



## Dear members, friends and supporters,

Please remember to pay annual membership dues. The congregation depends on everyone to pay promptly to enable us to continue our work. Thank you!

Please note our bank information:

Sparkasse Weserbergland

IBAN: DE47 2545 0110 0031 030380

BIC: NOLADE21SWB



The month of April was a celebratory one in our congregation. Let's have a look what happened.

This year, 2017, is our twentieth year. Who could've believed in 1997 as Rachel Dohme and Polina Pelts met with recently immigrated FSU Jews that what they would establish that day in the rooms of the St. Elisabeth Catholic Church would change their lives and the religious landscape of their new home in Hamelin, Germany forever. The vision, love of Judaism and determination has more than paid off for that small group and the 200 members who would follow throughout the two decades. The city of Hamelin has been bettered with the establishment and development of our Reform congregation. Our congregation was blessed to have the hand of Rabbi Irit Shillor guiding us religiously through the years. The jewel of our vision was the construction and dedication on February 20, 2011, of the first Reform synagogue built in post-Shoah Germany, which stands on the very ground the city's synagogue stood until its destruction on November 9, 1938. The synagogue has become the focal point of our members' lives. The congregation has grown on many levels over the last twenty years. The members are secure in their faith, educated about their religious roots and active in all facets of congregational life. Some are drawn to opportunities for prayer, observance and religious study; others find their place in the liturgy, culture and history of our people; for others the accent is on social justice and community service. There are many ways to be Jewish.

It is also become a place where our non-Jewish neighbors can come and learn about Judaism, where dialog and encounter, and where healing can occur.

Sunday, April 2nd, provided the opportunity to gather together and celebrate this important milestone. Rachel Dohme and Polina Pelts welcomed everyone and shared their emotions on this special day. Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenbergl offered her thoughts on the anniversary. Although relatively new to our congregation, the successor to Rabbi Irit Shillor, she has quickly found her place on the bimah and in the hearts of our members. Her bi-monthly visits to a congregation are a further development in securing our congregation's stability.

The members produced a two-hour musical program and all were agreement: it could have gone on another two hours. Valerij Fridmann composed and performed a piece he wrote for the day, "We are here to stay," sung by Faina Pelts and Valerij Bogotchyk. Other performances were given by our synagogue choir, Svetlana Banschukova and Valerij Fridmann, a Ukrainian trio, and our Israeli dance troupe, "Chag Sameach." And that it was!

We thank Dora Bogachyk, Lymilla Zaychenko, Motel Dvortsis, Olga Gerr, Anya Anikina, Maria Bielau and Nadja Pesok and grandson Denis for the culinary delights that covered table after table—blinis, baked salmon, red beet salads, herring platters and cakes to make the most strong-willed dieters crumble.

A special treat were the photo gallery and videos of years gone by. We once again were reminded what a big Jewish family we are.

Borys Utchitel had a surprise for everyone. He had invested a year's work in researching and organizing a journal of our 20-year history. Every member was given a copy, and Borys was celebrated for this momentous achievement with a special certificate of recognition and gift certificate from the congregation.

Our twentieth year should not only be a celebration for us. We wish to reach out to our greater community too. On June 11th, we will open the synagogue doors and welcome everyone interested to the 1st Jewish Cultural festival in Hamelin. The mayor and county commissioner will be in attendance as will many church and civic leaders. We hope to offer a day of outreach, sharing our history, culture and religion with all who wish to come, see and learn. It will be an open-door day offering various sessions with Jewish music, Israeli dance, information about Israel, Hebrew language, an "Ask the Rabbi" booth, tours of the building, work from Jewish artists, a children's arts and crafts table, kosher food table and much more.



# Our Twentieth Anniversary





# Pesach



## **Chag Kasher v' Sameach! A happy and kosher Pesach!**

Rabbi Ulrike led us through this year's Seder on Monday evening, Erev Pesach, April 10th.

Our congregation joined Jews around the world on this "Festival of Freedom." Our Russian-Hebrew and German-Hebrew Haggadot allowed all present to re-tell and understand our story, as in every generation, with symbols from the Seder plate. The children asked the Four Questions, "Ma Nishtana," searched feverishly for the Affikomen, received their rewards and joined together in singing "Dayenu" and other Pesach melodies. It was loud and at times chaotic, happy and long, delicious and satisfying—a real family festival.

Our special thanks to the organization team, Liubow and Alex's unrivaled kitchen magic, and of course, Rabbi Offenberg with assistant Wladymr Pesok. One felt how happy Rabbi Ulrike was, leading us through the evening. So many people lent a hand and helped make the evening special as it is in a big family. This was noticed and appreciated by a group of guests from Berlin who chose to spend the holiday with us.

Wladimir Pesok led a Yom Ha Shoah service on April 24th, a day of deep sadness and remembrance of those who came before us. We recalled the 102 Jewish souls who never returned to their homes and synagogue in Hamelin. Their names are engraved in bronze as silent witnesses on the memorial walls outside our synagogue. Their names are at eye level and can be read, standing in front of the memorial. We owe it to them to remember them this way—eye to eye. The German project of Gunther Demning with the so-called "Stolpersteine" (Stumbling Stones) in which small brass name blocks are imbedded into the sidewalks of German towns and cities is abhorrent to us. The reality that these names are stepped upon, soiled and defaced. This is not how we, the Jewish congregation of Hamelin, wish our dead to be memorialized.

On Yom Ha Shoah our sanctuary was dimly lit with the flickering flames of six yellow candles, symbolizing the Six Million who were murdered in the Holocaust. Readings, prayers and song were carried softly through the sanctuary. The ceremony ended with Faina Pelts singing El Male Rachamin. The congregants slowly found their way home, deep in thought and visibly moved. We will never forget and will keep their memories alive in the lives we live here. We are honored to be their religious descendants.

## **Jewish May**

We will be observing Memorial Day on May 9th, the day Fascism was eradicated by the allied troops in 1945 and marked the formal acceptance by the Allies of World War II of Nazi Germany's armed forces unconditional surrender. We will honor and thank our veterans, who sacrificed so much to free the world of the tyranny of Nazism.

On Sunday, May 14th, we invite all our members to our annual Lag B'Omer picnic. Lag B'Omer is celebrated on the 33rd day between Pesach and Shavuot. The festival is traditionally celebrated with a picnic and barbeque outdoors. Kosher hotdogs and drinks will be provided, grilled perfectly by our grill masters. We ask everyone to bring a vegetarian dish to share. Let's hope that the sun shines on us when we meet in the garden of the Lutheran Church as we do every year.

Shavuot is the festival that goes hand in hand with Pesach. The two holidays belong together. Pesach celebrates our freedom from slavery and Shavuot celebrates the giving of the Law. Freedom without law or law without freedom would be hollow. We see once again that the Torah's teachings and wisdom has led the way to what we see as modern democratic thought.

Join Rabbi Ulrike as we celebrate this holiday and sit together for a Tikun ha Leila, an evening study session and a morning Shavuot service the following day.

The final meeting of the Inter-religious Women's Group will meet at 5:00 p.m. on May 31st. Rabbi Offenberg will offer a Torah reading and lead a discussion, in keeping with the spirit of Shavuot.

We wish to share our religious heritage while showing respect to those of other faiths and see this as part of our Reform tradition.

## **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 and we are grateful to all involved. If you would care to help us stay online, please contact Rachel Dohme at [racheldohme@jghreform.org](mailto:racheldohme@jghreform.org). We appreciate any and all support.

Enjoy the banner of pictures on our Web site at [www.jghreform.org](http://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. Gibas, Deacon Rissau-Klopper and his communion students and parents, Mrs. Elisabeth Pfeiffer and Rachel Dohme for donations in April. May you all be blessed for your generosity.

## Etz Chayim — Tree of Life

Spring has sprung! Add your leaf to our blossoming Tree of Life. 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.



## Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to our congregation on our twentieth year!

## 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.

## May Yahrzeit

Betja Khomer	May 8, 1997 / 1 Iyar 5757
Evgenia Benderscaia	May 24, 2001 / 2 Sivan 5761
Wladimir Rubanov	May 14, 2002 / 3 Sivan 5762
Sofia Kasplar	May 13, 2008 / 8 Iyar 5768
Felix Gurevic	May 1, 2014 / 1 Iyar 5774

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

[Newsletter Archives](#)

## Program for May 2017 • Iyar–Sivan 5777

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

Tuesday, May 9	4:00 p.m.	Memorial Day Celebration, Concert and festive meal
<b>Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg</b>		
Friday, May 12	3:00 p.m.	Bnei Mitzvah class
	4:00 p.m.	Giyur class
	5:30 p.m.	Friday night services
Saturday, May 13	10:00 a.m.	Saturday morning services and Torah study
	1:30 p.m.	Kinder Kehilla
Sunday, May 14	5:00 p.m.	Lag B'Omer Picnick Lutheran Reformed Church garden, Huguenottenstrasse Bring a vegetarian dish to share
<b>Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg</b>		
Tuesday, May 30	5:30 p.m.	Erev Shavuoth services. Please bring a dish made from milk products. Bnei Mitzvah class, Giyur class, Friday night services
Wednesday, May 31	10:00 a.m.	Shavuoth morning services and Torah study
	5:00 p.m.	Interreligious Womens Group. Part III: The Torah—a reading and discussion
<b>Outside the Congregation</b>		
Wednesday, May 10	7:00 p.m.	In cooperation with the Society of Christians and Jews, "Evil-Cowardice-War Criminals," Niklas Frank personal confrontation with his Nazi family, St. Elisabeth Catholic Church, Arntweg Hamelin

### 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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