



Dear members of the community, friends and supporters,

Spring has sprung here in Germany. The temperatures have become milder, the sky a little bluer, and the sun warmer. The first flowers are poking their heads out of the ground, and the birds are practicing their song and making nest repairs. The reawakening of nature instills us with hope, change and new life. We look forward to spring but first let's have a look at our February activities.



AGM

On February 3rd our annual general meeting took place. We began with a welcome to all in attendance and a moment of silence in memory of members who passed away last year. Chairwoman Rachel Dohme reported on the community's activities in 2018. Her report listed and described the diversity of our congregational life. After Olga Gerr's treasurer's report, auditors Aron Kaplan and Matwej Dvortsis found the synagogue books to be flawless.

Vice-chairwoman Polina Pelts has been prevented from continuing to work on the board due to serious illness, so it was necessary to vote for someone to take her seat on the board. Peter Wendt and Eva Schkolnikova offered their candidacy for the position. Chairwoman Dohme paid tribute to Polina Pelts's invaluable contribution to community life and described her as the "heart of the synagogue."

Peter Wendt was elected; the congregation congratulated him warmly and thanked Eva Schkolnikova for her interest. A copy of the meeting's minutes is available to members in the office. Questions about the financial report can be addressed and answered by our treasurer Olga Gerr.

Our 22nd Birthday

Children, young people and new members of our community probably take it for granted that our synagogue exists. But everything has its beginning and so it was for us too. On February 18, 1997, our Jewish community was founded, the first synagogue in Hamelin after the Shoah. As a religious community, we have since taken our place in the religious, cultural and social landscape of the city and the county, and continue to deepen our commitment to Reform Jewish life in all its versatility and pluralistic forms.

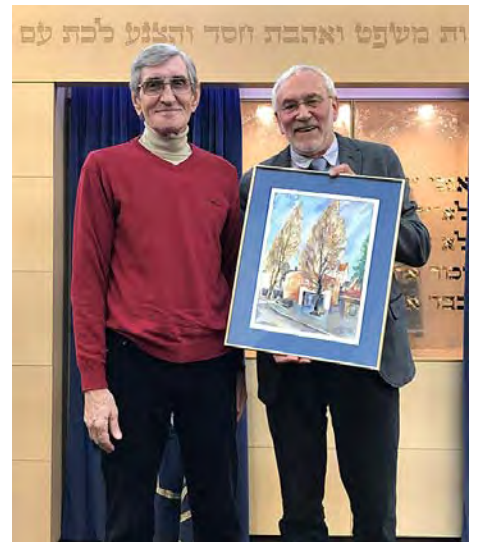
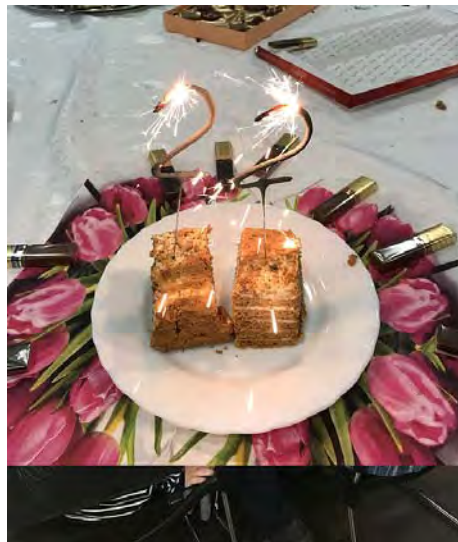
The birthday party for our congregation on Sunday, February 17, was a virtual thank you note to everyone who has helped us to become established and to grow in the last 22 years. Some of those people attended, and it was a pleasure to thank them personally. It was a bittersweet day as we honored Polina Pelts and Hans-Georg Spangenberg for their contribution to the foundation and development of the Jewish community of Hamelin.

Faina Pelts opened the celebration musically with a sweet rendition of "Halleluyah." Rabbi Offenberg congratulated all present and recited a blessing for our community. Ms. Lösekrug-Möller, Senator of the German Parliament and a member of our Synagogue Foundation, pointed out the significance of our community for the city and county of Hamelin. Chairwoman Rachel Dohme thanked everyone for their kind words:

"At the beginning of our 22 year-old history, people who were strangers—people from different countries and cultures met. There was no common language, but there was a common dream. What united us was our religion and the desire to create Jewish life here in Hamelin. The result of years of hard work is a congregational life as well as spiritual development, which has matured and deepened over the years. We are deeply indebted to Rabbi Irit Shillor and Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg.

"My deepest gratitude goes to Mrs. Polina Pelts, the heart of the community. I think there is no one she has not helped somehow and at one time or another. She was my guide, with whom I could always speak, with whom problems could always be solved. I do not know a wiser person. Our hearts are sad today that Polina cannot celebrate with us due to her illness—we miss her very much. She and her family can be proud of what she has built up. A life's work.

"In the 1990s, Jewish immigrants arrived in the hundreds to Hamelin-Pyrmont from the former Soviet Union. They lived at first in an immigration center in Hasperde, a village near my home. I first learned about it at a meeting of the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, in which I was the only Jewish member. That was about to change! I packed my three small children in the car and drove off to Hasperde to meet these new immigrants, and so began my love affair with FSU Jews until today.



“Once in Hamelin and settled in their own apartments, a Jewish group slowly emerged. We met for the first Shabbat in Polina and Josif Pelts’s living room to learn and pray together. From this beginning we evolved into a solid group and, thanks to the generosity of the St. Elisabeth Catholic Church and Deacon Hans-Georg Spangenberg, we were invited to hold our first services in their social hall. In 1997 we founded the first Jewish community of the city Hamelin with 18 Jewish women and men in that social hall. Week after week new immigrants came to us, and in 2000 we were able to move into our first rented rooms in the city center.

“And now 22 years later we are here: Beitenu—Our House. Much of what makes this house unique, as beautiful and simple as it is, is the round shape, almost like a nest that gives us security and symbolizes the further development of our synagogue. Our building was the first new construction of a Reform synagogue in Germany. It stands today, once again on the foundation of the original synagogue, built in 1879 and destroyed in 1938. It is home to a congregation of members from 16 nations, united by their love for Judaism, a community where every member is valued and respected.”

Finally, Rachel presented a painting of our synagogue to Mr. Hans-Georg Spangenberg, which our member Borys Kagan painted especially for him. We wholeheartedly thank Mr. Kagan. Mr. Spangenberg and Faina Pelts, speaking for her mother, thanked the community warmly. We also thank Lubov Pesin for the festive buffet.

Jewish March

International Women's Day

On Tuesday, March 8th, at 11:00 am, we will celebrate International Women’s Day with a concert to which all our parishioners are cordially invited. As every year, the women are presented with a flower, and after the concert we spend the time with nice talks, sweet chocolates and a glass of sparkling wine.



Purim

In spring, we join our Jewish brethren around the world to celebrate the Purim festival. We retell the story and recall how the wisdom and courage of Queen Esther saved the Jewish people from genocide.

At Purim, joy is the focus. The Festival of Lose (= Purim) celebrates the salvation of the Jewish people from the anti-Semitic massacre, planned by Haman. The story takes place in Persia and is celebrated depending on the location, on the 14th or 15th Adar of the Jewish calendar. The festival is based on the biblical book of Esther: During the time of Persian King Achashverosh and his Jewish wife Esther, the mighty Haman—the highest government official—tried to destroy Judaism in Persia and kill all believers. Haman’s plan was thwarted by Esther. She campaigned with the king for her people and persuaded him to grant Jews by decree the right of self-defense against attacks. The Jewish population defended themselves successfully and Haman’s plan failed. Ultimately, Haman and other enemies of the Jews lost their lives. Since then, this successful defense against anti-Semitism is celebrated. It is a story in which grief turns into joy and sadness into happiness. It is customary to dress up in costume on the holiday, eat Hamantaschen and hear the Megillah scroll retell our story.

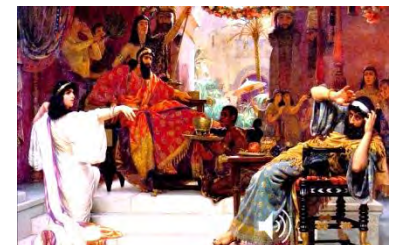
Our Purim celebration will begin Wednesday, the 20th of March in the afternoon. We will hear the Megillah and drown out the name “Haman” with loud noisemakers. Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg has rehearsed a Purim-shpil with the children. They have put a lot of love and effort in this play and are looking forward to a large audience. We hope that many will come to this happy festival in costumes and masks. Naturally, we also think of those who are homebound or ill and will send them small gifts of food, Schlachmones.

Hamantaschen Bakery

On Tuesday morning, March 19, the sweet smell poppy seed pastries will waft through our rooms. For the past twenty years, the “Hamantaschen” for Purim were baked under the proven leadership of Polina Pelts. Olga Gerr will lead the bakers this year. We invite all who enjoy baking to join us for a fun morning.

Rabbinic word

Purim is an underrated holiday. It is based on the biblical book of Esther, which interestingly does not mention the name of God at all. The splendor described in the Persian royal court seems like one of the stories of *One Thousand and One Nights*. We dress up in colorful costumes, act wonderfully silly and when hearing the reading of the Esther scroll in the synagogue, we interrupt again and again with noisemakers when evil Haman’s name is read. There is even the commandment to get so drunk you cannot hear the difference in the pronunciation of Haman and Mordecai’s names! It is a feast of folly that does not carry the sometimes heavy character of other holidays.



Queen Esther invites King Achaschverosch and with him the malevolent Haman to a private feast and made them drunk. While drunken Haman thought the Queen was honoring him, he did not realize that she was executing a plan to save her people from his plan of genocide. With that, “she prepared the table and earned a good name in this world and

in the world to come. For in the world to come, after the appearance of the Messiah, all the holidays will become obsolete, but Purim will be celebrated forever.” The Esther scroll says: “These days of Purim are always held by the Jews, and the memory of it will be continued from generation to generation.” (Midrash Mischle 9)

But why, we ask. Why should Purim acquire such importance while Pesach with its remembrance of the liberation from Egypt or the Shavuot festival with the gift of Torah becomes no longer necessary? Are not these holidays weightier and have influenced our Jewish traditions more than Purim?

Perhaps Rabbi Abahu, with his dictum about the continuing validity of the Purim festival, said that as long as human society exists, there is also the need for the courageous behavior of individuals. And we will not survive without remembrance of this experience in the future. Each person is shaped by the past, by individual and collective experiences. In addition, the ups and downs of Esther's story clarify the uncertainty of our existence. What we experience today can be quite different tomorrow; many things change unexpectedly and are out of our control. The Megillah teaches us, it is important to perceive God's hiddenness in our lives. In the face of our secular Zeitgeist Purim is actually a very modern, meaningful celebration.

Interreligious Podium

The Volkshochschule Hameln is offering an inter-religious podium discussion on March 26th, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Podium participants are our Rabbi Offenberg, as well as the Superintendent of the Lutheran churches of Hamelin-Pyrmont, Pastor Philipp Meyer, and the Chairman of the Islamic Community, Mr. Bilgin Onur. The theme of the evening will be “Environmental Sustainability.” The adult education center writes: “Environmental Sustainability has become of interest to everyone. This podium presentation will focus on the position of Judaism, Christianity and Islam on the subject of our shared responsibility for our environment. What does Torah, Bible, and Qur'an tell us about how we treat plants and animals, the soil, and the air? What efforts can the three major religious communities do—individually or jointly—regarding climate change and the loss of biodiversity, worldwide, here in Germany and above all here in Hamelin.” The public is cordially invited to attend. Please contact the Volkshochschule, 05151-94820.

New groups

We would like to announce that starting in February two new groups will begin. The German course taught by Mrs. Rudi will meet weekly on Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m. Mrs. Rudi is a German teacher of Russian descent. We welcome her to our community. Those wishing to attend the language course should contact the office.

Thanks to two grants from the Bürgerstiftung Sparkasse Hameln and the Landschaftsverband, we can end our choir's pause and begin anew. “Shalom,” under the direction of Faina Pelts, will practice weekly on Thursdays beginning at 3:00 o'clock. We would like to thank Mr. Dirk Adomat SPD, the Bürgerstiftung Sparkasse Hameln and Mrs. Fehn, Landschaftsverband, for their financial support. Shalom's accent will be liturgy for our religious services.

We also say thank you to Mr. Petr Chrastina, who led the group for many years. Many Thanks!

Get well wishes

We wish all our members who are currently experiencing illness a speedy and complete recovery. As we recite the prayer “Mi Scheberach” at services, our prayers and thoughts are with them. Remember—visiting the ill is a Mitzvah!

Donations — Zedakah

We sincerely thank members and friends who have supported our synagogue life and building fund with generous donations. We wish to acknowledge: “Russian Pension,” Mrs. Schlagmann, Mr. Schulz, Mr. Schnell, Mrs. Pfeiffer, Begegnung Christen und Juden in Niedersachsen, Mrs. Grabowski-Hölscher, Mr. Karlheinz Hesse, Mrs. Berhovski, Mrs. Rosenau with her 8th grade class of the Barntrup-Gymnasium, Mrs. Zischkale-Henßen with groups of the Bildungszentrum Ith, Mrs. Niedert and Mrs. Rachel Dohme. May all donors be blessed for their generosity.



Tree of Life — Etz Chaim

It's cold outside but the trees are beginning to bud. In our synagogue it is light and warm and our tree has room for many more leaves.

By ordering a new “leaf,” you can commemorate special occasions, e.g. Birth, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, wedding, thanks, Yahrzeit, memories or honors and thus also make a synagogue donation. Forms are in the office. Many Thanks!

Our Condolences

We express our condolences to family members and friends on the death of Mrs. Adel Gurevitsch. Adel Gurevich was a longtime member of our congregation.

March Yahrzeit

Riva Slavinska	March 18, 2005 / 8. Adar II 5765
Gersch Kogan	March 19, 2009 / 23. Adar 5769
Polina Khazanova	March 19, 2011 / 13. Adar II 5771
Elena Grabovska	March 28, 2012 / 5. Nissan 5772
Alla Drejzer	March 2, 2013 / 20. Adar 5773
Oksana Kozlova	March 11, 2013 / 29. Adar 5773



May the memory of our former members be a blessing. Kaddish is recited with family members during Shabbat services. Yahrzeit candles are available in the office.

Shalom,
Your Synagogue Board

[Newsletter Archives](#)

Program for March 2019 • Adar I–Adar II 5779

Office hours: Monday–Friday: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Friday, March 1	2:00 p.m. Bar/Bat Mitzvah class 5:30 p.m. Friday night services followed by Oneg Shabbat 8:00 p.m. Mishnah study, Pirke Avot
Saturday, March 2	10:00 a.m. Shacharit services, Kiddush and Talmud study 1:00 p.m. Monthly board meeting 1:30 p.m. Kinder Kehillah I 2:30 p.m. Kinder Kehillah II
Friday, March 8	4:00 p.m. International Women’s Day and Kiddush
Monday, March 18	7:00 p.m. Society of Christians and Jews annual membership meeting 8:00 p.m. Lecture: “Christianity’s early years”, Hans-Georg Spangenberg
Tuesday, March 19	11:00 a.m. Hamentaschen Bakery, Olga Gerr Calling all bakers!
Wednesday, March 20	5:30 p.m. Erev Purim Celebration Reading the Megillah, Graggers, Purim sing-along, homemade Hamentaschen, Purim Play Come in costumes please!
Wednesday, March 27	11:00 a.m. Informational meeting with social worker Faina Pelts
Outside the community	
Tuesday, March 26	7:00 p.m. Interfaith Podium, “Religious aspects of environmental sustainability,” Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg, Superintendent Phillip Meyer and Mr. Bilgin Onur, Hunoldstrasse Mosque, Hunoldstrasse 3, 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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