



The Jewish Community of Hamelin Newsletter

January 2017 • Tevet–Shvat 5777

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Dear members, friends and supporters,

We wish everyone a happy and healthy 2017!

Please remember to pay annual membership dues. The congregation depends on everyone to pay promptly in order to enable us to continue our work. Thank you! Please note our bank information:

Sparkasse Weserbergland, IBAN: DE47 2545 0110 0031 030380
BIC: NOLADE21SWB



This year is a very special one. The Jewish Congregation of Hameln, “Beitenu” will celebrate its 20th anniversary! Our congregation was established 20 years ago in 1997 with 18 men and women who had a dream and a hope to reestablish Jewish life in Hamelin. The conviction was to create a Jewish space in a country new to us all. It was an awesome task.

Who could imagine a stranger scenario—a Jewish American with three small children working with FSU Jews to build a Jewish community in Germany?

We came together, we met, we talked as best we could in a language none of us spoke well, we learned, we got to know each other and a group was formed. The Catholic Church St. Elisabeth gave us shelter for the first year. We grew. There were wishes to recreate a religious structure as had been known at home or as been heard about from elders or merely wanting a place to be together culturally. To most readers, this describes just about every congregation in the world.

We saw then and see ourselves now as the religious descendants of the congregation that came before us. We consciously decided to carry on the religious Reform tradition, which was celebrated in Hamelin until it was destroyed in 1938. We tried to emulate our predecessors and eventually in 2011, succeeded in rebuilding a synagogue on the very soil the Hamelin synagogue had stood when dedicated in 1879.

Everything we achieved, we achieved with and through the hands, minds and hearts of so many who were inspired by God. Jews and non-Jews, young and old, rabbis, organizations and people from Germany, the FSU, America, Israel, and Britain all were part of our tapestry. We are indebted and grateful to all those who helped build what we have today. In our 20th year we will celebrate our past, present and future and hope you will all take part.

The past 15 years we have been blessed having the rabbinic support and guidance of Rabbi Irit Shillor. She has decided to pass her pulpit on to Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg. Please enjoy the photo collage on page 2 from the Shabbat service where we said “Shalom-Shalom” to two amazing Jewish leaders, treasuring our past and welcoming our future. Excerpts from speeches and newspaper articles describing the evening follow.

Words of Farewell and Welcome

Rabbi Irit Shillor

“I have enjoyed working with you and feel grateful that you all became part of my life. It made me happy working here, learning together, laughing and crying together—through hard times and joyous moments. I thank each and every one of you that you were my congregation and will be Ulrike’s and for sharing tonight with me.”

Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg

“I am grateful to Rabbi Irit Shillor for the sound structure she is passing on to me. I promise that the Toldot, the story of the Jewish Congregation of Hameln will continue her example of a community of emancipated men and women, equal in every religious sense, sharing love of Torah and Jewish tradition as a guiding light toward the questions of a modern and progressive society.”



Congregational President Rachel Dohme

“Rabbi Shillor has helped guide and form our congregation for almost two decades. She came to us as a Leo Baeck rabbinical student in 1999 and stayed on after her S’micha in 2000, making monthly visits from her home in England until today. She has been a wise and just voice, helping individuals through joyous and trying times. She has made Judaism



accessible to those who were estranged from it, instructed our young people, bringing them to Bar and Bat Mitzvah, taught those who hungered for more knowledge, depth and understanding, brought Jews by Choice into our fold and offered non-Jews an opportunity to learn about our religious beliefs and culture. Her calm advice and analytical method solved many a problem and aided solutions in the design and building of our synagogue.

“We owe her so much and can never thank her enough for all she has done for this congregation. We are honored to bestow her with the title of Rabbi Emerita. We hope she will find time to visit us on occasion and know we will always have a special place in her heart and we have her in ours. With a tear and a smile we say L’hitraot Irit.

“No door closes without a new one opening and so it is with us. Today we welcome Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg as Rabbi Shillor’s spiritual successor. We are thrilled to have Rabbi Offenberg as our congregational rabbi. We look forward to working with this young rabbi who brings a deep knowledge and strong religiosity to the pulpit.”

Hans-Georg Spangenberg, Hamelin Society of Christians and Jews

“I wish to honor Irit Shillor for the work she has done guiding this congregation on its religious journey and spiritual development. You have offered your parishioners an open door to the depth and source of their Judaism. This is a huge task involving patience, respect and deep knowledge. It is the anchor to religious identity.”

Wolfhard F. Truchseß, *Deister und Weser Zeitung*

“The liberal Jewish congregation of Hameln bid their rabbi of 15 years, Rabbi Irit Shillor farewell and welcomed her spiritual successor, Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg. The religious ceremony was embedded in Shabbat services. Members and guests from England, the Netherlands and Israel were present for the festive and happy celebration.”

Christine Schmitt, *Jüdische Allgemeine Zeitung*

“More than 130 chairs were set up for the Shabbat and farewell service led by and for Rabbi Irit Shillor. Rabbi Shillor has led the Jewish Congregation of Hamelin for 15 years. Rabbis from Germany, the Netherlands, England and Israel, local politicians and local religious leaders joined together with congregational members to say thank you and goodbye to their rabbi and welcome her successor, Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg. President Rachel Dohme said, ‘It was a moving farewell and a happy welcome.’ Rabbi Offenberg praised the two women’s work by saying she believed the Hamelin congregation to be “a shining example of a European liberal congregation.”

Congregational Members

We wish to say thank you to our Rabbi Irit Shillor and thank her for her work with and for us. We are certain our future is in good hands with Rabbi Offenberg.

Jewish January

A Message from Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg

By now most of you have gotten to know me and I you. I thank Rabbi Shillor for the beautiful service in which she installed me as your new rabbi. I would like to present some ideas I hope to realize with you.

In the coming months, our congregation will celebrate its 20th anniversary. The congregation has grown up over the last two decades. The pains and strains of childhood and puberty lay behind us. The congregation stands steadfast. Our synagogue life involves observing the Jewish traditions, regular services and myriad social and cultural activities. We enjoy positive relationships with local government officials and excellent relations with other religious organizations in our city. The synagogue stands again. All these achievements are, in part, are the work of Rabbi Shillor. I wish to follow her lead and continue what she has established.

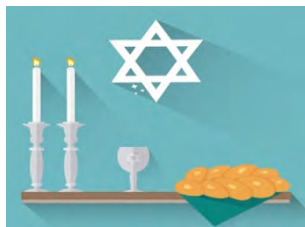
I will be with you two weekends a month and will continue our schedule of Shabbat and holiday services and Torah study. I wish to make working with families my priority. By this I mean religious education for the children, Hebrew lessons and Bnei Mitzvah preparation classes. I also hope to offer special Family Shabbat services several times a year.

During summer school vacation, I am planning a day camp for our children.

The older generation is just as important to me and I hope to make home visits, getting acquainted, hearing your thoughts, weaving your ideas into our communal life, and making our synagogue your focal point.

I am here for you and offer private and confidential pastoral care.

Let’s get started!



Services in January

Every week, 52 times a year, we Jews can celebrate a holiday—Shabbat. Observing this holiest of all days is even one of the Ten Commandments! Please join us for services with Rabbi Offenberg on January 13th and 27th weekends. Special prayers for January 27th will be added to Shabbat Vayera.

An old Jewish joke goes, “Levi goes to Shul to speak with God and Chayim goes to Shul to speak with Levi”—either way, we hope to see you there.

Hope and Return

The Jewish-Albanian family, Stelian, Denisa, Greta and Samuel are back! They have come home. The family wishes to express their gratitude to everyone who helped them to return to Germany.

The congregation and the office of the County Commissioner Mr. Tjark Bartels worked hard providing the German embassy in Albania with every document requested. (There were many!) Finally on November 14th, the family was given visas to enter Germany legally.

The young couple and their two children have now returned to their beloved community, can continue their conversion class and return to their workplaces. The children are happy to return to their kindergarten and elementary school and we are happy to have them with us.

If you'd like to help the family, contact Rachel Dohme.

Our Internet Presence

Those of you reading this newsletter in English are reading the internet version. The newsletter is also available in print form in [German](#) and [Russian](#) for members and supporters here in Germany. Many hours and many hands and heads go into producing this monthly informational newsletter. Keeping us online is no small expense for our small community of 90 percent Russian Jewish immigrants. We recognize the importance of this media tool in connecting and informing others of our congregational efforts and developments. And this newsletter has been the most efficient and successful outreach tool in our attempts to network internationally. Many new relationships have been established and built as a result of this newsletter and we are grateful to all involved. If you would like to help us stay online, please contact Rachel Dohme at racheldohme@jghreform.org. We appreciate any and all support!

Enjoy the collage of December's events and the new banner of pictures on our Web site at www.jghreform.org.

Refu'ah shlemah

We pray for the complete recovery of all who are ill, and everyone who is going through difficult times. We will recite Misheberach for them during services.



Donations — Tzedakah

We wish to thank Mrs. Zisckle-Henßen and her groups from the Seminar Center Ith, Mrs. Armbrecht, Mrs. Demuth, Rabbi Gábor Lengyl, Mr. Rinke, Mrs. Pfeiffer, Dr. Valentin Geletneky, Mrs. Gibas and the Dohme family.

We thank Mr. Uriel and Mrs. Dianne Schlair, USA.

May you all be blessed for your generosity.

Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg on her installment as our congregational rabbi.

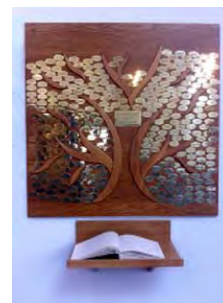
Mazel Tov to our former member, Lior Bar-Ami who assumes his rabbinical positions in Vienna and Toulouse.

Etz Chayim — Tree of Life

Winter is upon us but our tree needs to keep its leaves and add more. The Tree of Life offers our members, friends and supporters the opportunity for two mitzvot (good deeds) at once. One can commemorate special occasions, such as births, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, weddings, Yahrzeits and special honors and also support the maintenance of our synagogue.

New leaves added last month were donated from:

- Akadij Zyranov: "In memory of my son Dmitriy"
- Rabbi Irit Shillor: "Congregational rabbi Irit Shillor 2001-2016"
- Dohme family: "In beloved memory of Hanna and Johnny Jones"



Thank you — Todah Rabah

We thank everyone who help in making our holiday and cultural events very special. Our thanks go to everyone who plan and organize activities in our community.

January Yahrzeit

Chaja-Rachel Kruchkovitch January 1, 2003 / 26th Shevat 5763

Larissa Shapiro January 4, 2013 / 22nd Tevet 5773

May their memory be for a blessing. Please join family members during Sabbath services as we recite Kaddish. Yahrzeit candles are available in the office.



Shalom!

—The Congregation Board

Program for January 2017 • Tevet–Shvat 5777

Office hours: Monday, Wednesday & Friday: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; Tuesday & Thursday: 8.00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Friday, January 6	5:30 p.m.	Monthly Board Meeting
Monday, January 9	10:00 a.m.	Informational meeting for FSU members
Tuesday, January 10	4:00 p.m.	New Year's Reception
Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg		
Friday, January 13	3:00 p.m.	Bnei Mitzvah class
	4:00 p.m.	Kinder Kehilla
	5:30 p.m.	Friday night services
Saturday, January 14	10:00 a.m.	Saturday morning services
	12:30 p.m.	Torah study
	1:30 p.m.	Giyur class
Monday, January 16	1:00 p.m.	Lecture: "Dementia"
Sunday, January 22	3:00 p.m.	Video Afternoon: "Rabbi Wolff" with German and Russian subtitles
Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg		
Friday, January 27	3:00 p.m.	Bnei Mitzvah class
	4:00 p.m.	Kinder Kehilla
	5:30 p.m.	Friday night services
Saturday, January 28	10:00 a.m.	Saturday morning services
	12:30 p.m.	Torah study
	1:30 p.m.	Giyur class
Outside the synagogue		
Wednesday, January 11	8:00 p.m.	In cooperation with the Society of Christians and Jews, Film: "My Heart Dances" in the club "Sumpflume"

We wish all our members and families a healthy and happy 2017!

[Newsletter Archives](#)

Jewish Community of Hamelin

Member of the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany, the World Union of Progressive Judaism, and the Central Council of Jews of Germany

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