Cantor Sarah Freudenberger — “She’s Got the Goods!”

Once Cantor Sarah knew that being a cantor was a job, she was all in. As she was packing for her family’s move from Boca Raton, Florida to Salem, MA, her mother brought over a treasured memento from her Bat Mitzvah: the sign-in board (a large poster board with a picture of her face where guests wrote something personal to the celebrant). “Everyone wrote, ‘Wow, you did such a good job. You should really become a cantor.’ Even my cantor wrote, ‘If you want to become a cantor, you’ve got the goods,’” she said with a laugh.

After her Bat Mitzvah, she continued in synagogue activities, working as a teaching assistant in the religious school, and singing in the youth group and at High Holy Days services as a teen. “My rabbi and cantor were always asking me to sing,” she said.

The pivotal moment in her journey came as a 16-year-old on a “March of the Living” high school trip to Poland and then Israel. Every day on the trip, the students held minyans with different denominational “flavors.” Cantor Sarah usually went to the egalitarian service, led by her synagogue’s cantor, who had her sing something during every service.

Each group usually had its own room, but one morning they ran out of space, and her service was held in a corner of the huge, noisy ballroom where everyone ate breakfast. Her cantor told her that after the service, she would sing Modim. “There was so much noise, but when I started singing, the room started to quiet down. And then, all you could hear was me — singing. I knew right then this was what I needed to do with my life, that this is what I had to do,” she said.

With the support of her family, synagogue, and high school choir teacher (who guided her through the music school admissions process), she was on her way. She studied Music Education at the University of Miami Frost School of Music with the intent of going to cantorial school after graduating.

While in college, she taught music at a religious school and started filling in for cantors. She was 19-years-old when opportunity again knocked at her door. “My cantor called me and said her daughter, a cantor in Jupiter, Florida, needed a substitute and she thought I could do it. I said, ‘ME?’ She gave me a bunch of recordings and music and said, ‘You can do this. You know these songs. You’ve grown up with them.’ I realized she was right,” Cantor Sarah shared.

She filled in several times a year for the rest of the time she was in college, particularly for b’nei mitzvah. “When I started singing, the room started to quiet down. And then, all you could hear was me — singing. I knew right then this was what I needed to do with my life, that this is what I had to do,” she said.

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She filled in several times a year for the rest of the time she was in college, particularly for b’nei mitzvah. She didn’t meet the families beforehand; she just showed up that day. “I thought the families would wonder who this girl was, but after the service, every single time, I would stand outside the door (like a receiving line) and they thanked me and said it was marvelous. I had been so nervous, but the rabbi I worked with said afterward, ‘I don’t want to work with anybody else as a substitute.’”

Despite her plan, Cantor Sarah didn’t apply...

Cantor Sarah and her family sang Passover songs at their virtual seder.
Rabbi’s Corner

Dreaming of the Future

We stand on the precipice of a new era at Shirat Hayam. As we emerge from the darkness of the COVID-19 pandemic, we enter a new and brighter time as we welcome Cantor Sarah Freudenberger.

What unique spiritual fulfillment, youth engagement, and so much more will Cantor Sarah bring us? How will the pandemic transform Jewish life? Through the lens of the July Torah readings, we can gain a perspective on what was and what will be.

On July 10, Cantor Sarah’s first Shabbat, we conclude the Book of Numbers and begin Deuteronomy on the following Shabbat, July 17. Numbers chronicles Israel’s 40 years of wandering in the desert. Though we yearned for the Promised Land, we had to grow as a people into the responsibilities of freedom and our relationship with God.

The Book of Deuteronomy is a repetition of the commandments that the generation who entered will need. Additionally, Moses reminds the people of the God’s loyalty to them and assures them that they can always count on God to be compassionate with them. The purpose of this book, according to the S’fat Emet, is to draw close and bind the hearts of Israel to the Torah.

Like the Israelites’ forty years of wandering (the Book of Numbers), this past year was a journey through uncharted wilderness. We strove to keep everyone healthy while maintaining our community. The goal was to make it through the pandemic, to reach the other side intact—in short, to survive.

Along the way, we learned and grew. We learned to Zoom. We streamlined our services. We connected through online classes from the comfort of our homes. We enhanced our hesed work, caring for each other, while launching Tzedek LaKol, our team focused on achieving racial and social justice within our congregation and community.

Now we stand, like Moses, on the eastern bank of the Jordan River, looking into the Promised Land (like Deuteronomy). We’re on the cusp of re-opening Shirat Hayam and beginning the Cantor Sarah era. We can dream of our future and prepare for post-pandemic life. We can—and we will—thrive.

Dream with me. And then, together, let’s make our dreams come true. Let’s launch this new era and revitalize our lives with the light of Torah and Yiddishkeit, kindness (hesed) and commitment (gevurah).

CSH Zoom Annual Meeting Drew over 85 Members

Shirat Hayam held its 16th annual meeting on May 18, 2021, via Zoom. Over 85 congregants attended. Rabbi Michael opened the evening with a d’var Torah that looked at Shirat’s congregational approach to the pandemic through the lenses of Deuteronomy and Numbers. In those two Books of the Torah, the Israelites make a transition, emerging from their 40-year journey through the wilderness to stand on the precipice of their entrance into Eretz Yisrael, where they will realize the purpose of their journey and establish a holy society.

“We close the year on ‘the year of survival’ and start ‘the year of possibilities,” he said.

To view the Annual Report, including all financial reports and new slate of officers, go to https://shirathayam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Annual-Report-2021-01.pdf.

A message to CSH congregants from Barbara Messenger, Mark’s mother.
Cantor’s News

What Does It Mean to Welcome?

From my first encounter with Shirat Hayam, I have felt so welcomed by all of you! Even before I knew I was your choice for your Cantor, every interaction with your community has left me wanting more.

Shirat Hayam’s vision stresses that, “Every encounter with our congregation leaves you feeling welcomed, connected, and enriched.” And it’s true.

Based on what I have experienced, I can tell you that this is a crucial component to creating community and that not every place is like Shirat Hayam. Whether it is welcoming a new congregant or welcoming a new member of the professional team, the way we welcome others says a lot about who we are, both as individuals and as a community.

So, even before I begin officially as your new Cantor, you have told me a lot about your Shirat Hayam community just in the way you have welcomed me. During my virtual visits, not only did you ask me questions about what you wanted to know, you also told me what I needed to know in order to picture myself and my family living on the North Shore. An outpouring of information about schools, real estate, and the greater Jewish community — even before I was offered the job — impressed me so much. The over 100 congregants in Zoom boxes who attended my virtual visit, including many of our students, told me that the most fulfilling spiritual experience and the best childhood and teen education on the North is truly your goal.

During my very quick trip to look at housing, I was able to meet a few of you in person and was shown all over this beautiful area, including the gorgeous Shirat Hayam campus. Being the organized planner that I am, I also met with Rabbi Michael and started in on our to-do lists. I left feeling so excited about our new home and congregation!

I know that the official welcome has not even begun, but I want you to know that I already feel like a part of the community and have felt so welcomed by all of you since we first met in February on Zoom. Meeting you in person will bring even greater joy and I look forward to it with all my heart.

Many blessings,
Cantor Sarah

Message from the President

Happy July! It truly feels like a period of rebirth and new possibilities as life starts to reopen after such a long time of being apart. I invite us all to look at this as not just a period of returning, but one of recreation. Let us never forget to be grateful for every day, for every moment, and to work together to support our friends, our families and our community. We have so much to look forward to, from welcoming our new cantor to seeing each other’s faces and hearing each other’s voices together in song. So many of us are hard at work to plan our reopening, our upcoming multiple access approach to the high holy days, and exciting new programs and inspiring events. Please join us in keeping our Shirat Hayam family safe and secure, prosperous and inspiring, and overflowing with joy!

Warmly,
Ruth Estrich

For online links go to www.shirathayam.org/spiritual

In person (and online) minyan continues through the summer on Tuesday evenings, Thursday mornings, and on Rosh Hodesh. For full service calendar, go to www.shirathayam.org/daily-minyan/

Calendar

Continued from page 1

FRIDAY, AUGUST 6
6:00 pm Kabbalat Shabbat

SATURDAY, AUGUST 7
9:00 am Summer Shabbat Schedule

FRIDAY, AUGUST 13
6:00 pm Kabbalat Shabbat

SATURDAY, AUGUST 14
9:00 am Summer Shabbat Schedule

FRIDAY, AUGUST 20
6:00 pm Kabbalat Shabbat

SATURDAY, AUGUST 21
9:00 am Summer Shabbat Schedule

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25
6:00 pm Sunset and S’mores at the beach (watch for more information)

FRIDAY, AUGUST 27
6:00 pm Kabbalat Shabbat

SATURDAY, AUGUST 28
9:00 am Shabbat (schedule TDB) with Bar Mitzvah of Jack Conley

Evening Slichot

Summer Shabbat Schedule
For details go to shirathayam.org/shabbat/

JULY 3, 2021
9 am Torah Service
9:50 am Renewal
9:50 am Traditional Minyan led by Jan Brodie
10:45 am Rabbi’s Talk, Healing and Mourner’s Kaddish
11:15 am (approx.) Shabbat Schmooze

JULY 10, 2021
Welcome Cantor Sarah
9 am Torah Service with Rabbi Michael and Cantor Sarah
9:50 am Renewal
9:50 am Traditional Minyan led by Jan Brodie
10:45 am Talk, Healing and Mourner’s Kaddish
11:15 am (approx.) Welcome Gathering

JULY 17 - AUGUST 21, 2021
9 am Torah Service with Rabbi Michael and Cantor Sarah
9 am Yoga with Sarah Ragozin
9:50 am Renewal
9:50 am Traditional Minyan led by Jan Brodie
10:45 am Rabbi’s Talk, Healing and Mourner’s Kaddish
11:15 am (approx.) Shabbat Schmooze
Cantor Sarah
Continued from page 1

to cantorial school when she was a senior. She realized she needed a break from school. But, more importantly, she ran into a devastating obstacle: her then boyfriend and future husband was not Jewish. The cantorial seminaries at that time did not accept intermarried couples. “I didn’t like this policy, and I still don’t. It’s not OK. We need to be more welcoming, especially when so many of our population seem to be having these kinds of relationships. Not only that, but the non-Jewish spouses seem to be supporting, participating in, and loving their Jewish families. Why be like that?” she said.

But, once again, kismet was on her side. One day, out of the blue, she received a call from her current synagogue in Boca Raton asking her to audition for a full-time cantor position. She got the job. “I was only 21-years-old. I didn’t think I had enough experience. I kind of looked like a Barbie doll. Right out of undergraduate school, I started working as cantor,” she said.

She taught herself trope because it was something she needed to know right away, since she would be chanting Torah every week. “I had chanted for my Bat Mitzvah, but learned it from a cassette tape,” she said. She shadowed a more senior cantor for two years, and learned, among things, various nusachs (specific ways to chant liturgy, depending on the service and the time of day and occasion).

After a 2-year stint in Arizona while her husband earned his Master’s Degree in Music Performance, she returned to the Boca Raton synagogue and renewed her search for a cantorial school that would accept her. She got the same answer as she had before: the rule is we can’t accept applicants with non-Jewish spouses.

In her professional role as full-time cantor, she attended URJ (Uniform for Reform Judaism) Biennials and heard the leaders say that they wanted to welcome interfaith families; yet, she was thinking, “You’re not welcoming me! I’m not allowed to get the education I want, that I’m having to teach myself. I want to be there, in the classroom.”

“When I came back to this synagogue I was working again as a full-time cantor, and yet I was still not recognized as one by URJ. I was determined to find someplace that would accept me,” she said.

She started looking again in 2013 and came across the Aleph program. She didn’t know anything about Renewal, but she knew she wanted to be part of a community that was legitimate, respected and authentically welcoming to interfaith couples.

“That’s one of the things I really love about Shirat Hayam, that we really mean it. We don’t just say that we’re welcoming on the website, we really, really mean it. That’s also what I was looking for in a seminary, and that’s what I found in Aleph,” she said.

The Aleph program offers a comprehensive curriculum of study and practice embracing both traditional and innovative/experiential learning modalities. (to learn more about the program, go to https://www.aleph.org/cantorial-program)

Hazzan Jack Kessler, who heads the seminary, assured Cantor Sarah that being part of an interfaith couple was not a problem. “Renewal is an approach that can be utilized in any movement. Students are from diverse movements — Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Renewal. It’s like a cross-denominational seminary,” she said. She learned traditional chants, newer melodies with musicians, and a combination of both. “This is what today’s cantor needs to be able to do, because the landscape out there is always changing and always needs to be renewed. That is what Renewal is about. It’s taking the traditional and saying, ‘OK, how can we keep as much as we can and make it really meaningful for people today? It’s really exciting,’” she said.

Cantor Sarah and her professional musician husband, Peter, met in the music program at the University of Miami. They have two daughters — Aria (almost 10) and Ada (6). There are a lot of instruments in their house and “tons of singing. We love seeing Broadway musicals as a family, especially when Peter is playing trombone in the orchestra pit. During this past year, Peter and the girls often appeared in my Zoom services as my back-up singers and band,” she said.

She is especially excited to join a synagogue that “marries tradition with innovation and infuses music and spirituality into everything. You have all been so welcoming from the first conversations. I have to thank the amazing search committee and Rabbi Michael for making my interview process really so lovely that I already feel part of the congregation,” she said.

Cantor Sarah loves working with children, and can’t wait to bring her successful children’s choir model to Shirat Hayam. In addition, she teaches ukulele and guitar to kids and mentors teen song leaders. For adults, she has taught Adult B’nai Mitzvah (“my mom was in my class!”) and been involved with Adult Choir and Adult Band. She has trained Torah chanters and lay service leaders for many years.

Her top priority as she assumes the role of Cantor at Shirat Hayam is making the transition as smooth as possible for the congregation while also providing what the congregation wants in a Cantor. “That will mean a lot of listening in addition to singing: getting to know all the members at Shirat Hayam; participating in the greater North Shore Jewish community, and becoming involved with the CJJE and the preschool are all very important too. I am eager to create a holy partnership in service leading with Rabbi Michael and our amazing musicians, while empowering the congregation through our partnership together in prayer and music,” she said.

Most of all, she looks forward to meeting everyone in person, working with B’nei Mitzvah students, and sharing the Shabbat Synaplex, Renewal, Holy Happy Hour, daily Minyan, and CJJE experiences.

The pandemic honed her already considerable technology skills. “I love using technology with music. I am an avid Spotify user and make playlists for holidays and Shabbat that I share. I use Instagram to connect with teens and young families, and share music in the stories feature. My husband and I created videos all year for my Junior Choir (so they could still perform at services) and for our Purim Shpiel. I learned a lot of Zoom hacks to ensure maximum participation in prayer while screen sharing.

“While I am looking forward to services returning in person, I remain aware of the engagement that technology provided for us this year and am interested in continuing into that digital frontier to broaden our reach to more families,” she said.

Asked what she anticipates will be her biggest challenge, she answers without hesitation, “learning everyone’s names! Zoom helps a lot because your name is right under your face. In person, maybe you can all wear name tags for a while for me. I think it is really important to know everyone by name, so I will be working on that a lot in the first year!”
Shir Nefesh Announces “Mental Wellness Weekend” October 23-24

The CSH Mental Health Initiative Shir Nefesh (supported by The Ruderman Family Foundation) is pleased to announce Shirat Hayam’s “Mental Wellness Weekend” from October 23-24.

The weekend will include “The Soul in our Stories: How our Personal Stories of Resilience Help Us Heal,” during Shabbat morning (time TBD) on October 23, led by Bette Freedson, LCSW, LICSW, CGP, clinical social worker, psychotherapist, author and teacher. She will explore the essential aspects of resilience including courage, intuition, strength and the healing power of reframing our personal narratives.

The Me2/Orchestra, the world’s only classical music organization created for those with mental illness and their allies, will perform at CSH on Sunday afternoon, October 24, at 3 pm. The orchestra is comprised of 55 talented classical musicians, half of whom live with mental health issues and the other half without a diagnosis. Together, they create a dynamic and inspiring musical offering whose motto is, “Music for Mental Health.”

SAVE THE DATE — April 30, 2022
A Musical Celebration of Olam Chesed Yibaneh: Building the World through Inclusion, Justice, and Lovingkindness

The Campus Antisemitism Task Force of the North Shore is in the News

The Campus Antisemitism Task Force of the North Shore, founded by Rabbi Michael in 2017, is a signatory to a letter opposing California’s AB 101, a bill addressing California’s ethnic studies graduation requirement. The letter was composed by Tammi Rossman-Benjamin, Director of the AMCHA Initiative. In short, the letter states, “Although AB 101 recommends that school districts adopt the final State Board of Education-approved Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) as the basis for the required courses, the bill also allows for the use of any curriculum approved by an individual school district, even the inflammatory, overtly antisemitic first draft of the ESMC” (italics Rabbi Michael’s). To read the entire letter, go to https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pFMdVvrCa bNrsO8_6gs9udA1lr3xNqO/view
Our deepest condolences to those who have passed away.

NON-MEMBER: Dr. Michael Kenneth Goldstein
5/4/2021
Uncle of Hal Schwartz

In memory of
In memory of Arlene Goodstein
husband of Lynne Saltz
father of Terry Berenson

In memory of Leo Corben, father of Terry Berenson
In memory of Robert Saltz, husband of Lynne Saltz
In memory of Arlene Goodstein from Lois Miller

In memory of
Mother, Rebecca Hooker from Carl Hooker
Mother, Sarah Shapiro from Carol Denbo
Father, Leonard Glaser from Caryn Cohen
Mother, Marjorie Bresner from Edward Bresner
Father, David Goldberg from Ina Hoffman
Mother, Fanny Levine Cantofsky from Joel Levine
Father, Nathan Weiner from Leah Gallo
Father, Sherman Eidelman from Michael Eidelman
Wife, Edith Spector from Benjamin Spector
Sister, Frances Shuster from Herbert Goldberg
Father, Gordon Rothstein from Elaine Sandler
Husband, Lewis Mendelsohn from Frances Mendelsohn

In appreciation of
Barri Stein
In honor of all my children from Madeline Stark
In memory of Arlene Goodstein from Hal B. and J. Hazlett

In memory of
Wife, Harriet Diamond
Mother, Rose Diamond
Father, Alexander Diamond from Alan Diamond
Father, Joseph Weisman from Claudia Rodenstein
Mother, Beatrice Kantor-Gray from Alan Diamond
Husband and Father, Sidney Abramson from Barbara Abramson and Hope Abramson
Sister, Frances Shuster from Martin Goldberg
In appreciation of
Rabbi's Support over the last 15 months from Marsha Gerber
In memory of
Karen and David Rosenberg's children, Henry and Emily from Madeline Stark
In memory of
Arlene Goodstein from Naomi and Stephen Becker
Mother, Phyllis Sagan; Judy White
In memory of
Bradley Litman, brother of Lori Ehrlich from Phyllis Sagan

In appreciation of
Barri Stein
In honor of all my children from Madeline Stark
In memory of Arlene Goodstein from Hal B. and J. Hazlett

In memory of
Barry Schwartz's grandchildren
In memory of
Bradley Litman, brother of Lori Ehrlich from Madeline Stark

In appreciation of
Barri Stein
In honor of all my children from Madeline Stark
In memory of Arlene Goodstein from Hal B. and J. Hazlett

In memory of
Eli Talkov's birthday from Madeleine Stark
In memory of my father, Joseph Sigal from Mona Sigal

In memory of
Husband, Rene Villa
Friend, Evee Gelkes from Doris Villa
Mother, Edith Weitzner from Judith Tarlow
Father, Max Kirszen from Phyllis Kaplan
Grandmother, Ruth Goldberg from Robin Blake
Mother, Marilyn Williams
Father, Leo Williams
Sister, Elaine Williams
Uncle, Mel Williams

KIDDUSH FUND
In appreciation of
Barri Stein
In honor of all my children from Madeline Stark
In memory of Arlene Goodstein from Hal B. and J. Hazlett

PRAYERBOOK FUND
In appreciation of Rabbi Michael from Charlotte Fine
In appreciation of the marriage ceremony for Jordan and Heather Shane from Judy Rosenberg
In appreciation of Rabbi Michael's support over the last 15 months from Marsha Gerber
In memory of Arlene Goodstein from Beth and Marc Andler

In memory of
Father, Abraham Schneiderman from Elaine Volk
Father, Solomon Bloom from Esther Salinsky
Brother, Martin Bloom from Phyllis Patkin
Mother, Charlotte Volk from Roger Volk

RITUAL FUND
In honor of Eli Talkov's birthday from Madeleine Stark
In memory of my father, Joseph Sigal from Mona Sigal

In memory of
Father, Bernard Kline from Susan Kline
Great-aunt, Mary Stern from Karen Hirsch
Donations

SHIR LANU
In memory of Leo Corben, father of Terry Berenson from Helaine and Jim Hazlett

In memory of
Father, Herman Liss Grandfather, Max Leavitt from Charlotte Fine

TORAH FUND
In memory of
Brother-in-law, Howard Freedman from Marion Garfinkel and Family

SHIR CHESED FUND
In appreciation of Shir Chesed and their kindness from Norma and Sherman Freedman

In appreciation of soup and check-ins from Marsha Gerber

In honor of Stephen Plymote's congressional award from Bethany and Moshe Roditi

In honor of Yakutiel Winer, grandson of Sara and Marc Winer, becoming a Bar Mitzvah from Cindy and Ronald Matloff

In memory of Arlene Goodstein from Brenda and Shelley Cohen

In memory of Donald Fine from Bette and Dan Shoreman

In memory of
Father, Arthur Goldstein from Karen Madorsky
Father, Isaac Roditi from Moshe Roditi
Husband, Albert Eugene Helzner from Audrey Helzner

TREE PLANTED IN ISRAEL
In memory of Arlene Goodstein from Leslie and Robert Ogan

In memory of Emily Myerson, daughter of Heather and Peter Myerson from Charlotte Fine

TZEDEK LAKOL - RACIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE
In appreciation of the Tzedek Lakol committee from Devorah Feinbloom; Gail and Jerry Gerson

In memory of Bradley Litman, brother of Lori Ehrlich from the Tzedek LaKol Committee

In memory of
Mother, Vera E. Swartz from Rita Swartz

How to Make a Donation

To make a donation, please visit shirathayam.org/

Donate or mail your donation with a check made out to CSH or Congregation Shirat Hayam. Please specify the fund to which your donation should be allocated.

CJE NEWS

CJE Students Made a Communal Tree of Life

We ended our year of resilient learning and a renewed sense of community by creating a single art work of the Tree of Life (Etz Hayim) with student, madrichim, and teacher handprints as the leaves and trunk and roots. Our Tree of Life hangs in the main hallway as a reminder for us in years to come that we, as a school community, survived and learned and grew together during the pandemic.

I believe that our commitment to Jewish learning during a difficult year really helped us, both as individuals and as a community. The wisdom we found and taught from our online “La-bri’ut” (To Health) Curriculum, helped our students and teachers identify, cultivate, and strengthen the character traits that make up resiliency: kindness, self-reflection, focus on those beyond ourselves, and a sense that we are part of a greater whole and values in and of ourselves within a community.

—Janis Knight, CJE Director

CEE NEWS

Learning is fun!

We surround ourselves with Hebrew letters! One day we will be able to recite the alphabet and the aleph bet!

Our infants are exploring light in the most amazing way! Not only is this push button light a wonderful fine motor activity... it also changes color!
The Interview

CONGREGATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

Meet Rita Swartz

Every issue, the New Wave spotlights a congregant as a way to help us get to know each other by putting a face with a name. This month, Rita Swartz shares her thoughts on Shirat Hayam and its special, personal meaning.

**What role did religion and synagogue life play in your childhood and young adulthood?**

My earliest memory is of an Orthodox service on Yom Kippur. I was a toddler, in the balcony, standing at the rail, looking down at the men carrying the Torah and praying. I felt awe, and that image and sense of awe have stayed with me. I grew up in Medford, and Temple Shalom played a major role in my life and that of my parents. My brother, sister, and I went to Hebrew school there. We all celebrated bnei mitzvah and confirmations there. I sang in the choir, attended day camp, and joined USY. My sister was married there.

My parents were also very active in the community. They were among the founders of Temple Shalom. My mother was a leader in the Women’s Council, and president of Hadassah. Into her 90s, she helped run Bingo nights there. Her funeral service was in the synagogue. Even though my father worked close to 80 hours a week, he led B’nai Brith for a year. We went to every Kol Nidre service together. When he died, my mother took his place. Though we weren’t religious per se, being Jewish was central to our lives.

**Tell us a little about yourself and your family.**

I’m the last surviving member of my family. I enjoy badminton, jogging, skiing, boating, reading, learning, playing the violin, and being near the ocean. I’ve been self-employed for close to 40 years; I am a writer, journalist, and author, now semi-retired. I have two books to my credit — fiction and nonfiction — and over a dozen stories in literary journals.

I’ve written for Reuters Health, Business Week, and the Boston Business Journal, and have decades of speeches, features, case histories, editorials, book chapters, and other work for corporate and agency clients. Most all of my effort for the last 14 years has been in writing and editing for leaders in academic medicine. One of my favorite projects from that time was an expert panel report on patient safety in weight loss surgery for the Lehman Center. It was the first such report, and set the standard for best practices here in the U.S. and abroad.

Another highlight was the four summers I spent at the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference in Middlebury, Vermont.

**What first brought you to CSH?**

The people at Temple Israel were very gracious and welcoming to me when I moved to the North Shore in the early ’80s, and I joined. After my father died, their support was incredibly important to me. I’ve found that CSH is also a generous, warm, and dynamic community, and that’s why I joined. I grew up in Medford, lived in Malden for a couple of years, and then moved to Marblehead with my ex-husband. I spent many years in Swampscott and Nahant as well. This area has always been where I feel most at home. My parents had a summer house in Little Nahant. That’s where I fell in love with Nahant Bay. It’s also where my family shared idyllic summers together, halcyon days.

**What keeps you at CSH? What’s special to you?**

CSH is a warm, generous, vibrant community. I feel drawn to the temple as my spiritual home. Services are uplifting, satisfying in a deeply personal way. I love that the leadership is effective, smart, and open to new ideas and creative approaches to prayer and communal life.

**Are you involved in any CSH activities or committees?**

I’ve been the Wednesday night minyan team captain, and have been leading it since May 19th. I started out saying Kaddish for my mother every day, and just kept coming after that. I’ve learned so much from Ann Segal, Mark, Rabbi Michael, and other minyan leaders — they’ve taught me how to conduct a service. I’m proud to be a part of the CSH community, and happy to do what I can to help it keep thriving.

Rita Swartz in 2015, reading at a launch party in Amsterdam for Versal, the only international literary journal in the Netherlands.