

**From Moon Cycles to Life Cycles:  
Celebrating 20 years of  
Rabbi Carie Carter**



**Park Slope Jewish Center  
2020**



We are delighted to present this compilation of some memories and thoughts about Rabbi Carie Carter, as we celebrate her 20th year at PSJC. These written reflections\* echo the ones expressed at the “Celestial Shabbat” celebration this past February, and by so many other words of appreciation expressed throughout the years. A common thread permeates all of these, of someone who engages with everyone on an individual level and meets them where they are, of someone who is a teacher, a leader and a friend, who goes the extra mile time and time again. In a word, a true *mensch*. In these challenging times, when we cannot physically be together, it is a gift for us all to reflect on how fortunate the PSJC community, and so many of us individually, have been to have Carie Carter



\*Note that texts have been edited for clarity and space.

Excerpt from Cantor Judy Ribnick’s *Shabbat Shira* (Parshat B’shalach) D’rasha “Celestial Shabbat,” 2/8/20 in honor of Rabbi Carie Carter



*Shabbat Shalom*. I’m delighted to be here to honor the *Torah* and our beloved rabbi, Carie Carter. I have had the honor of working side by side with Rabbi Carie for 15 years. It has been a pleasure to learn and grow from her! She is a wonderful *bimah* partner — knowledgeable, committed, respectful, encouraging, joyous, fun. She’s filled with *kavana* and tremendous good will, and she loves to sing! I dedicate this “D’rasha B’Shira” — “Sermon in Song” to her, and to the messages of thanksgiving and hope she brings us.

I mentioned before that I chose “*Min HaMeitzar*” not only because of its thematic congruence with the Song of the Sea, but also because I believe its message can bolster us during times of personal and collective distress. Additionally, though, I want to raise up Rabbi Carie’s message about overcoming adversity, as I have understood it.

Rabbi Carie has taught over the years that we all find ourselves in *HaMeitzar* at some point. We all land in the narrows; hardship and pain touch us all. So how do we get out? Well, as verse five says, calling out for help, including God’s help, is one way. And believing in God and the forces of good that are greater than ourselves is another. And how do we get to *merchav Yah* — expansiveness, wide-open possibilities?

I would posit that Rabbi Carie Carter might say that one way is to reach out our hands to help someone else get out of *HaMeitzar*, out of their distress, and that when we turn towards others with an open heart and hand, we help lift ourselves out of despair. And, if we do this for one other in community, we’re more likely to lift one another to higher places. There we’d feel some open space, and then we might see that something better is indeed possible.

Thank you, Rabbi Carie, for helping to lift us up for twenty years and, we hope, for many more to come.



## Esther Schwalb & David Haase



Rabbi Carter has been a part of our family's life for all of her 20 years at PSJC. Though she missed Mimi's baby naming on the *bimah* upstairs by a handful of years, she's been a part of our joyous and trying times in the intervening years. Always seeking to reach the children and listen to what they have to say. Be it magically pulling out their surprising intellect during *Bat* and *Bar Mitzvah* preparation (like a rabbit from a hat!) or making a special visit soon after their grandmother died, Rabbi Carie has made an indelible mark on all of lives. Her love and dedication to inclusion and overall *menschlichkeit* is all encompassing and felt by all.

Having personally grown up in an Orthodox home in Scranton PA, this shul and this rabbi remain a breath of fresh air for me after all these years. My family doesn't know any other way really. In fact, when he was young, our son Jacob asked whether men could be rabbis and cantors too — and I sheepishly said — “well, yes, sometimes.” That question would've been ridiculous during my childhood and it just never gets old — still miraculous.

So, to Carie I say, thank you for everything you've done for us and everything you've taught us along the way. We are so grateful.

## Mark Schwartz



Throughout this chaotic time and many challenging moments at PSJC before and since, Carie helped us all keep our heads and hearts open to possibilities and aimed at our true North as a community. I have learned so much from her — from what she says and doesn't say — but mostly from who she is as a person, Rabbi, and leader. I am a far better person having Rabbi Carter in my life. I am deeply grateful to her.



Our beloved Rabbi lounging up in the sky in PSJC's Rose window during the 2005 renovation

## Elizabeth Schnur



I had the honor of hiring R. Carie when I was PSJC President, 20 years ago. The hiring committee process, chaired by Marlene Schwartz z”l, was one of the best that I have experienced at PSJC. Folks started from very different places, looking for very different attributes in a rabbi (my theory was that everyone wanted the rabbi of their childhood, but with contemporary thinking). Ultimately though, the final decision was unanimous: Carie was the perfect fit for our community.

Once Carie was here, my biggest worry was that she would be done in by the combination of the community's significant needs and her inclination to try to do whatever needed to be done — even if it meant cleaning the pews or polishing the silver. Happily, she survived those early days. But as today I see R. Carie doing the usher's work of assembling the *siddurim* and handouts on *Shabbat* morning, I know that helping her to resist her impulse to do whatever needs to be done for the community will remain a challenge for current and future presidents!

R. Carie has been there for me and my family through many life cycles, including our son Joshua's *bar mitzvah* (Carie's second one at PSJC!), Peter's adult *bar mitzvah* (first *adult b'nai mitzvah* class), my aunt's funeral (where R. Carie magnificently handled difficult personalities and nonagenarian ambivalence to tradition), and most recently, the end of my mother's life. Carie visited my mom, who was very fond of her, at home and at the hospice, and beautifully supported us all through her death, funeral and *shiva*. Thank you Carie, for your friendship, wisdom and caring and all that you have brought to the PSJC community and to our family.



R Carie with first adult B'nai Mitzvah Class

## Yehudit Moch



Rabbi Carie: Memories of life cycle events of my life in the last twenty years are all full of the important roles you have played in those events.

Sammy's *Bar Mitzvah*. You came on board midway through the planning. You established a rapport with him. You were welcoming and encouraging. You have a talent about the kids' *dvrei Torah*. Sam's *d'var* was his own, but with input from you so much better. There were complications that could have derailed the day. And you were calm. And smiling. You made it clear that all would be well, and it was. I know that you were glad Sam was shorter than you!

*Shivah* for my mother. You were there for me. You were also there for my sisters, for whom traditional observance is not part of their lives and something they're not generally comfortable around. You supported them. Explained traditions and welcomed them to consider the PSJC Community as a place they could count on.

That's one example of what a good bridge builder you are. You help make it safe for people to connect with each other  
You do

it with great humility. That's a term we don't use much in our circles. But in our *Mussar* class you showed the power of humility in the best sense.

Judith and my wedding ceremonies brought out so many of your best attributes. I am so proud that Judith and I were PSJC's and your first legal gay wedding. With a short time to plan, after thousands of years of homophobia, you created a ceremony and helped us make decisions true to us and the community at that historic moment for us all. I'm not quite sure which of us had the broadest smile as you announced, "by the power invested in me by the State of NY, I now pronounce you married."

Not only did you lead that ceremony, you also schlepped out to The East End four days before Rosh Hashanah. The rabbi out there had insisted that you two didn't have to plan together, that you would be leading the...whole...ceremony. He would just give Greetings. Well, then he jumped in...a lot. You let him, and you welcomed him to share the leadership. But you didn't cave in. You pleasantly asserted yourself. Not so easy.

He was tall. You are small. He is old, you are young. He is male, you are female. But it really was your event as well our event. And it was a special event. Both ceremonies were unique, creative Jewish occasions with one foot in tradition and the other moving forward.

I look forward to continuing to experience my major and minor life cycle events under your leadership.



## Charlie Urich



I have belonged to PSJC since the year prior to Carie Carter becoming our Rabbi. She has been giving us spiritual leadership in good times (bar and *bat mitzvahs*, weddings, Pride and Israel parades), and sad times (right after 9/11, when the shul was kept open for spiritual comfort the day after and the inspirational Friday night service in the yard a few days later, funerals, gravesite services, *shivas* and *shloshims* done for family members of congregants such as was done for my mother's passing in 2009.)

She was a great guide in helping me navigate my time as Friday Night Davenning Coordinator from 2002 thru 2012 as well, and has always been helpful in answering halachic questions when needed.

She has always been welcoming to new members and visitors to our beautiful shul as well. Thanks to Rabbi Carter for being here for us.



## Ilene Rubenstein



Many years ago, when my life was falling apart, Carie asked me to take over Adult Education. Really???? In her wisdom, she understood how badly I needed something in my life that I could feel good about. And she paired me with Steve Radwell who turned out to be one of the nicest people I've ever met and a great partner to work with. One class I never got to run, which would

have had standing room only would have been "How to Say No to the Rabbi." I couldn't find anybody who knew how to do it, let alone to teach it — she's so nice and works so hard. How could anybody say "no" to her?

Fast forward a number of years, and my life was still falling apart. I had always wanted to have a *Bat Mitzvah*, since I was young, but for one reason or another, it never happened. When Carie formed the first PSJC Adult *B'nai Mitzvah* class, I wanted to do it, but I didn't know if I could make a commitment to the year of study. Rabbi Carie told me that I had to learn one new thing and challenge myself — I couldn't just coast on the things I had always done, but I didn't have to make any commitments to the ceremony itself. I could just come and see how it went. By the second or third class, it became the most important thing in my life and I didn't miss a single session, and now I'm a *Bat Mitzvah*!

For years, when preparing her *D'var Torah*, Carie has had an uncanny knack for knowing what I was struggling with or what I needed to hear that week — even if we had not spoken. A bit spooky actually. I keep telling her that there are 300 other members in our congregation, and she can't keep writing her *Divrei Torah* just for me — but she doesn't listen.

But more than any particular thing, what stands out for me is that any time I've gone to Carie her response has always been wise, insightful, compassionate, non-judgmental, understanding and supportive, and for that I am truly grateful.



## Peter Holmes



I was not on the frequently mentioned Rabbi Search Committee. However, there were many meetings held around our dinner table. You might be amazed at how long it can take to do the dishes when there is a vital conversation going on in the next room! The Committee engaged in a principled discussion about the selection process and candidates. That type of discussion mirrored the way R. Carie has approached many thorny issues at PSJC.

For example, when we considered how to address the prohibition against male homosexuality in the Leviticus Chapter 18 reading for Rosh Hashanah, R. Carie first led sessions on learning about the text and commentators' thoughts about it. She then led a congregational meeting on the subject. I was surprised at that meeting to hear one member express the view we should retain the sexual prohibition parts of the reading as part of the High Holy Day liturgy — she had been a victim of abuse by a relative who was forbidden by the Levitical sanctions to have sexual contact with her, and she felt it remained a critical reminder for the community. Her statement cast a different light on the discussion, broadening the conversation and raising a different level of awareness about a broader set of issues addressed in the sanctions.

This demonstration of learning and respect around this set of questions and others throughout Rabbi Carie's tenure, provided fora to address difficult subjects in the community. These discussions allow many voices to be heard and demonstrate how a profound examination of issues based on our traditional texts and current writings can lead to measured consideration marked by mutual respect, even in the absence of full accord. This approach — to engage in learning and respectful discussion — has been and is a profound, enduring gift to the community enabling us all to be at our best when wrestling with difficult issues.



## Aron Halberstam



**The Rabbi Blushed.** In Talmud class last year we studied a text which begins a tangential string of statements starting with Reb Huna who, when confronting a scriptural verse that put into question the assumption of Divine justice, began to weep. This is followed by numerous statements of other Rabbis of the Talmud who wept at other verses which similarly questioned Divine Justice. My first memory of Rabbi Carie blushing is when many years ago a congregant asked her to reprimand a young girl for bringing her dog to synagogue — not exactly a sin for anyone who knows the Rabbi. Over the past 20 years we have all witnessed Rabbi Carie's confrontations between tradition and injustice, and like the Rabbis in tractate *Chaggigah*, her response has never been to yield to injustice over tradition. More recently, last year I mentioned the discussion in the Talmud text we were studying in which were enumerated the many forms of respect owed to one's Rabbi and the concomitant punishment for disrespect. Again, the Rabbi blushed. When the Search Committee consulted the Prophet *Micah* about the qualifications for choosing a Rabbi, he replied that we should select one who is able, "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

## Howard and Susan Kayne

Sending fond memories from far away Manhattan!



Rabbi Carie officiates the wedding of Susan and Howard Kayne on May 19, 2002 on beautiful Cape Cod. A magical day!

## Marie Wyatt



I first met Rabbi Carie when I came to PSJC eleven years ago searching for a new spiritual home. I had just moved to Brooklyn, and as a young lesbian, what I wanted most in a shul was a place where I could be myself. I remember asking Rabbi Carie whether PSJC was an LGBT friendly synagogue, and she assured me that the congregation knew she was a lesbian when they hired her. I have been attending services at PSJC ever since.

A few months back, I was going through a lot of spiritual struggles. So, I was less than entirely comfortable when I was given an *Aliyah* one morning... and to make things even worse, I had the first *Aliyah* of the day. I went up to the *bimah*, feeling rather nervous, and stumbled through the blessings. As I was about to step down, Rabbi Carie approached me and announced that a "little birdy" told her that this was my first *Aliyah*. Well, that little birdy had been mistaken, but nonetheless, Rabbi Carie guided me in an extremely calm and supportive manner, as I unnecessarily said *shehecheyanu*. In that moment, I realized that despite my spiritual struggles, PSJC would always be my home.

## Sara Sloan



My younger sister, Viv, died in March 2010 following a prolonged battle with kidney cancer. Rabbi Carie was very compassionate and caring throughout this long period, for which I am grateful. I'm also thankful to her for arranging twice daily minyanim at my home so that I could sit *shiva* the way that's important to me





### Steve Elworth



I feel particularly honored to briefly talk about our beloved rabbi and friend, Carie Carter. I still consider myself a “newbie” around here. It is not yet seven years ago that I and my mom first came here on a Shabbat looking for a *Shul* that would fill all of our Jewish needs, spiritual, educational, emotional — and of course good food, good people and a fine Rabbi. Not only did we find it but we also found a rabbi who is warm, loving and intelligent and able to read minds (more about that later)!

My mom came here shortly after her 89th birthday and Rabbi Carie and her family and the Shul Community made her feel at home. I remember my mom asking me what is going on at PSJC this weekend, will there be a class, will there be food, and if it was a *B'nai Mitzvah* that day, do I know the kid. And yes my mom started taking Talmud at 90 with the wonderful Aron Halberstam and loved it. Behind everything that my mom loved was the smiling face of Rabbi Carie, director of everything.

When my mom died, Rabbi Carie was there for me and the rest of my family who had not previously met her. Rabbi Carie, through her mind reading skills, was able to make a compromise, between my sister and myself, to have what turned out to be an amazing *Shloshim* right here. When I have a problem Rabbi Carie will give me advice before I even ask the question. I particularly remember two pieces of advice she gave me, keep the match from the fuse, and always take the high road. Just last month I had the privilege to walk across the Brooklyn Bridge with her and many PSJCers and thousands of others against hate and Anti-Semitism. It was such a pleasure to walk with her and seeing her beaming with love of Judaism and all people on that sunny day. I did not feel lost but definitely found.

And during what has been another stressful and horrible week. It is nice that Rabbi Carie has been happy to celebrate not only her anniversary at PSJC but The Kansas City Chief's first Super Bowl appearance and victory in half a century.

I will close with words from another favorite *rebbe* of mine, Bob Dylan: May her song always be sung and may she always stay forever young.

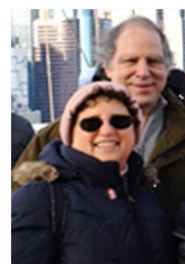
### Angela J. Weisl



I was also on the Rabbi search committee, and what I remember is Rabbi Carie asking what the parameters of the job were — did she have to buy the hamantaschen for Purim? — which told us a lot about the kind of person she is.

But I really wanted to talk about the way Rabbi Carie's wonderfulness reaches beyond the PSJC community. Several years ago, I was teaching a first-year writing class [at Seton Hall] that revolved around the subject of vocation, and I brought in guests who had interesting paths to their careers. Rabbi Carie came and fascinated my students who were not used to female clergy, apart from scary nuns, and who didn't entirely know how to behave around her. She told the story of how she really wanted to be an astronaut, and later, in college, how she was planning to be a psychologist, but her mother thought she should be a genetic counselor. When she realized that as a kid she used to give sermons to do the dog, she came home and said she was going to be a rabbi, and her mother said, “A psychologist is a wonderful thing to be!” This made a strong impression on all my students, who all wrote on their thank-you cards, which I required, “It was so exciting to meet the first Rabbi in Space!” But it's still a line around the English Department, when kids come in saying they're getting push-back from their parents, that they should tell them they want to become a rabbi. Thank you Rabbi Carie bringing your spirit far beyond the boundaries of PSJC.

### Les Honig



I'm sure other people will discuss Carie's pastoral skills, community building skills, and *menschlichkeit*. I wanted to mention how much I enjoy her teaching, through her leading discussions, writing *divrei Torah*, and somehow guiding most *b'nai mitzvah* to discuss social justice issues. Carie readily applies Jewish concepts to everyday life in a way that is edifying, interesting, and uplifting.

### Susana Honig

Carie, thank you for being there for us when we went through difficult times. Our conversations lifted the weight off our shoulders and helped us move forward. Thank you.

## Howard Chernick



June and I joined PSJC in 2005, a year before our daughter Rachel's bat mitzvah. Rachel was too shy and lacking in self-confidence to be able to do her bat mitzvah at the *Shul*. Carie immediately looked for an alternative solution and suggested that we have a Havdalah service at our home. It worked out beautifully, and under Carie's gentle guidance, really converted our home into a (temporary) *shul*. No reproof, total flexibility, only positive message. That's Carie. We were and are so grateful.

Carie also established a special bond with my dad, Jack Chernick, who passed away in 2013. I think it's fair to say it was a bond of mutual love. I remember once Carie paid my dad a visit at the Prospect Park West assisted living home on Grand Army Plaza. He began to tell me stories of his courting of my mom, Anne Chernick, all the way back in Winnipeg, Canada, where my parents grew up. Suffice to say, Jack was very very reticent in regard to personal matters, and here he was talking about the — delayed — first kiss, that my mom finally had to demand of my dad, after some time courting. Carie beamed with pleasure and delight. What a beautiful moment.

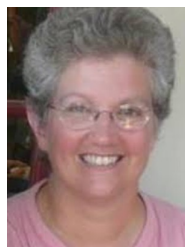
## Marjorie Rothenberg



Thank you for this opportunity to express our love and real appreciation for Carie. Here's my story:

For several years, when my son was very young, my mother lived downstairs in our house with us. She would come in with her big hat and her cane, as she was having trouble walking by then. Carie always had a kind word for her. And, when she died, even though we were then members of another community, Carie came to the *shiva*. My mother died under rather unusual circumstances. She had been living with my brother who — very short long short — managed to engineer her conversion to another faith. Carie consoled me at the *shiva* and reinforced my belief that despite what had happened, that my mother was Jewish and always would be Jewish. To this day, when my mother's *yahrzeit* is announced, she always searches the congregation for me, and we lock eyes for a second. And I know that she knew my mother and remembered her fondly and never doubted her, and understood my pain and confusion during a very trying period.

## Yael Seligman



Some memories of Rabbi Carie, from Yael, who also was on the Search Committee.

During a first conference call with the search committee, we asked Rabbi Carie a number of questions. Up until then, she had been working as a Hillel Rabbi and so we asked her, "Why do you want to be a congregational rabbi now?" And she gave a really good answer. She said, "I don't want to be a congregational Rabbi. I want to be **your** rabbi." She knew a bit about PSJC as an egalitarian Conservative *shul* in a diverse liberal urban neighborhood and thought it would be a good fit for her.

The *Shabbat* that R. Carie came for her audition weekend was very lovely. Her *dvar Torah*, time with the kids, and adult teaching were all well received. On Saturday night, the committee got together to talk about how the experience had been, and if/how to go further.

Several people commented that it seemed like Carie might be gay, and this generated two concerns. One was that if she were gay, she should not have to live closetedly, which would feel like sacrificing integrity. The other concern was that the Jewish world 20 years ago was very different than it is now, particularly in the Conservative world, where openly gay students were not admitted to JTS, and openly gay rabbis could not be members of the RA. And 20 years ago, our congregation was just emerging from a protracted contentious situation with a congregation that met downstairs, and we did not want any more notoriety. The committee decided that somebody should meet with Rabbi Carie on Sunday morning about these concerns. All eyes turned to me and I said I would be glad to do it.

So I called Carie and we arranged to meet...in my car. I had hoped that we would drive someplace for a chat, but that Sunday was St. Patrick's Day and a Brooklyn parade blocked our driving anywhere. So we sat and talked in my car for three hours. Carie understood our concerns, and assured me of two things. One was that she was not looking to make any public issues or generate publicity. The other was that she had inside information that things were finally changing in the Conservative movement, and that within the year openly gay students would be admitted as rabbinical students. Her candor and openness were a relief. And thank goodness the committee decided to offer her the position, and thank goodness she said yes!



## Miranda Hajduk



Although I am not Jewish, I have been an intermittent guest at PSJC for the past two years because my dear friend Angela Weisl was eager to share this beautiful community with me. During these two years, I have suffered a lot of conflict with my very religious family due to my sexuality, and have felt a lot of separation and loneliness.

But through all of that PSJC was a place where I always felt welcomed, no matter what, and that is in no small part due to Rabbi Carie. Every time I visit PSJC, the Rabbi takes time to greet me and welcome me, to share her story, and make me feel so much less alone. She has always made me feel at home at the shul, at a time in my life where going home was painful and difficult. A small anecdote to illustrate this: in the summer of 2019, I was bingeing the final season of one of my favorite Netflix shows, *Orange is the New Black*. I was coasting through episode to episode, when all of a sudden I saw the inside of PSJC! I was so overcome with excitement that I pointed, and without thinking exclaimed: "Oh my goodness! That's my *shul*!" Thank you, Rabbi, for helping this *Shabbos goy* find her *shul*.

## Karen Hartman and Todd London

Rabbi Carter has tended to my husband Todd and me in times of sorrow and joy. Each one is worth its own anecdote, but the sweetest and most joyful was when she officiated at our teeny tiny wedding in our living room in 2011. Our son Grisha was four years old (long story) and a bit overwhelmed by all of the emotion in the room. Rabbi Carter made time for Grisha and hunkered down with him on the floor by our staircase. We have a picture of them, face to face on the floor, just chilling, in the midst of Mom and Dad's wedding. We treasure Rabbi Carie's ability to be warm, present and personal always, no matter the occasion. She listens and makes space. She heightened the joy of our wedding. We are so grateful for her leadership!



## April Cantor & Barry Blumenfeld



We'll always remember Rabbi Carie's warm send-off before our family was scheduled to leave for six months in Brazil. I didn't expect her to call us all up to the *bimah* during services and after sharing sweet words about our family she asked the congregation to join her in blessing our trip. It was such a nice and unexpected gesture, and it perfectly exhibited the compassionate leadership Rabbi Carie possesses. We definitely felt the love from the supportive community she has fostered at PSJC. We are an interfaith, multicultural family and Rabbi Carie has always made us feel welcomed and seen.

We are so happy to celebrate all that Rabbi Carie does and is! And she is a big reason why we stay at PSJC.

## David Rosen



I was also a member of the now-infamous committee that hired Rabbi Carter. Sometimes being on that committee felt a bit like being in Charles Dickens' book *A Christmas Carol*, but with a Jewish twist. All the members of the committee felt they had been visited by the spirits of Rabbis Past, the spirits of Rabbis Present, and the spirits of Rabbis Future.

Looking back into our many experiences with synagogues and rabbis, it was clear that intellectual ability and executive functioning did not always appear in the same package. But suddenly and unexpectedly sweeping up from the plains of the American Midwest came Rabbi Carter, who was (and still is) young, bright, capable and energetic, and full of both intellectual skills and humane instincts. We are truly blessed to have had her as our rabbi for the last twenty years.

Every Friday evening at the beginning of *Shabbat*, in Jewish households throughout the world, we recite the section from the Book of Proverbs known as *Eshet Hayil* ("אשת חיל — A Woman of Valor"). I want to say that for all these years Rabbi Carter has been our Woman of Valor. As the opening lines of *Eshet Hayil* state, "A woman of valor who can find? For her price is far above rubies." But the verses close with an equally important line: "Give her of the fruit of her hands; And let her works praise her in the gates." All around us we can see those works.

## David Tepper



When Jennifer and I were new parents and had recently moved to our house on Degraw Street, we lived down the block from our good friend Meret. Meret's roommate Nancy was maybe ten years older than us, and she was a bit of a rolling stone. She had been on her own for quite some time, living in a lot of different places and

supporting herself. She was estranged from her family, who had not accepted her when she came out as a lesbian. Nancy was a guitarist, known in the Chicago hillbilly-punk scene as Nancy Rideout (née Tannenbaum). She rode big, fast motorcycles, the kind you ride with your body stretched out, nearly parallel with the road. On the night of the blackout in 2003, she rode me on the back of her bike to retrieve Lee from the babysitter, and I held onto her waist as we drove slowly through the quiet and darkened streets of Park Slope.

Nancy had a swagger, but she was also a searcher — she was looking for community and family. She had not grown up with much Jewish practice, but she was exploring her Judaism and had found her way to PSJC from time to time. As a single gay woman, she felt welcomed there and felt that Rabbi Carie was someone who she could have a connection with.

Nancy had been saving for a couple of years to buy a Ducati 1098, and the afternoon she brought it home she showed it off on the sidewalk. Later that night she took it out for a ride. She went over the Brooklyn Bridge, around the Battery, and crashed on the West Side Highway, where she died.

Jennifer and I were relatively new members at PSJC at the time, and maybe we didn't know any better, but we asked Rabbi Carie to help us with a memorial service at our house. She had no obligation to do it — Nancy wasn't a member of the shul, Rabbi Carie didn't know her — in fact, she barely knew us! By all rights, she could have said no...but she agreed to help.

Nancy's family showed up, filled with grief and anger, and the Rabbi was able to help them in some way get through the afternoon. I don't really remember what she said or what we did — I'm sure we said *kaddish* — but I do remember that she was there for us when we reached out to her.

The crazy thing is, we didn't even know Nancy that well. We did what we did to support our friend Meret. And Carie did what she did to support us. And for me it was one of those moments when you're just barely an adult, living on your own, making your own family and your own community, and you recognize: *this is the community I want. This is my family of choice.* By doing that act of loving kindness for us — and for Nancy — if I felt a little like Rabbi Carie had chosen us. And in turn, we chose her back.

## Florence Hutner



In the summer of 2000, coincident with Carie Carter's momentous arrival at PSJC, President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter brought their annual Habitat for Humanity Carter Work Project to New York City, as well as to sites in Florida and Georgia, and our new rabbi gamely signed up to swing a hammer and wield power tools when she probably

should have been writing High Holiday sermons. But there's sermon opportunity in everything, right? — so it was probably a working break anyway. A bunch of us PSJC-ers pulled on our Carter Work Project t-shirts and baseball caps, and we went off to the work site to paint walls, install molding, and — for the more expert in the group — work on electrical wiring. Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter did come by every house that Habitat volunteers were working on that day — we have the 8x10 group photo to prove it, in living color — so that was exciting. I loved working with other like-minded folks, as well as the illusion that I can measure and cut and nail in molding competently, but I didn't think much at the time about how emblematic the day would be of Carie's ongoing role at PSJC: quietly building a spiritual home as well as four walls and a roof, enthusiastic about the shared enterprise while calm and effective, cheerfully doing whatever was needed in the moment, sensitive to others' needs, committed to social justice and to praying with her feet (or her paint roller) as well as through the familiar rituals, not blinded by the brush with celebrity (even if we were all a little bit awed by that fleeting connection with royalty), and always warm and supportive company. May you continue to go from strength to strength.





Thanks to Matthew Septimus for many of the wonderful photos in this booklet.



