

Installation Shabbat – May 5, 2023

Shabbat Shalom. I am honored to stand before you this evening being installed as the 62nd President of Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple. Many of you may know that I was very close to this spot a dozen or so years ago but it wasn't the right time for me. Now is the right time for me and I hope it is the right time for all of you as well. Thank you for putting your trust in me.

I look at this evening as my opportunity to tell you a little about myself and how I got here. I grew up in Albany, New York. My family were members of a large Reform congregation, Congregation Beth Emeth, and I was active in all facets of synagogue life, even becoming president of CBEYG, the temple youth group. One thing I am extremely proud of from those years was the work that I and a few other young women in our class put in to advocate for offering bat mitzvah at Beth Emeth – my class was the first to have bat mitzvahs, and I was only the third woman to ever be bat mitzvah'd there

I attended college at the University of Rochester, in Rochester, New York, obtaining a degree in geological sciences, because I flamed out dramatically in the organic chemistry classes required for my original chosen major, chemical engineering. Just about the only jobs with an undergraduate degree in geology in the early 1980s were mud logging cores on offshore oil rigs and they weren't so interested in hiring women for those roles at that point in time. I fell back into the work that had been my livelihood from the age of 16, employment in libraries. I had a variety of library jobs until I decided to get my master's degree in library science at SUNY Albany. There I met my husband, Martin, and one outgrowth of our relationship was my experience going through conversion class with him. This was an opportunity for me to reinforce my Jewish knowledge and gain a renewed understanding of how critical these teachings were to my being, as Martin and I learned together. Fun fact and further proof of the concept, six degrees of Jewish separation, our instructor in Albany was the wife of the conservative rabbi who had worked with Ann Thayer Cohen on her conversion years before.

We ended up in New Jersey by way of Connecticut. I worked my way through academic and special library positions, simultaneously our family grew with the addition of Rachel and Jared. Like many, I balanced family life with full time career responsibilities, eventually landing a job at the pharmaceutical company Schering-Plough where I worked for 22 years until they merged with Merck and my services were no longer needed. As I assessed the next steps in my career life, I felt it important to remain connected to our tradition of social action; so while looking for a new job, I volunteered with the Franklin Foodbank helping with their mission in our community. This was something I had always wanted to do but they hadn't needed help on nights and weekends when I was available previously. I found great fulfillment in the time I spent doing this important work. Fast forward six months to find me at the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, which is home to my current day job, Anshe Emeth being my night job.

The synagogue is a major center of our life. When we settled in New Jersey we knew we needed to find a congregation, even before we had children. We didn't know anyone and had no relatives here so we desperately needed to start building a community. We did some temple shopping

and knew after one service at Anshe Emeth that we had found our spiritual home. Over the years our closest friends, who we now consider family, have come from Anshe Emeth and we are so thankful for that. Our children were both born into this community, Rachel welcomed at a special Friday night baby naming and Jared at his bris right here in Keller Hall, both under the watchful eyes of Rabbi Miller. They both went through religious school and were active in AETY and NFTY-GER. The assistant rabbi when we joined was Jack Paskoff, still a dear friend, and he honored us by participating in Rachel and Andrew's wedding in 2014. We had the privilege of having Rabbi Bazeley officiate at the bris of our grandson Jason in 2019. So you see our temple family is our community and is our family.

I have so many people who have helped guide me on my path to standing here tonight. First and foremost are my parents who have imparted in me my foundational Jewish values and the importance of being part of, and contributing to, a temple community. Rabbi Miller was there during the early years providing wisdom, mentorship, and encouragement. He saw something in me that I didn't see in myself, encouraging me to take on leadership roles, and for that I am grateful.

There has been so much that I've partnered with Heather Kibel on during the last ten plus years, which has taught me about the inner workings of our synagogue, security, grants and finances. Heather has a strong commitment to Anshe Emeth and she has played an important role in helping the Temple manage the mounting challenges that all synagogues face while allowing Temple leadership to focus on their correct functions. Thank you, Heather, for all you do.

The office team of Jenn, Nancy, Ann, Uma, and Miriam, along with our custodians, Jim, Julius and Denise, have made my life easier when working on many events and I'm truly appreciative of all they do. I look forward to working closely with Jenn in the coming years as she assumes her new role as our Temple Administrator.

I can't miss acknowledging Matt Vogel who has been a wonderful partner, especially during the last two years as we worked closely to ensure our Education and Youth programs ran smoothly. His deep caring for the well-being of our children is critical to the success of the programming we run for them at Anshe Emeth.

Finding Cantor Stanton three years ago was a blessing, as his wonderful voice enhances our worship. Ina and I were fortunate to co-chair the search committee that brought Cantor Stanton to our congregation and we continue to enjoy the music that he brings to us. He has allowed us to follow Cantor Anna Ott's legacy of music excellence. As has Piano Dave Schlossberg.

And what can I say about Rabbi Bazeley? His moving High Holy Days sermon not so many years ago inspired me to return to leadership at Anshe Emeth. He is an innovative, creative, and caring man who has a wonderful way of connecting and engaging with the congregation. His spiritual leadership has kept Anshe Emeth strong and a place of meaning and purpose. Rabbi Bazeley, I am certain that you will continue to inspire us, lead us, and guide us with your wisdom for many years to come. Our visions for this congregation are closely aligned and I look forward to working

with you even more directly as well as deepening our friendship during my term as President. I think we are going to have a good time.

And then there is my friend and partner in crime of the last two years, Ina Horn. Her warmth, kindness and compassion have helped build back synagogue life as COVID has subsided. Ina, our Blanche is looking down and kvelling with all you have accomplished the past two years. I have learned so much working closely with you. Thank you for your guidance and support on my journey to reach this memorable day. Your friendship means the world to me, and I know that I will always be able to turn to you as well as all of our past presidents for advice and counsel. Special shout out to my dear friends, past presidents Marc Rothstein, Mike Greenberg, and David Levine who have given me confidence that you can have a demanding job and still be able to do justice to your Anshe Emeth commitment. They have provided insights on how to maintain balance and I am grateful for their faith in me and their unwavering support. I am excited to continue Ina's work to more fully engage all of our past presidents. They bring so much experience to the table and we will leverage that resource even more during the coming years.

I am fortunate to have the talents of Dave Snyder and Amy Warner as 1st and 2nd vice presidents. I congratulate them, along with our other Officers, Laura, Neil, Andrea and Elise, and Trustees, as well as the new AETY Board. I look forward to what the future brings as we work as a team together.

I am coming into this role during a time of transition and change. We are all extremely excited about reinstituting the role of Assistant Rabbi with Rabbi Sienna Lotenberg joining our amazing clergy team on July 1st. Rabbi Lotenberg has spent the last two years teaching us and we look forward to expanding our relationship and taking advantage of all the wonderful things she has to offer. Her enthusiasm, beautiful voice and interest in developing programming and outreach in new areas will only serve to strengthen our temple community.

I would not be here today without the endless and loving support of my husband Martin, and the encouragement of my mom, Elaine. I also thank my wonderful children Rachel, Andrew, and Jared, and my grandson Jason, who continue to inspire me. I love you all. And I can't forget my special girls, you know who you are, for unconditional love and support and getting me through the challenges of the last year, you all keep me sane, I love you long time. I also thank you, the congregants and friends of Anshe Emeth; you are the heart and soul of this synagogue.

As the new president of Anshe Emeth I am committed to helping to ensure our Temple's continued fiscal health and transparency, articulating our commitment to promote inclusivity, and continuing to broaden our efforts in member support and engagement. I hope to expand the work of the Tzedakah and Caring Community Committees to get our efforts back to their pre-pandemic levels. Outreach to young families and the unaffiliated will also be a renewed effort as we take advantage of the portfolio of our new Assistant Rabbi, to build our membership numbers back towards what they were a decade ago. We will continue to provide hybrid and virtual events to ensure engagement of our members who can't always make the trip into New Brunswick or

have left the local area. But we will also get back to some of the wonderful in person events that haven't been held in many years.

I am deeply grateful to be part of this congregation. I proudly stand with those who came before me and as I begin my term as President I am filled with energy and enthusiasm and look forward to the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead. Thank you again for putting your trust in me.

Shabbat Shalom.