



Veshinantam Levanecha! **Honoring Those Who** **Teach Our Children!**



Honoring all our Religious School teachers, past and present, and Sue Summit, who led our school for the past eight years.

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As we move into a new academic year at Mount Zion, it's the perfect time to recognize the gifted educators who have guided our students over the decades. In honor of Sue Summit, who has stepped down from her post as director of the Religious School after eight years, we're sharing short profiles of four individuals: Sue herself as well as Mary Ann Wark (teacher and tzedakah specialist, 1978–present); David Wark (teacher, 1960s–1970s); and Stephanie Fink (Director of Education, 2000–2009).

Mary Ann's future in education at Mount Zion was sealed at the tender age of five, when her grandmother caught her crossing herself at the dinner table, learned at St. Kate's preschool, and promptly sent her off to the Mount Zion's Religious School. Decades later she was a Mount Zion teacher herself, focusing on Jewish history and holidays for middle grades. Having written a musical puppet show Haggadah ("We Tell it to our Children: the Story of Passover") and doing "Zlateh the Goat" Chanukah puppet shows for over 40 years, she worked hard to involve the younger students in active ways in holidays. She gave up classroom time to become the congregation's president in 1990 but continued her education work as a tzedakah specialist. In that role **she helped build understanding of the importance of the food shelf program, pushing a donation wagon from class to class and using music to teach the concept of justice through giving.** "What I remembered from my own religious school training were the music and the songs," she says, "so I decided I better make up some songs to go with my

teaching. That's what I did, and that's what I'm still using today...someone last Friday night came up to me and he said, 'I remember you!' And he started singing my song."

David Wark was already teaching comparative religion at Mount Zion when Mary Ann was hired in the 1970s. They met as coworkers and married in 1977. David's approach to teaching was influenced by his childhood in the Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles, which encouraged members to study Judaism in a multi-faith context. "I was pretty concerned about teaching comparative religion within the context of Jewish history," he recalls. "How it developed and what the comparative religions and side shoots of religions were. **I wanted my students to have a wide view of their faith.**" His vision broadened the knowledge of Mount Zion students, and like Mary Ann, he made a lasting impact. "There are still some adults in the congregation who remember my classes," he adds.

By the time Mount Zion hired Stephanie Fink as its first Director of Education in 2000, the religious school had diversified its offerings through the work of teachers like David and Mary Ann. Stephanie began her Mount Zion career as a classroom teacher, then received a graduate degree in Jewish education and returned to develop curriculum, lead youth and family education, and teach scores of adults. **"I took very seriously the responsibility of mentoring teachers,"** she explains. "And so I provided a lot of supervision, observation, feedback, and mentoring to teachers on a regular basis." Students also thrived under Stephanie—particularly eighth grader D. Marcos Vital, who became a Judaica teacher and eventually trained as an adult to become a sofer, writing Torah scrolls and mezuzot by hand. A number of former students teach in our religious school and are congregational leaders today.

When Sue Summit began her “dream job” as Religious School Director in 2015, she brought with her ideas and passions from growing up in Minnesota and 18 years teaching and directing at religious schools in Massachusetts. She revamped our Chai School to design electives around teachers’ interests and areas of expertise and started offering trips to the Religious Action Center in Washington, DC, where teens learn about social justice and lobby on Capitol Hill. Sue also prioritized and broadened the scope of our KULAM services for students with special needs, which is her professional specialty as an educator. Sue shared “That’s what I love about Mount Zion; we approach each individual and family to meet them where they are.” **Sue’s family-focused outlook on Jewish education resulted in an inclusive, dynamic, thriving education program where families love to gather and learn.**

Sue, Stephanie, David, and Mary Ann are just four of the dozens of educators whose commitment has nurtured generations of students at Mount Zion. It’s thanks in part to them that, in Sue’s words,

“We always know we have Mount Zion as our guidepost. We come here in tough times and happy times, and life cycle moments. The students understand that we’re here for them, and it’s great when they come back to visit. They know that there are other congregations throughout the country and the world that they can go to, and become a part of, and get that same love.”



Support our sacred work, for a bright future together.

Contribute today.

Secure giving can be made or [donated online](https://www.mzion.org/donate). Go to www.mzion.org/donate and click on “Annual Campaign.” You may also send in a check payable to “Mount Zion” with L’Chaim 5784 in the memo line. Payments may be made in installments.

We honor everyone’s contribution equally and list all names alphabetically without levels to emphasize this value. We continue to strive for balance in our Mount Zion giving.

Mount Zion Giving Committee:

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Questions:

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Annual Campaign – our free will offering

All gifts to the Annual Campaign go toward Mount Zion’s essential needs in our annual budget including initiatives in Jewish education, cultivating life-long connections, innovative worship services, festivals and community celebrations, the pursuit of social justice, and meeting strategic plan objectives.

Dues – our annual commitment

Our dues are akin to the half-shekel that every Israelite gave in ancient days. In accordance with our congregation’s values, Mount Zion uses the Fair Share model where all member households give according to their ability. Dues and fees cover only a portion of the operating budget. Dues alone cover approximately 50% of our budget.

Endowment – our foundation for the future

Endowment functions financially much like the building’s concrete foundation: it is largely hidden, yet provides the unshakeable base upon which everything that takes place in the building depends. Mount Zion’s endowment funds and legacy gifts provide permanent resources so that succeeding generations can engage in diverse activities while allowing the Temple to address emergent opportunities and unforeseeable contingencies.

