker (Committee Co-Chair)



Cathy and her husband, Matt, are among the founding families of Sukkat Shalom. Their three children, Rachel, Melissa and Bennett, have grown up in the temple and are still connected as adults. Cathy is currently a temple board member. In the past she was elected as a trustee on the Northfield Township board and has served in many volunteer capacities through the schools, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, and other organizations in the community. She is a freelance court reporter who also loves to quilt, run, and cook.

Bob Breit



Bob and his family joined CSS within a year of its founding. They raised their family in Northbrook, but all live in city neighborhoods currently. Bob is a neuroradiologist and head radiology at Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital. He also served the CSS Board of Directors for six years. Rabbi Gordon officiated at the b'nai mitzvah of his three children: Benjamin, now with Airbnb; Hannah, a Neurology fellow at Rush; and Jeremy, now with Aeris. He is honored to serve the Rabbinic Search Committee, promising to contribute to the fullest as the committee does its best in identifying the community's next spiritual leader.

Shoshana Buchholz-Miller



Shoshana served on the Rabbinic Search Committee and will continue in that role for the Assistant/Associate Rabbi Search now underway. She has been a member of Sukkat Shalom for 13 years. She lives with her husband Victor and three children, Annabel, 17, Atticus, 15, and Tess 11, in Wilmette. Currently, Shoshana leads the Jewish Community grantmaking for Circle of Service Foundation. Previously, she was the Executive Director of Cradles to Crayons, a nonprofit that provides basic needs to children. Throughout her career, she has worked in a number of human rights and advocacy organizations, including those in the Jewish community in Chicagoland.

Lisa Fingerhut Carlton



Originally from Cleveland and New York, Lisa has lived in Chicago and Wilmette for 35 years with husband Jim Carlton, a Jew by choice, where they raised their three children. They have been members of Sukkat Shalom for 5 years and are delighted to have found a wonderful community to call their spiritual home. A lifetime active member of the Jewish community with a commitment to synagogue life, Lisa jumped right in by serving on the Board and committees and as Vice President and will soon step in as Board president. In this capacity, Lisa serves on the Transition and Search committees with the belief that this is an opportunity for Sukkat Shalom to assure the needs of our current community are met while defining our future. She is incredibly grateful to serve at this very important time in the lifecycle of the congregation. Lisa is in a management role at McDonald's Corp internal agency where she's been 'lovin' it for 20 years. She supports strategic communication initiatives for the global business and senior leadership team. In her spare time, Lisa enjoys being active, taking advantage of the beautiful lakefront (especially with her new puppy Rosie) and hanging out with her family!

Jim Denton



Jim and Lynn Denton have been members of Sukkat Shalom for over 25 years. Both have been participants in the congregation choir since its founding and are anxiously looking forward to its return. Over the years, their family participation grew from beyond them and their two daughters to also include Lynn's parents. Jim has continued to be active in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where he has served in both teaching and administrative roles. For the past eight years, he has coordinated the use of the LDS church building for Sukkat Shalom's High Holiday services. A native of Ohio, Jim has worked in high tech his entire career, most recently managing strategic alliances for an enterprise software company. He and Lynn continue to reside in Evanston, but are often found in Michiana, MI, particularly during the warmer months.

Kaitlin Donnelly



Kaitlin grew up with Sukkat Shalom - her family is a proud founding family of the congregation. She recently relocated to Oakland, California where she works in fundraising for an environmental nonprofit. Sukkat Shalom remains her congregational home base. She is honored and excited to serve on the search committee.

Doug Fisher



Doug and his family currently reside in Wilmette and have been members of Sukkat Shalom since 2015. Doug is entering his second year on the temple board of directors and serves on the temple's Social Justice Committee. He is a founding partner of Rockwell Property Company, a Chicago based real estate investment firm founded in 2009 and prior co-owner of Essex Realty Group also in Chicago. Previously, he was a Director at JPMorgan Chase. Doug received an MBA from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University and a BS degree from the University of Wisconsin. He has served on the board of directors of SGA Youth Services and various boards within the Jewish United Fund of Chicago.

Steve Horwitz



Steve and his wife, Donna, joined Sukkat Shalom nearly six years ago. At the time they had left their previous synagogue and – at the suggestion of a friend who does not even belong to the congregation – went to High Holy Day services to “check it out.” They joined the next week. Steve and Donna have participated in the adult education programs and traveled to Morocco with Rabbi Gordon in 2020, returning the day before the nation shut down due to Covid-19. Their son, Gabriel, 42, lives in Bethesda, MD with his wife Jessica and grandson, Grant. Their beloved daughter, Madeline, died seven years ago at age 30 of malignant melanoma. Steve retired as an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat) from NorthShore University last December. While he has not served on a search committee previously, he did run a medical practice for 35 years and was on hospital committees.

Ron Packowitz



Ron grew up in Skokie, attended law school at DePaul University, and worked for several years as an attorney with the Illinois Office of the State Appellate Defender. In 2000 he joined the U.S. Department of State as a Foreign Service officer, and since then has been serving as a U.S. diplomat, most recently in Afghanistan. He returned to the area three years ago and is now the State Department's Chicago-based Diplomat in Residence, recruiting and advising new Foreign Service candidates. Ron joined the congregation in 2018 with his wife Liv and three kids. Their two older children, Marc and Roberta, are students at Illinois State University, while their youngest, Daniel, is 13, and celebrated his Bar Mitzvah in October 2020.

Debbie Plager



Debbie and her husband Alex Kamilewicz initially checked out Sukkat Shalom for the music. A lifelong choral singer, Debbie heard about Cantor Jill Abramson. After attending Shabbat Services at Gillson Park a few times that summer, meeting fellow congregants and the clergy, Debbie and Alex joined the temple. Fast forward about 13 years and Debbie, Alex, and their two sons (Sam, 12, and Gabriel, 9) have many years of memories, learnings, fun, community, and music at Sukkat Shalom. Debbie is an organizational development practitioner and executive coach. She is the Chief Talent Officer for HUB International. Debbie is also adjunct faculty on the Learning and Organizational Change graduate program at Northwestern University.

Abbey Fishman Romanek



Abbey is a Judge serving in the domestic relations division of the circuit court of Cook County, Illinois in the Daley Center. She and her husband Daron have been members of Sukkat Shalom for seven years. Abbey has lived in Wilmette with her family for 21 years. Her three boys attended McKenzie, Highcrest, Wilmette Junior High, New Trier High School and Indiana University. Abbey has been active in the community for many years working for social justice. She currently serves as a Vice President on the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and is on the Board of the Directors of the Anti-Defamation League. She held leadership positions on numerous other boards including, Connections for the Homeless, The League of Women Voters, The New Trier Democratic Organization, The Jewish Labor Committee, Interfaith Action, Mount Sinai Hospital, The Wilmette Chamber of Commerce, The Wilmette Zoning Board, and numerous Wilmette school committees.

Jill Schoeneman-Parker



Jill has been a member of Sukkat Shalom since 1996. She joined with her husband, Eric, following their wedding, officiated by Rabbi Gordon. Jill and Eric have two teenage children, both of whom have become B'nai Mitzvah at the congregation. Jill served on the Sukkat Shalom Board of Directors for five years, including in the role of Vice-President. She has been an active participant in other committees including the Women's Spirituality Group, and was the Chairperson of the Education Advisory Committee for ten years. She was a participant in the search committees for Sukkat Shalom's Education Directors and Cantorial Soloist. Prior to Covid, she began the Connect-Reconnect (dinner and Havdalah group for adults of recent post-Family School graduates). While active with Sukkat Shalom, she also has a thriving private practice as she has been a clinical psychologist for over 20 years. In her free time, Jill loves being with her family, creating works in clay, gardening, and walking with her dog.

Adam Siegel



Adam joined Sukkat Shalom in 2018 with his wife, Cristin, daughter Margot, 8, and son, Henry, 5, and was quickly inspired to become active in our community, attending Family School, Shabbat, and Adult Learning events. Recently, he assumed leadership of the Sukkat Shalom Social Justice Committee. Adam is Founder and CEO of Chicago-based technology firm Cultivate Labs. Before starting Cultivate, Adam was a senior executive at Accenture, a global consulting firm. He has a B.A. in political science from Indiana University. Outside of work, Adam enjoys reading short story fiction and political long-form journalism, listening to his favorite podcasts, cooking, and trying to find time to exercise.