Saying Kaddish at Biennial
A Message From Leah Berkowitz, WRN Co-President

As many of you know, my dad died right before Thanksgiving. The day before he went into the hospital for the last time, I sat praying with our Women’s Rabbinic Network board in my living room at the end of our board retreat. I remember feeling so grateful for the support I felt being a part of this community. I had no idea how much I was going to rely on my WRN community in the weeks that followed.

While too many of you reached out to me to name everyone, I have to raise up the people who held me up during this dark time. Mary Zamore was one of my first calls when I found out that my father’s cancer was progressing, as I knew she could both offer her own comfort and connect me with colleagues who could help me navigate the months ahead with my congregation. Robin Nafshi sat up late with me at the CCAR conference in Cincinnati, walking me through what it was like to care for a synagogue community while caring for a sick parent and experiencing a personal loss. Mary consoled me and my family at the funeral, and Elisa Koppel came to the cemetery to help me bury my father. Rebecca Reice sent her own version of the healing scarf, and countless others in our circle sent loving messages, care packages, and generous contributions. You have taught me how to grieve, and how to comfort, and I am grateful.

I didn’t know if it would be jarring to spend five days of shloshim at a URJ Biennial. But something told me that the experience would be healing and soul-filling. So not only did I go, I convinced my mom to join me for Shabbat.

I sometimes find Biennial to be overwhelming (my mom and I joked that my introverted dad would have hated it). But in this case, it was exactly what we needed. You held both me and my mother in your heart and in your arms. I was able to say Kaddish every day in a Reform prayer service that lifted my spirit (though I have to shout out my local Conservative synagogues who host an egalitarian minyan every day). I was able to receive the comfort of friends and the wisdom of colleagues who had walked a similar path. Allison Berry assured me that my memories of those last weeks in the hospital would soon fade into the background and be replaced by memories of my father as a whole and healthy human being.

My leadership in the WRN was important to my father. I tended to take a backseat when it came to organizational leadership--having to do so much of that as part of my job--and my dad was the one who encouraged me to push myself and expand my rabbinate beyond my synagogue. I wish I could have told him how proud I am of the work we are doing. How the (non-Jewish)
waitress at the WRN dinner lit up when given the opportunity to meet the first woman ordained as a rabbi in the U.S., and how thrilling it was to meet the next generation of women rabbis while they were still students. I was so proud that Mary Zamore was celebrated at the Women of Reform Judaism Empowerment dinner for the incredible work that she is doing to promote pay equity and safe workplaces.

Most of all, I was honored to participate in The Clergy Monologues, a staged reading of firsthand accounts from women clergy in our movement. While we had performed these monologues once before--at the 2019 CCAR convention in Cincinnati--it was incredibly moving to bring this production to an audience that included both Jewish professionals and laypeople. Though so many of the stories were already familiar to me--from our WRN Facebook page and our in-person gatherings--hearing this wider audience’s shocked reactions reminded me how important it is to give a voice to our experience.

For me, the most powerful moment was when, in the post-performance discussion, one of the moderators said, “You know the monologues when you reacted the loudest? Those incidents happened this year.” So many people in that room might have thought that gender discrimination and harassment of clergy were a thing of the past, and that The Clergy Monologues were a celebration of how far we had come. But we all know that harassment, discrimination, and microaggressions continues to this day: only now we no longer have to smile and keep silent. I’m grateful for the safe and confidential sharing space that the WRN provides, but also for the courage it has given us to speak up to our colleagues and our communities.

Rabbi Leah Berkowitz, Co-President
presidents@womensrabbinicnetwork.org
WRN Board Nominations & Opportunities to Get Involved

It’s that time of year again in which the WRN Nominating Committee is gathering names for our next WRN Board. Nominees must be members of the WRN in good standing. You may suggest the name (or names) of a colleague or nominate yourself as someone who might next serve on the WRN Board. Please email these names and why they are a good fit for WRN leadership to amemisfoler@bethemet.org. The Nominating Committee will consider all names submitted by February 28. The Nominating Committee will then present the slate for an electronic vote in March. You must be a current member of WRN to vote.

In addition, there are other opportunities to engage in the work of WRN, in roles beyond our Board. For example: with our Convention 2021 planners, Social Action and Advocacy work, Fundraising, etc. If you would like to get involved with the WRN or want to suggest the names of others who would be interested in WRN, along with their talents, interests, etc. please email amemisfoler@bethemet.org.

Thank you,
Amy L. Memis-Foler
Immediate Past President
"The Journey to 50" begins! We are thrilled to announce that our 2021 Convention will be held June 6 - 9 at Wylie Inn and Conference Center in Beverly, MA [wyliecenter.com] twenty miles north of Boston and Logan Airport. Our Convention will mark the beginning of a year-long celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Sally Priesand's Ordination and women in the Reform Rabbinate. Overlooking the Atlantic Ocean in a hotel setting, we will learn from scholars and from one another, rejoicing in the past and looking ahead to the future. An Advisory Council and Program Committee are being formed. Please contact WRN's VPs of National Events if you are interested in planning the Convention, Beth Klafter (RabbiBHK@tbdcommack.org) and Patricia Karlin-Neumann (Rabbipkn@stanford.edu).

WRN Membership Update

A reminder: your membership matters! Joining and supporting the WRN enables us to accomplish our ongoing, sacred work of supporting, nurturing, and advocating for female rabbis and rabbinic students in the Reform movement. To renew your membership or check to see if your membership is up to date, you can log into the WRN website, and click on My Profile.

If it says your renewal is due in July of 2020, you are current. If not, it is easy to renew your membership. Here is a helpful video if you need guidance. Of course, I am happy to help, too. Feel free to reach out to me, Sarah Marion, at membership@womensrabbinicnetwork.org.

Please know that no one is ever denied membership because of financial challenges. Just reach out confidentially to our Executive Director Mary Zamore, maryzamore@womensrabbinicnetwork.org, or to Lynne Goldsmith, treasurer@womensrabbinicnetwork.org.
WRN shares the very sad news that Emily Feigenson died on January 23rd. We extended loving condolences to her husband Dennis Perluss, their children, and entire family. We also think of so many of you, our WRN rabbis, who are direct friends, classmates, and colleagues with Emily.

Dennis shared this on Caring Bridge: "Emily passed away at home... after fighting hard for 13 months. Netanya, Gabriel and Talia were all here with us. Emily seemed comfortable to the very end."

May Emily’s memory always be for a blessing.

**Oys**

Correction from our last newsletter: Ariel Friedlander’s father’s name is Rabbi Dr Albert H Friedlander, z"l

Condolences to Rachel Sabath Beit-halachmi and her husband Ofer on the death of Ofer’s father Yoel Beit-Halachmi

Condolences to Batsheva Appel on the death of her father Leonard Appel

Condolences to Wendy Spears on the death of her mother-in-law Lorraine Ginsburg

Condolences to Dennis Purluss and Netanya, Talia and Gabriel on the death of our colleague, friend, and sister, Rabbi Emily Feigenson on January 23, 2020

Condolences Judy Shanks and her husband James on the death of James’ mother Estelle Grace

Condolences to Elle Muhlbaum on the death of her uncle Randy Bates

Condolences to Lucy Dinner and her husband Jeff on the death of her father J.M. Fried, Jr.

Condolences to Amy Feder and her husband, our colleague, Rabbi Michael Alper on the death of Michael’s father Barry Alper

**Joys**

Mazel Tov to Paula Winnig on the engagement of her son Shai to Kristin Jaffe
Don't forget to follow us on Instagram and Facebook!

If you would like to be highlighted on the WRN's Facebook and Instagram accounts, please click here and complete this short questionnaire.