



Simchat Torah 5786

Join Us On Wednesday Morning, October 15
As We Honor These Members Of Our Temple Israel Community



Ron Balk
Hatan Bereshit



Laurie Alford
Kallat Torah



Idy Lanier
Kallat Maftir

SUKKOT		
October 6	Erev Sukkot – Ma’ariv	7:30 PM
October 7	First Day Sukkot / Congregational Luncheon Youth Programming Ma’ariv	9:15 AM 11:00 AM 7:30 PM
October 8	Second Day Sukkot	9:15 AM
October 9-10	Morning Services for Hol HaMoed	6:45 AM
October 10	Kabbalat Shabbat	5:45 PM
October 11	Shabbat Services	9:15 AM
October 12	Morning Services for Hol HaMoed	9:00 AM
SHEMINI ATZERET & SIMCHAT TORAH		
October 13	Morning Services/Hoshanah Rabbah Erev Shemini Atzeret	6:30 AM 7:30 PM
October 14	Shemini Atzeret Dinner – Erev Simchat Torah Ma’ariv Hakafot & Dancing	6:30 AM / 9:15 AM 5:30 PM 6:45 PM 7:00 PM
October 15	Simchat Torah & Congregational Lunch Youth Programming	9:15 AM 11:00 AM

Ron Balk

Hatan Bereshit



Ron Balk began attending Temple Israel's daily morning minyan in March 2000 to say kaddish for his mother, Irene Balk Rivchin z"l. "It was important for me to know the correct way to mourn her."

Twenty-five years later, Ron is still at daily morning minyan, now often leading services, chanting from the Torah, and blowing shofar during the month of Elul. "The daily morning minyan was so helpful to me that I resolved that I had to be there to help others through their own mourning process and I just never left."

These days, Ron is best known as Friday morning minyan co-captain. In this capacity, he continues Mark Needleman's z"l legacy of building community by serving breakfast after Friday minyan. Some say that he brews the best coffee at TI.

He attributes his growth as a learned Jewish adult to Temple

Israel. "Just about everything I know about Judaism has been learned as a result of my TI membership," said Balk who grew up as a "three-day-a-year Jew" in a secular household in Newton, Mass.; he quit Hebrew School the week of his bar mitzvah. "As a result, Judaism was little more than a concept to me when I started here. Temple Israel has taught me a great deal about the culture of Judaism which I think of as just about the best culture there is. It's my habit during the silent *Amidah* to read *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers) and try to take its teachings to heart."

In any case, Ron has been actively involved in many aspects of Temple Israel congregational life since officially joining in 2010 after switching from another MetroWest congregation. As a Men's Club member, he volunteers and donates at blood drives, builds and takes-down the sukkah, and serves meals during congregational and religious school events. As a volunteer for Sisterhood, he shops and volunteers for Open Table, as well as for

Continued on Page 4

Laurie Alford

Kallat Torah



Resilient!

Not only does Laurie Alford value resilience, she may be the most resilient person I know. She has confronted many profound challenges including significant losses, serious health issues, and family problems and yet, when I picture Laurie, she always bears her contagious smile.

Born in Columbus, Ohio, she and her family moved multiple times during her childhood. Her college education began at Curry College and was interrupted when she recognized serious personal issues, took a three-year hiatus during which she rebuilt her life, then returned to college at Northeastern where she earned a BS in Psychology.

Her career began at Lotus Corporation which was later acquired by IBM. During this time, she met and married Stuart Alford whom she unabashedly calls her soulmate. (Her smile becomes larger and brighter when she talks about him.) Together they es-

tablished a strong and loving family. They landed in Natick and found Temple Israel through the Judy Gordon Early Learning Center. Laurie's volunteer work began at Judy Gordon and eventually she served as co-president of the parent-teacher association. She is an active and long-time member of Sisterhood, having held myriad positions. Among her most important roles at TI is that of wife of the president! Other partners can share the commitment and sacrifices expected of spouses.

Laurie has a passion for travel especially cruising and has been to many destinations, domestic and international. Their next trip is to Quebec via Maine, and she'd love to tell you about their adventures in Bermuda, Italy and Alaska. Laurie is fluent in American Sign Language. She enjoys cooking, is learning watercolor painting, and thrives on learning new things.

Laurie's Jewish journey began in her parents' Reform Jewish home. She remembers joining her family at temple on the High Holidays. She attended Sunday school but due to frequent moves was unable to celebrate her Bat Mitzvah though she was Confirmed. After marrying Stuart, they frequently joined his parents

Continued on Page 3

Idy Lanier

Kallat Maftir



Growing up in an observant home in New York meant that a connection to Judaism grew organically during Idy Lanier's childhood. Her social scene expanded through Shechter, three times a week Hebrew School, and USY. Being Jewish was easy for her as a student at Brandeis, and her Jewish identity became just part of who she is. When she started dating a lovely man named Ken, their discussions turned to how important Jewish community and Jewish culture would be in their

future planning. They agreed that it was imperative to raise children in a Jewish home with a strong connection to the Jewish community. Their 38 year partnership has fulfilled that mission. Idy and Ken joined Temple Beth Torah in Holliston before they married, it seemed only natural for her to become involved in the synagogue community, beginning with the education committee and extending to Sisterhood.

As planned, her own children attended preschool Torah Tots with our own Faye Tonkonogy as director, actively participated in the Hebrew school at Temple Beth Torah, and continued their Jewish education through Prozdor at Temple Israel. They have continued to have strong connections to their Jewish identities and, in their core, believe that a Jewish home life is important for themselves.

Idy joined Temple Israel in Natick in 2015 and immediately rolled up her sleeves. She volunteered at Sisterhood Open Door her first year, with June Shea as the Social Action chair person. The following year Idy was asked to take over that role, and went on to chair the Kiddush committee as well and eventually become Sisterhood President. From there, she was elected to the Temple Israel board, becoming Vice President of Membership, Executive Vice President and then President of Temple Israel.

Idy has a great love of our community, and described her term as president as a privilege. She did not see this so much as work, but rather as being keenly aware of the honor and the responsibility she felt to the community.

In the future, she looks forward to supporting any efforts she can to offer fellow congregants and community members whatever they need to feel engaged and connected to our wonderful community. In this vein, she has concentrated on continuing to volunteer and support events such as the Fall Kick Off, which was begun by her predecessor Marlene Dodyk, being part of the Development Committee to ensure financial stability for generations to come, Rise Against Hunger which feeds those in need wherever they are, and other opportunities to support our coming together as a community. Idy is eager to help facilitate projects that will bring us together as a community, strengthen our bonds, and encourage us all to be engaged and support one another. What a wonderful choice for our synagogue to celebrate Idy this year as Kallat Maftir.

Laurie Alford

at Mishkan Tefila in Newton. She flourished at Temple Israel in Rabbi Liben's Adult B'nei Mitzvah class. (Her smile expanded as she described the B'nei Mitzvah class.) In fact, for her, the experience was so powerful that she asked for a Beit Din because she asserts that in her heart, she has always felt that she was Jewish and as an adoptee, she believed that conversion was necessary to validate her Jewish identity. The class also enhanced her Jewish observance. She chose to attend Shabbat services with greater frequency and grew to understand the structure of the service. Her commitment influenced her family's behavior and soon they followed. Ultimately her children, Jackie and Hannah, attended Gann Academy and Jackie did the Nativ College Leadership program in Israel.

Her marriage, children, and bat mitzvah have given her the greatest fulfillment in her life.

Laurie believes that one should always be kind because you never know what other people are going through.

Honoring Laurie on Simchat Torah seems absolutely appropriate since Laurie's favorite holiday is Sukkot! She has a special affection for Sukkot because it is homey and offers the opportunity to make it beautiful. Spending time with Laurie feels homey and beautiful. She is grounded, kind, and compassionate. She values time and learning and is grateful for everyone and everything she has in her life. She loves Temple Israel because it's warm and welcoming and says that "if you are part of the community, you are part of everyone's family." This Simchat Torah, her chuppah holders will be her father, husband, daughter and friend, each representing essential relationships, love, and home.

Due to Laurie's disability, she uses a crutch. When we parted, Laurie allowed me to assist her on the high stair outside my home. It was an honor to be with her, to learn from her, and to enjoy her infectious smile. Laurie, Mazal Tov! May you go from strength to strength!

Ron Balk

Shabbat upon request. As a volunteer with the Caring Committee, he drives congregants to medical appointments when he is available. And most recently, as a student in Rabbi Weiss' "Bagels with a schmear of Talmud" class, he serves coffee and bagels to the class each week.

"What I love about Temple Israel is that there's always something going on, and now that I'm retired, I try to take advantage of these opportunities.... TI is a genuine community if you want it to be, one that seems to really care about its members. I also think both of our clergy are really great."

Approximately 3.5 years ago, as a result of a DNA test, Ron discovered the surprise and gift of his lifetime. In addition to the family that raised him -- his late mother, Irene; her late husband, Cyrus; and sister, Hilary, he learned that he also had a biological father, the late Dr. Herbert J. Wilson who was Ron's mother's sperm donor while he was a fourth-year student at Tufts University Medical School. Each of Ron's six newly discovered siblings, who were raised in North Dakota, have accepted Ron as their long-lost brother, and they consider him a full-fledged member of their family.

Before retiring in 2018, Ron enjoyed a 41-year career as a corporate lawyer, with the last 31 spent at Stride Rite/Payless/

Wolverine. Today, he participates in activities that enhance his love of the outdoors including: backpacking, birding, and travel: He has hiked to the summits of all 68 mountains over 4,000 feet in New England and also 88 on the New England "Hundred Highest." Since viewing a rose-breasted grosbeak in 1981, he has birded across North America, England, Israel, Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru and many Caribbean islands, and identifying more than 1,000 species of birds; a birding trip in the Ecuadorian Andes is planned for November. Long-distance biking trips have included one in Vermont and two in Israel from Jerusalem to Eilat. He and his wife, Carol Woolfe have traveled to Florida, Maine, the Berkshires, and, most recently to Europe on a Danube River cruise.

Ron is especially proud of his two adult daughters and their career choices: Carolyn, a NYU and Columbia University graduate, is a project manager with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Washington, DC. Adrienne, a graduate of the Ben-Gurion Medical School in Beersheva, is a second-year medical resident in Newark, NJ; she previously served as an IDF lone soldier and medic on an IDF training base.

Ron sums it up: "It is said that half of life is just showing up. Show up at TI and take advantage of all that it has to offer. You'll be glad you did."

L' Shanah Tovah
Have a sweet year!

