



Final Proposal for Revitalization & Stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House

Dr. Sonja K. Birthisel & Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick
As Representatives for Mifneh L'Kedushah

Presented to the New England Yearly Meeting Permanent Board
May 11, 2024

Executive Summary

The purpose of this proposal is to build relationships and continue dialogue as we explore with the New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) the exciting possibility of stewarding the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House into the future.

The historic space, established in 1784, is located in central Maine, and has largely been vacant since the meeting was discontinued in 2017, and officially laid down in 2021.

We - Dr. Sonja Birthisel and Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick - are an energetic young duo of faith leaders, seeking a home for our emerging collaborative project, **nVolution**. The mission of nVolution is:

- To give space, place, and opportunity for the next generation of multi-faith spiritual leadership to emerge and be supported.
- Become an incubator and hub for community-led spiritual and religious projects that are welcoming to all people in central Maine and beyond.
- Approach our work with a philosophy of flexibility and emergence, sensing and responding as the spirit moves in our world today.

We are excited to continue conversations with NEYM about your hopes and dreams for future use of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House, and mutually addressing further logistical and due-diligence questions that may arise.

How Did We Get Here?

In late August, 2023, I (Sonja) was sharing breakfast with my friend, Joey LeBlanc, when his phone rang. “Hi Joey, it’s your mother. I’m talking to Barb from The Historical Society about the old Quaker Meeting House just down the road. Here, I’ll put you on speakerphone...”

(Joey was raised less than a mile from the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House, where his family still live today, proprietors of the aptly named “Quaker Hill Disc Golf Course.”)

“Oh, hi Barb!” Joey replied. “How can I help?”

“Well, as you know, the Meeting House was laid down a few years ago, and is still looking for new owners. We thought about it for the Historical Society but it didn’t make sense. We’re afraid it’ll get sold to out-of-state real-estate developers or something horrible. Do you know any nonprofits or good community people who’d be interested in bringing an old building back to life?”

Joey looked me in the eye across the table and burst out laughing. He mouthed the words “you guys want an old Quaker Meeting House, right?” at me. Also laughing, I nodded vigorously and whispered back “Almost definitely. Let me call Ben and double check!”

He gathered himself. “I might know some people.”

And that was how Rabbi Ben and I learned about the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

I met Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick in August 2020, in the depths of the pandemic. I had just started in my role as Director of the Wilson Center for Spiritual Exploration and Multifaith Dialogue, an Orono-based nonprofit closely affiliated with the University of Maine. Rabbi Ben was on his way out of Maine to begin congregational work in Denver, Colorado - but our paths briefly crossed.

In those few weeks, we became fast friends who delighted in deep conversation, challenging each other over questions of spirituality, religion, and ways of bringing G-d to life in this world. We enjoyed exploring what might be possible if we were willing to put in the work to continue collaborating. We stayed in touch.

Three and a half years later, that exploration has proved to be among the more consequential of our lives; Rabbi Ben moved back to Maine last fall and spent the year as Rabbi-in-Residence at the Wilson Center, where I’m finishing a four-year tenure as Director. Together, this year, we worked on: developing a multi-faith curriculum centered around transcendent practices and experiences that deepen our connection with self, community, and God; facilitating student and community creation of spiritual services and programming; providing spiritual care and guidance to our communities; and continuing to explore together and challenge each other in many beautiful ways.

For some time now, we've also dreamed about what might be possible in our collaboration with a space to truly bring our creative spiritual vision to life.

Enter stage left: The North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

A few weeks after that fateful breakfast with Joey, Holly Weidner gave Rabbi Ben and me a tour of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House, and we fell in love. The wheels have been turning ever since, and this document is the to-this-moment culmination of that process.

Assumptions

We thought it might be helpful to start with a few assumptions we're operating under, based on conversations we've had with various parties to date. Please know that we're not attached to these assumptions; we understand that this is a conversation meant to follow the flow of divine will and we welcome further information, ideas, and feelings as they come.

Note: We have updated this list from that included in our February proposal to incorporate helpful factual edits supplied by one Friend.

Things we think are true:

- The North Fairfield Friends Meeting was discontinued in 2017, and responsibility for the property was assumed by the New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM). The process of laying down the North Fairfield Friends Monthly Meeting was finalized in 2021. The Meeting House basement had been occupied briefly in 2017.
- In 2020 and into 2021, NEYM had serious discussions with the local Historical Society about donating the building and whatever fixtures remained inside, for use by the community. However, those discussions petered out, and the Historical Society is no longer interested in taking on the building and associated property.
- In 2022 NEYM re-engaged with the process of finding next uses for the Meeting House that align with its spiritual mission.
- NEYM's ultimate goal is to transfer ownership of the building, remaining fixtures (other than records or historical artifacts of interest to NEYM Friends that might be found at a later date), and surrounding property to an organization that is mission-aligned, has a sound financial plan, and will bring a strong sense of community and purpose to the space once again.
- There remain several unknowns about the building and grounds at this time, including the age and condition of the roof, the condition of the plumbing, septic, and electrical systems.
- There is mutual interest in an ownership transfer whereby our non-profit, Mifneh L'Kedushah, becomes the new steward of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

We further think that a timeline (past and future) for decision-making about such a transfer could be concisely summarized as follows:

- September 2023: Register interest in the building and have a tour of the facility.
- October 2023: Send a formal letter-of-interest to representatives of the Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting and NEYM, noting our interest in exploring future stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.
- December 2023: Meet with Noah Merrill and Susan Davies for preliminary conversation about mutual hopes, dreams, and desires for the community space, early-stage vetting, and discussion of next steps.
- February 2024: Circulate written Proposal for Revitalization & Stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House for NEYM Permanent Board review.
- February 2024: Susan Davies initiates PFAS testing with State of Maine DEP.
- March 2024: Meet with Susan Davies and Sarah Gant who share initial encouraging feedback on proposal; discuss next-steps.
- April 30, 2024: Meet with Susan, Sarah, and Noah to share mutual progress updates; significant topics included condition of plumbing and preparations for May 11th meeting.
- May 3, 2024: Submit revised proposal to NEYM Permanent Board.
- May 11, 2024: In-person presentation to the Permanent Board for discussion and a potential approval of concept.
- Summer 2024: Transfer of ownership of the North Fairfield Meeting House.

In this timeline, we have sought to concisely summarize important communications and milestones already reached, and future dates considered possible in some conversations.

Please note that this schedule moving ahead is not meant to be binding, but is rather intended as a check to our operating assumptions meant to facilitate ongoing communication about what is possible and feels aligned to all parties involved.

Who We Are

In a nutshell, we are a duo of faith leaders, following our respective calls to ministry into new and serendipitous territory. We have attached our CVs as background to this proposal, highlighting details about our individual training, skills, and accomplishments to date. We have also summarized especially pertinent information briefly in the bios below:

Dr. Sonja Birthisel is an ELCA Lutheran, who currently attends the Church of Universal Fellowship in Orono, ME. Her academic background is in Ecology and Environmental Sciences, with expertise in climate change adaptation and mitigation in agricultural systems.



While teaching at the University of Maine during the early days of COVID-19, she felt deeply called to re-focus her energy toward tending to the spiritual wellbeing of her (suddenly remote, and terrified!) students. She was contemplating seminary when she heard the news that the Wilson Center for Spiritual Exploration and Multifaith Dialogue was hiring a new Director. It was the perfect next-step.

As Director, Sonja has doubled the Wilson Center's weekly program offerings, while consistently exceeding her Board's fundraising expectations in order to close sizable budget deficits. She has achieved this organically, by building great relationships with students, Board members, alumni, and friends, and by creating a feeling of organizational momentum and a culture of community empowerment.

She is additionally an activist and community organizer, variously working on campaigns for climate justice, workers rights, and Indigenous sovereignty. She is a duly elected member of the Orono Town Council and serves on several nonprofit Boards.



Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick was raised Modern Orthodox Jewish in an intentional community in northern New Mexico. While his educational background is in engineering, his professional life has been spent in education. He spent 11 years as the President of a small 4-year college, where he primarily focused on the creation and integration of human-centered liberal arts education training and assessment practices into his and other technical colleges. Today, the curriculum he developed is used in industries ranging from mountain guiding to commercial aviation to NASA.

More recently, he is the founder of Mifneh L'Kedushah, a school of transcendent exploration for Jewish youth, with programs running at ten locations across the US. He has also served as congregational Rabbi for The Sacred Tribe, a Denver-based synagogue grounded in Kabbalah - Jewish mysticism.

Today, he is the Rabbi-in-Residence at the Wilson Center for Spiritual Exploration and Multifaith Dialogue, where he is concurrently designing a curriculum for and leading a semester-long coming-of-age program, aiming to create space for college students to grow as fully expressed and spiritually connected people in the space of community.

His portfolio includes designing many innovative events and experiences to explore spirituality through art and embodiment practices, creating and/or leading several organizations with multi-million dollar annual budgets, and expanding ideas of what is possible in educational and spiritual spaces.

Our Core Philosophy

Though we understand the world through the lenses of different religious traditions, our collaborative work is motivated by a strong foundation of shared philosophical and theological principles, including a shared commitment to building connections across lines of division.

What is G-d? We believe in an expansive concept of the divine, that is present within, between, and beyond us – that is to say that the relationships we nurture with self, community, and G-d are all facets of the same holy and wondrous divine. We know G-d through the magic of photosynthesis, the rising action of yeast as we bake bread, and the connective mystery we feel unequivocally as love. We know G-d through personal and communal practice, through prayer-in-our-hearts, and at scales from the quantum to the infinite.

Your Life is Your Prayer. Judaism demands our fullest self-expression, given freely within community, as a moral imperative. Our shared scriptures tell us to pray without ceasing. How does one do this? By aligning our creation – that which we bring to life in this world - with our thoughts, our deepest feelings, and divine will.

Further, in Jewish practice there is the idea that “your prayer is incomplete if it’s offered alone.” That is, it’s not enough to retreat into oneself, to pray and seek enlightenment on one’s own; it is our purpose to be deeply in connection with one another, spiritually, emotionally, physically - wholly. Jesus’ words highlighting that the greatest commandments of all are to love G-d with our whole heart and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves likewise makes unavoidable this ethos of heart-centered engagement with the world.

The Reformation Continues. Martin Luther didn’t mean to start a revolution; he simply did the thing his “bound conscience” demanded he do when faced with the injustices and hypocrisies of his time. He came to understand, as is shared in the roots of Quaker tradition, that much of the structure and dogma of our religious traditions is culturally constructed, and does little to build our unique, unmediated individual and communal connection to the divine. We, inspired by Luther’s life and by Kabbalah, see ourselves within a timeless stream of transformation and re-creation. We seek, as the spirit moves, to practice stripping away those layers that have come to separate and divide us, that we might better return to the heart of our scriptures and together draw closer to G-d.

A New Vision for the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House

Together, we are seeking a space to serve as home for an emerging collaborative project. The working title of this initiative is *nVolution* - a word connoting the artistic and spiritual process through which divine inspiration flows through into manifest creation. Our mission, as best we understand it presently, is:

- To give space, place, and opportunity for the next generation of multi-faith spiritual leadership to emerge and be supported.

- Become a hub and incubator for community-led spiritual and religious projects that are welcoming to all people in central Maine and beyond.
- Approach this work with a philosophy of flexibility and emergence, sensing and responding as the spirit moves in our world today.

The North Fairfield Friends Meeting House would be the perfect home for this project: it has lived for more than two centuries as a nexus of G-d energy and teems with potential for spiritual expansion; it is centrally located to our already existing communities and families; it is close enough to Portland and Boston so as to make destination travel possible, is “just right sized” for the sort of spiritual and artistic exploration we envision.

We understand that addressing deferred maintenance and undertaking some renovation of the space would be necessary to bring the building back to life and equip it for future use, and we are prepared to fundraise for and take ownership over this transition process.

Our ask is that, if you feel inspired by our vision and potential as new stewards, you offer the as-is facility to us as a gift or for nominal cost (e.g., \$1) in order to set us up for success as we undertake the ambitious work of revitalizing the building. We further ask that any covenant created as part of an ownership transfer process grant us freedom to continue imagining and evolving what this project will become, in accordance with our mission.

Through this process and into the future, it is our hope and intent to build and maintain good relationships with those who have been connected to this space – and the land on which it sits – throughout history. We have reached out to local leaders in the Land Back movement to solicit advice and connection with indigenous neighbors. We would be honored to host occasional Quaker meetings or other events for which Friends wished to make use of the space. And, in the event that ownership of the cemetery were transferred with the building, we would hold with reverence and care the responsibility of maintaining the cemetery, and seek to include families and loved ones of the deceased in conversation and decision-making regarding its upkeep.

Logistics & Draft Budget

We are both affiliated with an existing religious nonprofit, Mifneh L’Kedushah, which would act as the formal entity to take ownership over the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House in event of an ownership transfer. Mifneh is governed by a five-person multi-faith Board of Directors consisting of Dr. Sonja Birthisel (President), Ariel Peterson (Vice President), Jack Leopold (Secretary), Amy Bliss (Treasurer) and Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick (Spiritual Leader / Director).

For the purposes of this proposal, we have drafted a three-year budget for this project. This budget is broken into major *Income* and *Expense* categories, below. To the extent possible, with our existing knowledge, we have sought to realistically account for all that is needed to adequately resource this undertaking, and considered how our time, skills, and connections might best be leveraged to make the project financially viable.

We expect most of our first year would be spent in three ways: (1) maintenance and renovation projects, (2) engaging in the interpersonal work of making connections toward future tenancy and partnerships, and (3) building out our programming portfolio and bringing that to life.

Then, in our second and third years, we anticipate launching a full lineup of programs and space-rental opportunities, such that by the end of year three we would be at full operational capacity.

Draft Budget for nVolution FY24/25 - FY26/27 (Assuming FY Begins July 2024)

Income

	FY24/25	FY25/26	FY26/27
Angel Investment Loan	150,000		
Donations	25,000	30,000	40,000
Grants	20,000	50,000	50,000
In-Kind Donations	50,000	20,000	15,000
Rental	20,000	50,000	75,000
Fundraising	25,000	30,000	30,000
Programming	10,000	40,000	60,000
Totals	300,000	220,000	270,000

Notes on Income: We envision our first year focusing on building/grounds revitalization and capacity-building, laying the foundation for important revenue streams in years to come.

In years two-three (FY25/26 and FY 26/27) we anticipate our donor base, rental income, and programming will grow to become increasingly established and dependable sources of revenue supporting the organization in the longer-term.

At this stage, we anticipate taking a \$150,000 angel loan to cover the cost of building materials and contractor-required work, noted in the expenses byline below. We have assumed a good deal of community help in the process of revitalizing the building, listed in the “in-kind donations” line, above. Given that our friend networks include many skilled tradespeople and we have strong experience mobilizing “work parties” of volunteers to accomplish great things, we think these numbers are within the bounds of realistic.

With regard to programming, we expect that a religious education pilot being developed from within Mifneh’s educational portfolio could rent and regularly use the building for courses, spiritual gatherings, and the like, serving as an “anchor tenant” and providing a stable ongoing

source of revenue. Due to the expected timing of building maintenance work, we don't anticipate being able to offer the school space in the first year, but do anticipate this could launch in FY25/26. This accounts for the large leap in rental income we are assuming between years one and two.

The rest of the numbers flow as you might expect, and we welcome feedback and clarifying questions on any other assumptions we have made herein.

Expense

	FY24/25	FY25/26	FY26/27
Deferred Maintenance, Repairs, & Improvements	100,000	25,000	5,000
Staff Payroll	50,000	75,000	100,000
Payroll Taxes	7,650	11,475	15,300
Workers Comp Insurance	1,000	1,550	2,100
Contract Services	5,000	8,000	8,000
In-Kind Labor	50,000	20,000	15,000
Non-Personnel Expenses	5,000	20,000	25,000
Utilities	15,000	17,500	20,000
Property & Liability Insurance	3,800	3,950	4,200
Programming	1,000	10,000	25,000
Marketing	5,000	5,000	5,000
Community Relations	1,500	1,500	1,500
Consulting	6,000	6,000	6,000
Loan Repayment		15,000	15,000
Totals	250,950	219,975	247,100

Notes on Expenses: As the building improvement projects slow down after year one, we anticipate a corresponding decrease in direct (mostly material) expenses related to the building, although we continue to anticipate in-kind contributions (skilled friends and volunteers helping with projects) to remain an important aspect of operations for some time. Most other items flow as we think you might imagine, and again, we welcome feedback and clarifying questions.

Running P&L (Savings)	49,050	49,075	71,975
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Conclusions & Thanks

We hope that this document addresses many of your questions about who we are, and paints a picture of the future we could create for the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House and the surrounding central Maine community that this space served for over 200 years.

We are deeply grateful for the process of discernment that has accompanied our interest in the Meeting House to date. Our conversations with NEYM representatives and with each other have helped crystalize a vision for our emerging collaborative project, nVolution, that feels, to us, alive, powerful, and spiritually engaged.

We are excited to collaborate and explore with you, and to continue conversations on questions both spiritual and logistical. How does our vision align with your dreams for future stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House? What about this proposal is unclear or gives you pause? What do you find inspiring? What sparks your curiosity? What do you wish we'd thought to include?

We look forward with hope and gratitude toward ongoing dialogue and mutual discernment around future stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

-Dr. Sonja K. Birthisel & Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick

Education

University of Maine

PhD, 2018 | Ecology and Environmental Sciences | 3.98 GPA | Phi Kappa Phi
Dissertation: Multi-Tactic Ecological Weed Management in a Changing Climate

MS, 2013 | Ecology and Environmental Sciences | 4.00 GPA

Thesis: Sources of Variability in Agronomic Weed Seed Predation: Time, Space, Habitat, and Hyperpredation

Luther College

BA, 2010 | Biology, Mathematics minor | 3.77 GPA | Phi Beta Kappa

Research Experience

Faculty Associate

2020-Present, University of Maine

- Coordinated a multi-state working group on tarping and soil solarization for weed management
- Supervised student research on life cycle analyses of agricultural plastics and soil microplastics
- Served as a Special Projects Assistant studying natural climate solutions with the Daigneault Lab

Contract Scientist

Spring-Summer 2022, State of Maine

- Conducted an issue analysis and co-authored a scientific and technical report on behalf of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) as per LD 937.

Postdoctoral Research Associate

2019-2020, University of Maine (Daigneault Lab)

- Estimated the mitigation potential of natural climate solutions for the state of Maine
- Conducted farmer focus groups to understand barriers to adoption of soil health building practices
- Studied farmer 'mental models' and decision-making related to climate change in order to design tailored and effective outreach materials

Graduate Research Assistant

2015-2018, University of Maine (Gallandt Lab)

- Conducted stakeholder-driven field and laboratory research testing soil solarization and tarping for control of agronomic weeds, and investigated impacts of these practices on soil ecology
- Conducted on-farm surveys to identify weeds that are currently rare in Maine but could become increasingly problematic in a changing climate
- Created an educational computer game, WEEDucator, to teach beginning farmers about ecological weed management through interactive animations and simulation modeling
- Conducted a systematic review of the literature on ecological weed management and climate change

2011-2013, University of Maine (Gallandt Lab)

- Conducted on-farm field research to measure sources of variability in agronomic weed seed predation

Laboratory Assistant

Summer 2008, CAPE Technologies

- Ran protocols to test levels of dioxin in environmental samples; conducted R&D to streamline protocols

Publications

A.J. Chase, M.S. Erich, I.J. Fernandez, & **S.K. Birthisel** (2023). Evaluating the loss-on-ignition method to monitor changes in agricultural soil organic carbon over time.

S.K. Birthisel, R.S. Clements, & E.R. Gallandt (2021). Review: How will climate change impact the 'many little hammers' of ecological weed management? *Weed Research*.

R. Clements, **S.K. Birthisel**, A. Daigneault, E. Gallandt, D. Johnson, T. Wentworth, & M.T. Niles (2021). Climate change in the context of whole-farming systems: opportunities for improved outreach. *Climatic Change* 166 (40).

S.K. Birthisel, B.A. Eastman, A.R. Soucy, M. Paul, R.S. Clements, A. White, M.P. Acquafredda, W. Errickson, L-H. Zhu, M.C. Allen, S.A. Mills, G. Dimmig, & K.M. Dittmer (2020). Convergence, continuity, and community: a framework for enabling emerging leaders to build climate solutions in agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture. *Climatic Change* 162 (4).

S.K. Birthisel & E.R. Gallandt (2019). Trials evaluating solarization and tarping for improved stale seedbed preparation in the Northeast USA. *Organic Farming*.

S.K. Birthisel, G.A. Smith, G.M. Mallory, J. Hao, & E.R. Gallandt (2019). Effects of field and greenhouse solarization on soil microbiota and weed seeds in the Northeast USA. *Organic Farming*.

E.H. Roche, E.B. Mallory, & **S.K. Birthisel** (2019). Using farmer storytelling to build understanding of our "new weather reality." *Journal of Extension* 57 (5).

E.R. Gallandt, **S.K. Birthisel**, B.J. Brown, M. McCollough, & M.A. Pickoff (2018). Organic farming and sustainable weed control. Chapter 34 *in* *Weed Control: Sustainability, Hazards and Risks in Cropping Systems Worldwide*. N.E. Korres, N.R. Burgos, & S.O. Duke, eds. Science Publishers: Boca Raton, FL.

S.K. Birthisel (2018). Multi-tactic ecological weed management in a changing climate. PhD Thesis: University of Maine, Orono, ME. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/etd/2928/>

R.G. Smith, **S.K. Birthisel**, S.C. Bosworth, B. Brown, T.M. Davis, E.R. Gallandt, A. Hazelrigg, E. Venturini, & N.D. Warren (2018). Environmental correlates with germinable weed seed banks on organic farms across northern New England. *Weed Science* 66, 78-93.

S.K. Birthisel, E.R. Gallandt, R. Jabbour, & F.A. Drummond (2015). Habitat and time are more important predictors of weed seed predation than space on a diversified vegetable farm in Maine, USA. *Weed Science* 63, 916-927.

S.K. Birthisel, E.R. Gallandt, & R. Jabbour (2014). Habitat effects on second-order predation of the seed predator *Harpalus rufipes* and implications for weed seedbank management. *Biological Control* 70, 65-72.

S.K. Birthisel (2013). Sources of variability in agronomic weed seed predation: Time, space, habitat, and hyperpredation. Masters Thesis: University of Maine, Orono, ME. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/etd/2023/>

Teaching Experience

Instructor: Field Problems in Ecology & Environmental Sciences (EES 217)

May 2023, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Instructor for hands-on intensive travel and field study course

Instructor: Introduction to Sustainable Gardening

April 2022, Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens

- Developed and taught a mini-course on sustainable horticulture principles and practices

Co-Instructor: Plant Science (PSE 100)

Fall 2022, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Provided lesson plans and technical assistance to ensure success of this co-instructed course

Instructor: Human Populations and the Global Environment (EES 100)

Spring 2020, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Adapted and facilitated lectures, class activities, and assessments for a class of 150
- Supervised the work of a Teaching Assistant and two undergraduate Maine Learning Assistants

Instructor: Critical Issues in Environmental Policy / Capstone (EES 489)

Fall 2019, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Revised syllabus, developed class activities and assessments
- Provided mentorship for student Capstone projects

Instructor: Introduction to Ecology and Environmental Science (EES 117)

Fall 2019, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Facilitated skills-based seminar course

Instructor: Environmental Horticulture Capstone (PSE 430)

Spring 2019, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Developed syllabus, class activities, and assessments
- Provided mentorship for student Capstone projects

Teaching Assistant: Plant Taxonomy (BIO 464)

Fall 2018, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Facilitated one lab section and assisted with grading

Instructor: Cropping Systems (PSE 101)

Spring 2018, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Developed syllabus, writing labs, and assessments
- Coordinated lectures with co-Instructors and guest experts

Instructor: Plant Science (PSE 100)

Fall 2017, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Developed syllabus, lectures, labs, and assessments
- Lectured and facilitated three lab sections
- Supervised the work of a teaching assistant

Teaching Assistant: Principles of Sustainable Agriculture (PSE 105)

Falls 2015, 2016, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Guest lectured and assisted with grading

Teaching Assistant: Experimental Design (PSE 509)

Spring 2016, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Developed and taught unit on linear regression
- Assisted with lecturing and grading

Service Member: FoodCorps/AmeriCorps

2013-2014, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Bangor, ME

- Developed and taught K-12 garden-based nutrition and science lessons

Teaching Assistant: Plant Science (PSE 100)

Fall 2012, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Assisted with lab facilitation and guest lectured

Instructor: Microbiology and Wilderness Survival Skills

Summer 2012, Maine School of Science and Mathematics Science Camp, Limestone, ME

- Developed and taught week-long courses for middle school students

Teaching Assistant: Introduction to Biological Principles (BIO 100)

2007-2010, Luther College, Decorah, IA

- Assisted with laboratory instruction, grading, and tutoring

Advising & Student Engagement

Director

2020-present, The Wilson Center, Orono, ME

- Runs an independent nonprofit affiliated with University of Maine that offers students and the wider community opportunities to engage in spiritual exploration and multifaith dialogue
- Partners with University of Maine Office for Diversity and Inclusion, Student Life, and other on-campus partners to provide expertise and programming on religious diversity
- Serves on University of Maine President's Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Senior Honors Thesis Committee Member

2019-2023, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Co-chaired the committee of Bailey Lewis (2023)
- Served on the committees of Ashley Kayser (2020) and Sarah Meyer-Waldo (2021)

Member of Graduate Faculty

2018-2022, University of Maine

- Served on the committees of MS students Ruth Sexton Clements (2021) and Andrew Chase (2022)

Academic Adviser for Ecology and Environmental Sciences Program

2019-2021, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Provided tailored academic advising to up to 50 undergraduate students

Co-Coordinator for Graduate Student Climate Adaptation Partners (GradCAP) Program

2018-2019, USDA Northeast Climate Hub

- Co-coordinated pilot project to create a virtual consortium of graduate Scholars from across the Northeast USA working on climate adaptation in agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry

Adviser for EPSCoR Summer Research Internships

Summer 2015; 2016-2017, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Served as mentor to four high school student projects through UMaine's EPSCoR program
- Student Grace Smith co-authored a manuscript
- Student Ana Eliza Souza Cunha co-authored a peer reviewed outreach bulletin

Adviser for Summer Research Fellowship

Summer 2016, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Served as mentor for Swarthmore Biology major Gavriella Mallory's Summer Research Fellowship

Service Member with FoodCorps/AmeriCorps

2013-2014, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Bangor, ME

- Reached 1,900 students with garden and nutrition-related programming through activities implemented in classrooms, cafeterias, after school programs, and community events

Resident Counselor

2010-2011, Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, Aurora, IL

- Lived in residence hall with high school students; built community, enforced school policies, and mediated student disagreements
- Co-advised Theater Club

Awarded Grants (\$263,828 Total)

S.K. Birthisel & B. Gorelick (2023). Support for a Wilson Center Rabbi in Residence and Related Programming (three grants, totaling \$8,760). Jewish Community Endowment Associates.

S.K. Birthisel (2021-2023). Support for Interfaith Luncheon series (three grants, totaling \$5,880). Jewish Community Endowment Associates.

S.K. Birthisel (2022). Orono Contra Dance re-launch (\$800). Hamm Campus Activities Grants.

B. Katz & **S.K. Birthisel** (2022). Seed grant for a community garden at the Wilson Center (\$500). Maine Hunger Dialogues.

T. Shanteler & **S.K. Birthisel** (2022). Support for a Kosher commercial dishwasher at the Wilson Center (\$3,903). Jewish Community Endowment Associates.

S.K. Birthisel, S. Barker, J. Labouff, & S. Caron (2022). Leveraging our religiously diverse landscape toward community wellbeing (\$6,000). Interfaith Youth Corps.

J. Leopold & **S.K. Birthisel** (2021). Culture night series to expand DEI reach of community dinner series (\$1,000). Interfaith Youth Corps.

S.K. Birthisel, S. Ishaq, A. Smart, & E. Kinnebrew (2020). A working group on tarping and soil solarization (\$19,350). Northeast IPM Center Partnership Grant.

A. Daigneault, I. Fernandez, A. Weiskittel, **S.K. Birthisel**, H. Pingree, and S. Curran (2019). An integrated approach to quantifying the GHG mitigation potential of Natural Climate Solutions from Maine's working lands (\$132,174). United States Climate Alliance USCA Grant Program for NWL Research.

R. Dennet (2019). Maine Climate Resilience Training Program (\$29,787). Northeast SARE Partnership Grant ONE19-334.

A. Daigneault, I. Fernandez, C. Isenhouer, and **S.K. Birthisel** (2019). A Maine soil health initiative to enhance agricultural sustainability and mitigate climate change (\$22,981). Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions Sustainability Research Grant Program.

S.K. Birthisel & G.M. Mallory (2016). Impacts of soil solarization on soil microbial community and function (\$714). University of Maine School of Food and Agriculture Analytical Laboratory.

E.R. Gallandt, **S.K. Birthisel**, A.K. Hoshide, & D. Hiebeler (2016). A decision-aid to improve weed management on Maine organic farms (\$15,000). Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions Sustainability Research Grant Program.

S.K. Birthisel & E.R. Gallandt (2015). Soil solarization for enhanced weed control in vegetables (\$5,000). Maine Agricultural Center Research and Extension Grant Program.

S.K. Birthisel (2014). Annie's grants for gardens: Ridge View Community School outdoor classroom (\$2,500). Annie's Homegrown, Inc.

C. Greaves & **S.K. Birthisel** (2014). Fuel Up to Play 60 Grant: Ridge View Community School playground revitalization (\$2,400). Fuel Up to Play 60, LLC.

S.K. Birthisel (2012). The effects of vegetative cover on hyperpredation of weed seed predator *Harpalus rufipes* DeGeer (\$3000). MAFES Graduate Student IMP Initiatives Grant Program.

S.K. Birthisel (2012-2018). Graduate student travel and degree-related grants (six grants, totaling \$4,078). University of Maine Graduate Student Government.

Outreach Materials

B.J. Brown & **S.K. Birthisel** (2024). Seed-Eating Beetles, Solarization, and Climate Change, with guest Sonja Birthisel. Into The Weeds (New York State IPM) Podcast, available on Spotify.

N. Lounsbury & **S.K. Birthisel** (2023). Sonja Birthisel, Agroecologist & PhD from the University of Maine. Podcast interview for The Market Garden Podcast, available at: <https://notillmarketgardenpodcast.libsyn.com/sonja-birthisel-agroecologist-phd-from-the-university-of-maine>

S.K. Birthisel (2022). Tarping in the Northeast: A Guide for Small Farms. Northeast IPM Center IPM Toolbox Webinar, available at: <https://www.northeastipm.org/ipm-in-action/the-ipm-toolbox/tarping-in-the-northeast-a-guide-for-small-farms/>

N. Lounsbury, **S. Birthisel**, J. Lilley, & R. Maher (2022). Bulletin #1075, Tarping in the Northeast: A Guide for Small Farms. University of Maine Cooperative Extension, available at: <https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/1075e/>

A. Daignealt, E. Simons-Legaard, **S.K. Birthisel**, J. Carroll, I. Fernandez, & A. Weiskittel (2021). Final Report: Maine Forestry and Agriculture Natural Climate Solutions Mitigation Potential. University of Maine Center for Research on Sustainable Forests, available at: https://crsf.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/214/2021/08/UMaine-NCS-Final-Report_final_8.4.21.pdf

S.K. Birthisel (2020). Non-Chemical Weed Management. UNH Weed IPM Webinar Series presentation, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtnUArGx7Jg&feature=youtu.be>

S.K. Birthisel, E. Conover, & C. Gunderson (2020). Dance Your PhD: Multi-tactic ecological weed management in a changing climate. AAAS video contest entry, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBsyqzT4YWQ>.

S.K. Birthisel (2018). Rain, rain, go away: Effects of changing precipitation on days suitable for agricultural fieldwork. USDA Northeast Climate Hub GradCAP webinar presentation, available at: https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/sites/default/files/birthisel_final_web508.pdf.

S.K. Birthisel, E.R. Gallandt, & A.E. Souza Cunha (2018). Solarization and tarping for weed management on organic vegetable farms in the Northeast USA. eOrganic bulletin, available at: <https://articles.extension.org/pages/74713/solarization-and-tarping-for-weed-management-on-organic-vegetable-farms-in-the-northeast-usa>.

S.K. Birthisel, P. Rimkunas, J. Sullivan, & E.R. Gallandt (2017). WEEDucator: a digital tool for agricultural weed management education. Computer game prototype, available at: <https://skbirthisel.weebly.com/outreach.html>.

S.K. Birthisel, E.R. Gallandt, & E.M. Venturini (2017). Physical weed control: Managing weeds through hand weeding, cultivation, and flaming. UMaine Weed Ecology bulletin, available at: <https://skbirthisel.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/6/9/106960183/physicalweedcontrol.pdf>.

S.K. Birthisel & E.R. Gallandt (2017). Seedbank management: Managing weeds through germination, preemption, predation, and flaming. *UMaine Weed Ecology bulletin*, available at: <https://skbirthisel.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/6/9/106960183/seedbankmanagement.pdf>.

G.K. Landis, **S.K. Birthisel**, & E.R. Gallandt (2017). Weed management for beginning farmers: Principles for organic growing. *UMaine Weed Ecology bulletin*, available at <https://umaine.edu/weedecology/wp-content/uploads/sites/354/2017/10/beginningfarmers.pdf>.

A. Jones, **S.K. Birthisel**, R. Jabbour, F.A. Drummond, & D. Yarborough (2013). Carabidae (ground beetles) on Maine farms. *UMaine Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 196*. University of Maine, Orono, ME. Available at: <https://extension.umaine.edu/blueberries/factsheets/insects/insects-196-beneficial-insect-series-2-carabidae-ground-beetles-on-maine-farms/>.

Scholarly Presentations

S.K. Birthisel, B.J. Brown, & E.R. Gallandt (2019, February). Looking for 'rare' weeds of agronomic concern in a changing climate. Talk presented at Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, New Orleans, LA.

R. Sexton, **S.K. Birthisel**, & E.R. Gallandt (2018, November). Impacts of increasing precipitation on physical weed control. Poster presented at the Rutgers Climate Symposium, New Brunswick, NJ.

S.K. Birthisel (2018, August). Communicating within and beyond science. Graduate student workshop facilitated at American Society for Horticultural Science annual meeting, Washington, DC.

S.K. Birthisel (2018, August). Comparing solarization and tarping for weed management in the Northeast USA. Talk presented at American Society for Horticultural Science, Washington, DC.

S.K. Birthisel, E. Mallory, & E.H. Roche (2018, March). Farming in a new weather reality: Farmer stories from Maine. Talk presented at USDA Northeast Climate Hub meeting, New Brunswick, NJ.

S.K. Birthisel & E.R. Gallandt (2018, January). WEEDucator: A digital tool for organic weed management education. Talk presented at Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, Arlington, VA.

S.K. Birthisel & E.R. Gallandt (2017, February). Solarization in the Northeast: Effective weed control with transient effects on soil microbes. Talk presented at Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, Tucson, AZ.

S.K. Birthisel & E.R. Gallandt (2016, February). Solarization for improved stale seedbed preparation in the Northeast. Poster presented at the Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

S.K. Birthisel, E.R. Gallandt, R.G. Smith, S.C. Bosworth, A. Hazelrigg, & B.J. Brown (2015, August). Potential invasions and extirpations of rare agronomic weeds in northern New England. Poster presented at the Ecological Society of America annual meeting, Baltimore, MD.

R. Jabbour, **S.K. Birthisel**, F.A. Drummond, & E.R. Gallandt (2013, November). Habitat effects on granivore diversity and weed seed predation in a New England farmscape. Invited talk in Program Symposium "Impacts of Global Change on Biodiversity and Biological Control" at the Entomological Society of America annual meeting, Austin, TX.

S.K. Birthisel, E.R. Gallandt, R. Jabbour, & F.A. Drummond (2013, August). Comparing sources of variation in agronomic weed seed predation: Time, space, and habitat. Talk presented at the Ecological Society of America annual meeting, Minneapolis, MN.

S.K. Birthisel, E.R. Gallandt, R. Jabbour, & F.A. Drummond (2013, February). Variation in seed predation across a farmscape. Talk presented at the Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, Baltimore, MD.

S.K. Birthisel, E.R. Gallandt, & R. Jabbour (2013, February). Hyperpredation of seed predator beetle *Harpalus rufipes*. Poster presented at the Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, Baltimore, MD.

Press & Online Appearances (Partial List)

How to make your own mulch at home. **Bangor Daily News** article available at:

<https://bangordailynews.com/2020/06/09/homestead/yes-upcycled-diy-mulches-work-but-with-a-few-limitations/>

What you should know before you take a flamethrower to weeds. **Bangor Daily News** article available at: <https://bangordailynews.com/2020/06/02/homestead/what-you-should-know-before-you-take-a-flamethrower-to-weeds/>

The biggest mistake first-time gardeners make when mulching. **Times Herald-Record** article available at: <https://www.recordonline.com/story/lifestyle/2020/06/18/garden-careful-when-spreading-mulch/3177439001/>

This simple trick could rid you of your weed woes for good. **Bangor Daily News** article available at: <https://bangordailynews.com/2020/06/03/homestead/this-simple-trick-could-rid-you-of-your-weed-woes-for-good/?ref=most-popular>

Here's what works when it comes to natural weeding solutions. **Bangor Daily News** article available at: <https://bangordailynews.com/2020/05/23/homestead/heres-what-works-when-it-comes-to-natural-weeding-solutions/>

The easier way to make a garden bed. **New York Times** article available at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/24/realestate/the-easier-way-to-make-a-garden-bed.html>

Maine gardener: And you think you hate weeding now? **Portland Press Herald** article available at: <https://www.pressherald.com/2020/02/02/and-you-think-you-hate-weeding-now/>

Whether or not Roundup is safe, the gardener has better options. **Washington Post** article available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/home/whether-or-not-roundup-is-safe-the-gardener-has-better-options/2019/09/17/8ccb8a5e-ca95-11e9-a1fe-ca46e8d573c0_story.html

UMaine graduate student researchers attend GradCAP workshop. **UMaine News** release available at: <https://umaine.edu/news/blog/2019/04/01/umaine-graduate-student-researchers-attend-gradcap-workshop/>

Reducing weeds: A 101 on soil solarization. **A Way To Garden Podcast** episode available at: <https://awaytogarden.com/reducing-weeds-a-101-on-soil-solarization-with-sonja-birthisel/>

Sonja Birthisel will help you meet the beetles. **Portland Press Herald** article available at: <https://www.pressherald.com/2017/11/26/meet-the-beetles/>

That seed-eating ground beetle may be your garden's best friend. **Bangor Daily News** article available at: <https://bangordailynews.com/2018/04/12/homestead/that-seed-eating-ground-beetle-may-be-your-gardens-best-friend/>

How to solarize your garden for weed prevention. **Midwest Workshop & Garden** YouTube video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPQ40KFOGmU>

In the weeds. **UMaine Today** YouTube video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYurDLnsDOM>

Other Presentations

S.K. Birthisel (2022, September). How Can We Be Honest Brokers in an Honestly Broken System? Invited Seminar at The Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions, Orono, ME

S.K. Birthisel & I. Peterson (2020, November). Effort to Shut Down the Last New England Coal Plant. Invited Talk at NHCUC New England Environmental Justice Youth Summit, Zoom.

S.K. Birthisel (2020, January). Soil Solarization and Tarping for Improved Stale Seedbed Preparation. Invited talk at Empire State Producers Expo, Syracuse, NY.

S.K. Birthisel (2020, January). Weed Management in a Changing Climate. Invited talk at Maine Agricultural Trades Show, Augusta, ME.

S.K. Birthisel (2019, December). Organic Weed Management in a Changing Climate. Invited talk at New England Vegetable & Fruit Conference, Manchester, NH

S.K. Birthisel (2019, November). Climate Change Adaptation Strategies. Workshop at MOFGA Farmer to Farmer Conference, Northport, ME

S.K. Birthisel (2019, October). Farmers' Tools & Resources. Invited classroom lecture and discussion for UMaine Climate Adaptation course, Orono, ME

R. Clements & **S.K. Birthisel** (2019, October). Sustainable Farming in a Changing Climate. Invited workshop for middle school girls at Expanding Your Horizons STEM event, Orono, ME.

S.K. Birthisel (2019, September). Seed predation: An ecosystem service on Maine farms. Invited classroom lecture at College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, ME.

S.K. Birthisel, R. Clements, & A. Daigneault (2019, September). Climate adaptation for Maine farms. Workshop at MOFGA Common Ground Country Fair, Unity, ME.

E.H. Roche, **S.K. Birthisel**, & G. Koehler (2019, August). Introduction to the Maine Climate and Agriculture Network. Invited talk at Maine AGCOM meeting, Augusta, ME.

S.K. Birthisel (2019, April). Adapting Maine farms to climate change. Invited talk at Merryspring Nature Center, Camden, ME.

E. Mallory, B. Tooley, & **S.K. Birthisel** (2019, March). Farming in a changing climate. Invited lecture for Aroostook Soil and Water Conservation District Winter Ag School, Houlton, ME.

S.K. Birthisel (2019, January). Clear plastic for weed solarization. Invited talk at Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association Mulching and Tarping Conference, Fairlee, VT.

S.K. Birthisel & E.H. Roche (2019, January). Weather tool show and tell. Workshop at the Maine Agricultural Trades Show, Augusta, ME.

- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, December). Global and US perspectives on climate change and agriculture. Invited lecture for UMaine Principles of Sustainable Agriculture class, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, November). Soil solarization. Invited lecture for UMaine Organic Matter Management class.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, September). Ground beetles! Invited workshop at MOFGA Common Ground Country Fair, Unity, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, September). Dichotomous keys and why we use them. Invited workshop for UMaine Weed Biology and Identification class, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, September). Choosing hand tools that work for you. Invited demonstration at UMaine Master Gardener Field Day, Old Town, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, July). Solarization and tarping for weed management. Invited talk at UMass Extension Organic Weed Management Field Day, North Easton, MA.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, May). Weed seedbank management. Invited lecture at Eastern Maine Orchid Society Meeting, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2017, November). Role of predatory ground beetles in weed seed predation. Invited lecture as part of Xerces Society short course on conservation biological control, Unity, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2017, November). Dirty weeds done dirt cheap: Coupling weed ecology and economics to aid farmer decision-making. Invited seminar at the Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions, Orono, ME.
- A. Daigneault, J. Jansujwicz, S. Roy, S. De Urioste-Stone & **S.K. Birthisel** (2017, November). A conversation about decision support tools (Moderator: L. Silka). Panel discussion at the Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2017, September). Seed predation. Invited classroom lecture at College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2017, February). Agronomic weeds and climate change: Scouting for potential invaders. Talk presented at Maine Climate and Agriculture Network Graduate Student Mini-Symposium, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** & E.R. Gallandt (2016, April). Soil solarization for weed management in a changing climate. Talk presented at Maine Climate and Agriculture Network Symposium, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2016, November). A decision-aid to improve the economic sustainability of Maine organic farms through improved weed management. Lightning talk presented at Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions Seminar, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2016, September). Managing weeds with soil solarization & occultation. Talk presented to visiting beginning farmers and Purdue Cooperative Extension personnel, Old Town, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2016, August). Mechanistic differences between soil solarization and occultation for weed control. Talk presented to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Old Town, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2016, July). Soil solarization and occultation for weed management. Talk presented at UMaine Sustainable Agriculture Field Day, Old Town, ME.

S.K. Birthisel (2016, May). Organic weed management in a changing climate. Talk presented during FoodCorps Graduate Research Symposium Webinar.

S.K. Birthisel & E.R. Gallandt (2016, April). Soil solarization for weed management in a changing climate. Talk presented at UMaine Climate Change and Agriculture Symposium, Orono, ME.

E.R. Gallandt, B.J. Brown & **S.K. Birthisel** (2015, September). Climate change and weed management. UMaine Climate Change and Agriculture Symposium, University of Maine, Orono, ME.

S.K. Birthisel (2015, July). Managing weeds with soil solarization. Talk presented at the UMaine Sustainable Agriculture Twilight Tour, Old Town, ME.

T.K. Fogler, K.M. Brown, **S.K. Birthisel**, & E. Ripley (2015, February). STEM Hub teen science café. Panel discussion for the Dexter-Dover-Guilford STEM Hub, Dexter, ME.

S.K. Birthisel (2013, June). Ecological weed management. Workshop presented at two Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association Farmer Training Project events, Orono, ME and Brunswick, ME.

S.K. Birthisel (2012, March). Hand weeding tools for the small-scale vegetable gardener. Workshop presented at the Maine Rural Living Day, Thorndike, ME.

Scholarships & Awards

- Community Solidarity Award, 2023, Food AND Medicine
- Gulf of Maine 2050 Scholarship, 2019, Gulf of Maine Research Institute
- Fiore Art Center Academic Writing Residency Award, 2019, Maine Farmland Trust
- Distinguished Nominee for Edith Patch Award, 2019, UMaine Edith Patch Award Committee
- Outstanding Service Award, 2018, UMaine College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, & Agriculture
- Samuel L. Boucher Horticulture Education Scholarship, 2018, UMaine School of Food and Agriculture
- Student eOrganic Article Competition Winner, 2018, American Society for Horticultural Science Organic Interest Group
- Outstanding Contribution to Sustainability Research by a Graduate Student, 2017, Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions
- Correll Fellowship, 2015, UMaine Ecology and Environmental Sciences Program
- Sarah Jane White Spruce Memorial Scholarship, 2015, UMaine School of Food and Agriculture
- Graduate Student Travel Award, 2013, Weed Science Society of America
- Regent Scholarship, 2006-2010, Luther College

Other Academic & Community Service

- Member of the Maine Bureau of Labor Education Advisory Board (2023-present)
- Member of the Maine Rail Group Board (2023-present)
- Member of ISO-NE Consumer Liaison Group Coordinating Committee (2022-present)
- President of The Sacred Tribe Board of Directors (2022-present)
- Member of the Orono Town Council (2022-present)
- Member of the Board of Food AND Medicine (2022-present)
- Faculty Adviser for Maine Peace Action Committee (2020-present)
- Volunteer with the Maine People's Alliance (2020-present)
- Teacher for Young Adults With Pizzaz youth program (2019-present)
- Member of Church of Universal Fellowship Board of Trustees (2019-present)
- Member of Maine Climate and Agriculture Network (2016-present)
- Contra dance caller (2016-present)

- Instructor for Our Whole Lives comprehensive sexuality education program (2015-present)
- Faculty Adviser for UMaine Interfaith Group (2021-2022)
- Member of the Epic Skill Swap organizing committee (2018-2022)
- Editorial Board Member for Spire: the Maine Journal of Conservation and Sustainability (2019-2020)
- Interim Coordinator of Maine Climate and Agriculture Network (Fall 2019)
- Member of UMaine Friends of the Herbarium Society (2016-2019)
- Coordinator for Wilson Center SCOPE Community Service Grants Program (2017-2018)
- Coordinator for Dorothy Clarke Wilson Peace Writing Prize (2017-2018)
- Garden caretaker for the Wilson Center at UMaine (2017-2018)
- Member of Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast planning committee (2017-2018)
- Faculty Sponsor for UMaine undergraduate AcroYoga club (2016-2017)
- Organizer of Bangor Blues monthly dance series (2016)
- Member of UMaine Witter Research Center Farm Manager hiring committee (Spring 2016)
- Member of UMaine Ecology and Environmental Sciences seminar committee (2012-2013)

Affiliations & Certifications

- Cooperative Extension Tractor Safety certification
- Cooperative Extension Master Gardener
- ServSafe Manager certification

Selected Education

Jewish Spiritual Leadership Institute, New York, NY

- Rabbinic Ordination, 2019
 - Beit Deिन: Rabbi Monte Sugarman, Rabbi Reuven Silverman, Rabbi Steven Blane
 - Thesis: *Psychedelics and Judaism*

ALEPH: The Alliance for Jewish Renewal, Philadelphia, PA

- Jewish Spiritual Director Certification Program, 2018
 - Thesis: *Transcendent Practice in Modern Kabbalah*

Davvenen' Leadership Training Institute, Falls Village, CT

- Jewish Service Leadership Certificate Program, 2017

Wilderness Education Association, Black Mountain, NC

- Program Assessor Trainer, 2011

Alaska Pacific University, Anchorage, AK

- MS, Chemical Engineering, 2002
 - Thesis: *Synthetic Control of Intrinsic Ground State Defects in a Mixed Valence Quasi-One-Dimensional Sodium Crystal Chain*
- MS, Chemistry, 2002
 - Thesis: *Ultrafast Vibrational Dynamics in a Quasi-One-Dimensional System*
- BS, Chemical Engineering, 1999
- BS, Chemistry, 1999
- BS, Environmental Science, 1999

Key Skills

- **Educational Leadership:** Extensive experience in leading educational institutions and programs, with a focus on transformative and experiential learning.
- **Curriculum Development:** Proficient in designing innovative and comprehensive curricula, blending traditional and modern educational theories.
- **Experiential Learning Techniques:** Proficient in creating immersive learning experiences, utilizing innovative techniques to enhance student engagement and understanding.
- **Assessment Design & Analysis:** Skilled in developing and implementing effective assessment strategies, including competency-based and portfolio models.
- **Interdisciplinary Teaching:** Skilled in integrating various disciplines such as Kabbalah, quantum mechanics, and modern educational methodologies for a holistic teaching approach.
- **Program Design & Implementation:** Expertise in conceptualizing and executing educational programs that combine academic rigor with real-world application.
- **Strategic Planning & Execution:** Demonstrated ability in strategic visioning, planning, and execution, ensuring alignment with educational goals and institutional growth.
- **Community Engagement & Collaboration:** Strong background in fostering community relationships and collaborative educational environments across diverse cultural and spiritual settings.
- **Mentorship & Faculty Development:** Experienced in mentoring educators and developing faculty capabilities to foster a progressive and dynamic educational workforce.
- **Inclusion & Diversity Advocacy:** Committed to creating inclusive learning environments, emphasizing respect and accommodation for diverse student needs.

Selected Professional Experience

The Wilson Center, University of Maine

Rabbi-in-Residence, 2023-2024 Academic Year

- **Innovative Program Development:** Pioneered the creation and implementation of a unique Coming-of-Age program, seamlessly integrating educational elements from diverse spiritual traditions such as Kabbalah, Hinduism, Sufism, the I-Ching, and Western Gnostic practices, tailored to the diverse needs of the University of Maine community.
- **Pastoral Care and Student Support:** Provided comprehensive pastoral care, offering essential guidance and emotional support to students and staff, enhancing the Center's supportive environment.
- **Multifaith Worship and Inclusivity:** Designed and led inclusive multifaith worship services, fostering a campus atmosphere of spiritual inclusivity and active interfaith dialogue, contributing to a broader understanding and respect among various faith communities.
- **Cultural and Religious Event Coordination:** Organized and executed significant Jewish ceremonies and cultural events, enriching the campus's religious and cultural landscape, and promoting cultural awareness and diversity.
- **Interfaith Educational Collaboration:** Co-taught and facilitated a range of multi-faith educational programs, encouraging mutual understanding and collaborative learning among students from different religious backgrounds, aligning with contemporary interfaith educational practices.

Mifneh L'Kedushah – A School of Transcendence, Multiple Locations Across the USA

Executive Director, 2018-Present

- **Innovative Curriculum Design:** Developed and implemented a unique curriculum integrating Kabbalistic teachings with modern educational techniques, enhancing students' personal growth and spiritual understanding.
- **Strategic Leadership in Educational Programming:** Spearheaded the overall strategic vision, fostering the school's expansion and aligning educational objectives with comprehensive personal development goals for children.
- **Assessment and Engagement Strategies:** Crafted and utilized novel assessment tools to measure student engagement and intellectual progress, ensuring a deep, experiential understanding of key concepts.
- **Experiential Learning and Capstone Projects:** Guided students in creating and presenting Bar or Bat Mitzvah projects, emphasizing these as capstone experiences that reflect their holistic learning journey and personal growth.
- **Collaborative Partnerships for Educational Enhancement:** Established and nurtured partnerships with various academic institutions and community organizations, broadening the educational scope and fostering a collaborative learning environment.
- **Faculty Development and Teaching Methodology Innovation:** Led initiatives for faculty development, focusing on innovative teaching methodologies to effectively communicate complex spiritual concepts in an accessible manner.
- **Community Building and Inclusivity:** Actively promoted and facilitated community-building activities, creating a nurturing and inclusive educational setting that encourages exploration and application of spiritual principles.

The Sacred Tribe, Denver, CO

Congregational Rabbi, 2020-2023

- **Leadership in Worship and Ceremonial Services:** Orchestrated diverse religious services and ceremonies, ensuring they were meaningful and engaging, contributing to the spiritual wellbeing of the congregation.
- **Pastoral Care and Spiritual Guidance:** Provided comprehensive pastoral care and spiritual counseling, supporting community members through various life stages and challenges, fostering a supportive and nurturing environment.
- **Educational Program Development:** Developed and implemented a wide range of educational programs tailored to different demographics, including innovative adult education initiatives and youth engagement activities, enhancing the congregation's learning experience.
- **Interfaith Dialogue and Outreach:** Led interfaith dialogues and community outreach initiatives, building and strengthening relationships both within the Jewish community and with other faith groups, promoting understanding and collaboration.
- **Religious, Social, and Educational Enrichment:** Played a key role in overseeing and enriching the congregation's religious, social, and educational activities, ensuring a vibrant and dynamic community life.

Congregation Bet Ha'am, South Portland, ME

Executive Director, 2017-2019

- **Educational Program Development:** Spearheaded the development and implementation of innovative adult and youth education programs, aligning them with the human skills curriculum from my dissertation, focusing on personal growth, community engagement, and holistic development.

- **Strategic Leadership in Educational Operations:** Directed comprehensive synagogue operations, with a special focus on educational initiatives, strategic planning, and community-building.
- **Collaborative Growth and Outreach:** Worked closely with the Board of Trustees, staff, and volunteers, as well as the larger Jewish community, fostering organizational growth and enhancing community outreach, particularly through educational programs.
- **Revenue Growth through Educational Initiatives:** Drove a successful growth initiative, significantly increasing program attendance and volunteer engagement, particularly in educational offerings, leading to exceeded revenue and participation targets.
- **Staff Development with a Competency and Portfolio Based Framework:** Created and administered a personnel development plan focused on enhancing educational competencies among staff, including performance metrics, training programs, and assessment tools, leading to improved team performance and educational delivery.

The Mountain Guide School, Multiple International Locations

Director, 2005-2016

- **Curriculum Innovation and Technical Education:** Established an accredited 4-year technical college with a groundbreaking curriculum that seamlessly integrated technical skills training with comprehensive human skills development.
- **Competency-Based Educational Framework:** Designed and implemented a comprehensive, portfolio-based competency model for the objective assessment of human skills, incorporating behavioral indicators and thresholding concepts to ensure student competence.
- **Human Skills Integration in Technical Training:** Innovated in the field of technical education by incorporating behavioral economic theory and outcome-aligned heuristics, enhancing student decision-making and leadership capabilities.
- **Global Collaboration and Accreditation:** Fostered international collaboration and accreditation by partnering with government agencies, training organizations, and industry leaders in 11 countries and 4 languages, enhancing the school's global presence and curriculum validity.
- **Diverse Team Leadership and Inclusivity:** Managed a diverse team of 7 administrators and 58 instructors, focusing on multicultural education and inclusivity across global campuses, and overseeing the development of over 180 students.
- **Financial and Operational Management:** Demonstrated financial leadership by managing a \$7.2 million annual budget, ensuring financial sustainability and transparency in a multi-country operation.
- **Strategic Growth and Marketing Initiatives:** Drove the strategic expansion of the college, utilizing various media channels to enhance reach and market presence, resulting in significant growth in program attendance and global recognition.

The Wilderness Education Association, Black Mountain, NC

Director of Curriculum and Accreditation, 2012-2014

- **Curriculum Development and Accreditation:** Spearheaded the development and implementation of comprehensive accreditation standards for Outdoor Leadership programs at 38 universities globally, enhancing the quality and consistency of educational experiences.
- **Collaboration and Standardization:** Worked closely with academic institutions to establish and uphold rigorous educational standards, focusing on continuous improvement and excellence in outdoor leadership training.
- **Assessment Process Design:** Developed a robust process for assessing schools, creating criteria and methodologies to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of their outdoor leadership curriculums.
- **Accreditation Framework Development:** Pioneered the construction of a detailed accreditation framework, defining benchmarks for educational excellence and compliance, ensuring high standards across all participating institutions.
- **Implementation and Monitoring of Standards:** Oversaw the implementation of these new standards and frameworks, regularly monitoring and providing feedback to institutions, ensuring adherence to the established guidelines and continuous improvement in curriculum delivery.

Selected Projects

The Art Paradigm

Co-Facilitator, December 2022 to April 2023

- **Innovative Program Development:** Co-developed "The Art Paradigm," a 10-week immersive program uniquely blending artistic, spiritual, and professional elements to guide participants towards meaningful and financially stable work.

- **Curriculum Design and Concept Integration:** Crafted the program structure to delve into the interplay between spirituality, art, and business, addressing critical themes like the influence of money and desire in creative endeavors and the development of a personal creative process.
- **Dynamic Learning Experiences:** Created and facilitated a range of interactive educational experiences, including workshops, small group tutorials, and daily audio content, to deeply engage participants in exploring these paradigms.
- **Holistic Teaching Approach:** Employed a comprehensive teaching methodology that combined personal storytelling, examination of diverse narratives (artistic, spiritual, business), and practical applications to the participants' professional and personal lives.
- **Community-Centric Learning Environment:** Cultivated a collaborative learning atmosphere, fostering peer interactions, discussions, and reflective practices through platforms like Voxer, enhancing community support and dialogue.
- **Participant Empowerment and Outcome Focus:** Guided participants towards a practical understanding and application of an artistic approach in their professional life, aiming to enhance personal fulfillment, creativity, and financial insight.

Mussar

Creator and Facilitator, August to October 2022

- **Innovative Program Design:** Developed a unique three-month program that uniquely combined the Jewish philosophy of Mussar with quantum mechanics principles, aiming to foster personal growth and a deeper understanding of life's interconnectedness.
- **Holistic Educational Approach:** Merged ethical teachings from Mussar with advanced quantum mechanics concepts, creating a comprehensive curriculum for self-improvement and enhanced worldview comprehension.
- **Personal Growth Tracking:** Implemented a behavioral indicator/portfolio system, enabling participants to systematically track and assess their development in ethical character traits and personal growth.
- **Narrative Learning Techniques:** Utilized storytelling as a central teaching method, facilitating a richer understanding of complex philosophical and scientific ideas through relatable narratives.
- **Emphasis on Transformation:** Encouraged participants to engage in self-reflection, linking their life experiences with the program's teachings, thereby promoting personal transformation aligned with ethical and scientific insights.
- **Interactive Learning Environment:** Fostered an immersive and active learning setting where participants discussed, participated in workshops, and practiced reflective exercises, applying the program's teachings to their own spiritual and personal paths.
- **Development Portfolio Creation:** Guided participants in creating their own growth portfolios, documenting their journey of transformation during the program and establishing a basis for ongoing personal development.

Shalom Maine

Co-Founder, 2018

- **Innovative Educational Integration:** Initiated and led the formation of an organization dedicated to harmonizing adult education across six synagogues from diverse Jewish denominations (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox), fostering a comprehensive and inclusive educational landscape.
- **Collaborative Educational Platform:** Orchestrated efforts to create a diverse and inclusive educational platform, bridging denominational gaps and bringing varied Jewish traditions and perspectives together.
- **Resource and Curriculum Sharing:** Facilitated the exchange of resources, educators, and curricula among participating synagogues, significantly enhancing the quality and diversity of educational experiences available to adult learners in the Jewish community.
- **Diverse Educational Offerings:** Curated and developed a broad spectrum of educational programs, catering to various interests and observance levels, ranging from traditional Torah study to contemporary Jewish thought and ethics.
- **Inter-Denominational Dialogue:** Fostered dialogue and understanding across denominations, establishing a unique learning environment where members of different Jewish communities could mutually enrich their knowledge and perspectives.
- **Special Events and Lecture Series:** Organized joint events and lecture series featuring esteemed speakers and educators, showcasing the depth and diversity of Jewish learning, scholarship, and thought.
- **Adaptive Teaching Methods:** Implemented progressive teaching methods and approaches, including online classes and interactive workshops, to reach a wider audience and accommodate evolving educational preferences and styles.

The Passover Experience

Director, January to April 2017

- **Immersive Theatrical Production:** Spearheaded an 8-day interactive theater program, meticulously designed to

emotionally parallel the Passover story, guiding participants through an experiential 3-hour journey.

- **Emotional Journey Design:** Crafted the experience to navigate through six key emotional stages - helplessness, bondage, terror, liberation, gratitude, and creation - offering a deep, comprehensive exploration of the Passover narrative.
- **Innovative Storytelling Techniques:** Employed cutting-edge theatrical and storytelling methods, deeply engaging participants and enabling them to intimately experience the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the Passover story.
- **Interactive Set Creation:** Developed a series of vivid, interactive sets and scenarios, symbolically tracing the Israelites' journey from slavery to freedom, significantly enhancing the overall immersive quality of the program.
- **Collaborative Artistic Effort:** Collaborated with a diverse team of actors, musicians, and artists, bringing the Passover story to life with a blend of historical authenticity and creative flair.
- **Reflective Discussions Facilitation:** Led reflective debriefing sessions post-experience, encouraging participants to process their experiences and relate the themes of freedom and redemption to their personal life narratives.

Unction

Director, October 2021

- **Innovative Retreat Leadership:** Conceptualized and led a unique three-day spiritual retreat that creatively combined storytelling, personal transformation, and Jewish teachings in a serene mountain setting near Denver, offering a unique educational experience.
- **Immersive Educational Sessions:** Facilitated immersive sessions inspired by the rich narratives and teachings of Judaism, utilizing the art of storytelling to impart deep spiritual lessons and insights.
- **Guided Personal Reflection:** Conducted sessions that encouraged personal reflection and introspection, helping participants draw connections between personal stories, Jewish faith, and traditional themes, fostering a deeper understanding and personal growth.
- **Integration of Mystical Teachings:** Seamlessly incorporated Kabbalistic principles, guiding attendees in exploring these mystical teachings as pathways to deeper spiritual understanding and connection.
- **Empowerment and Self-Discovery:** Motivated participants to explore and discover their own "Unction" or sacred purpose in life, leading them on a transformative journey of self-discovery and spiritual enlightenment.
- **Community and Supportive Environment:** Created and maintained a safe and nurturing environment, encouraging individuals to connect deeply with themselves and others, thereby fostering a sense of community and collective spiritual exploration.

Building the Whole Human: A Professional Development Series

Creator and Lead Instructor, Annually from 2010 through 2016

- **Comprehensive Educator Training Program:** Developed and led a six-month training program, covering a wide range of teaching competencies and methodologies, tailored to modern educational needs.
- **Fundamentals of Education Training:** Delivered in-depth training sessions on core principles of contemporary educational theory and practice, establishing a strong foundational knowledge base for participants.
- **Advanced Curriculum Design Workshops:** Facilitated specialized workshops in advanced curriculum design, empowering educators to create engaging, effective, and adaptable educational plans.
- **Assessment Techniques Best Practices:** Integrated best practices in student assessment, instructing educators on designing, implementing, and analyzing various assessment methods.
- **Innovative Teaching Strategies:** Concentrated on cutting-edge pedagogical strategies, equipping teachers with the skills to foster dynamic, interactive, and student-centered learning environments.
- **Mentorship Skills Development:** Introduced a mentorship module, training educators in effective mentorship practices to promote professional growth and development within educational communities.
- **Inclusion and Diversity Focus:** Emphasized the importance of inclusive teaching, providing educators with practical tools and strategies to create diverse and accommodating learning environments for all students.

Move

Director, June and July 2016

- **Interdisciplinary Art Installation Leadership:** Co-created a distinctive 10-day art installation in Ireland, collaborating with a Buddhist monk and a Pagan/Celtic priestess, focusing on the creative synthesis of diverse spiritual and cultural expressions.
- **Innovative Visual Artistry:** Developed "light tapestries" as a central visual feature, intricately blending patterns of light with fabric to create visually captivating displays, demonstrating a unique approach to artistic expression.
- **Dynamic Performance Integration:** Seamlessly incorporated live music and dance performances into the installation,

providing an engaging and immersive experience for audiences, showcasing the ability to create dynamic learning environments.

- **Contemplative Space Design:** Thoughtfully designed the installation as an intimate and reflective space, inviting attendees to explore the rich intersections of different spiritual traditions through art, enhancing their understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures.
- **Artistic Mediums Fusion:** Orchestrated a harmonious integration of various artistic forms – light, music, and dance – each element synergistically contributing to the overall aesthetic and thematic impact of the installation.
- **Community Building and Spiritual Exploration:** Fostered a communal atmosphere, enabling attendees to engage in shared spiritual exploration and connect with diverse cultural and religious practices, emphasizing the importance of community in learning experiences.

Selected Presentations, Conferences, and Teachings

Transcendent Curriculum Design

Darkhei Rephua, 2021

Divergent Thought

Darkhei Rephua, 2020

Transcendent Practice in Modern Kabbalah

The Kabbalah Center, 2020

Most of All, I Want My Child to be a Good Person

Limmud Boston, 2018

Limmud Chicago, 2018

Limmud New Orleans, 2018

Limmud Seattle, 2018

Limmud, Boston, 2017

Using Behavioral Indicators in Adult and Children's Education

NewCAJE, 2018

The Six Elements of Spiritual Feedback

Limmud Chicago, 2017

Limmud Seattle, 2017

Using Behavioral Indicators to Assess a Human Based Competency Training Program

Corporacion Nacional Forestal, 2016

American Alpine Association, 2016

American Avalanche Association, 2015

Wilderness Education Association, 2015, 2014, 2013, and 2012