



## Dear members of the community, friends and supporters,

The month of March was filled with many events. On March 8 we celebrated International Women's Day with over 50 members and guests. To mark the specialness of the day, a core group of members had prepared a program with well-loved music, poems and readings. Faina Pelts opened the celebration and congratulated all the women on Women's Day on behalf of the community. After the concert, the men presented each woman with a flower and thanked the artists. Sparkling wine, chocolates and pastries rounded off the afternoon and everyone was happy with the evening and went home with a smile.



## Purim

March means spring and the colorful and joyful Purim festival which took center stage. A few days beforehand, Olga Gerr and 12 women had gathered in the social hall and kitchen to bake Hamantaschen with the dough that Liubow Pesin prepared the night before. The traditional recipe of our late Betia Kholmer (Polina Pelts' mother and founding member) was used once again as were other recipes. Poppy seeds, jam and date filling bubbled from the triangular cookies. Sweet smells coupled with songs from home eased the women's work. The result was mounds and mounds of Hamantaschen which we enjoyed on March 20th and which we could pack into gift baskets, Schlachmones, for the elderly and members who are homebound. Many thanks to all who baked these delicious sweets for our festival of Purim!

On the Purim eve we celebrated with imaginative costumes, with the reading of the biblical Esther story, with music and with a Purimshpil. Rabbi Offenbergl davened from the 200 year-old had handwritten Megillat Esther (Scroll of Esther). She honored specific members who also read chapters in German and Russian. Young and old were involved in the reading. Whenever the name of the evil Haman was heard, there was a cacophony of noise, drowning his name out. Young and old had fun reading as well as dressing up in costumes. Upon completion of the Mitzvah of reading and hearing the Megillah, the children's Kehillah performed a Purimshpil. The children had practiced their parts, lyrics, songs and the dramaturgy for weeks. The fact that our children's group has grown and developed during the past two years was obvious with their performance. The youngsters were so excited and enthusiastic and the appreciative audience rewarded them with applause and Purim gift bags. Our choir "Shalom" under the direction of Faina Pelts treated everyone with Purim songs before we all feasted at the Purim tables.

## Network Seminar

Our congregation hosted the annual Network Seminar of interfaith dialogue groups from all over Lower Saxony. The seminar is organized every year by the organization "Christians and Jews of Lower Saxony" under the direction of Prof. Dr. Ursula Rudnick and Pastor Dr. Daniela Koppler. Thirty-five men and women came to Hamelin, representing various Protestant and Catholic interreligious dialogue groups and institutions. They traveled as far away as from Nordhorn on the Dutch border and Bremen, Osnabruck, Burgdorf and Hannover. Superintendent of Churches Pastor Dr. Eckhardt Gorke from Hildesheim also attended, accompanied by his assistant Mr. Goldschmidt, who could trace his family back to relatives from the Hamelin Jewish community of the 18th century. The theme of this year's meeting was "Anti-Semitism: What Jewish Communities Wanted from Their Christian Partners." Rachel Dohme and Rabbi Offenbergl as well as Marina Jalowaja from the Orthodox congregations of Lower Saxony talked about experiences with anti-Semitism on an individual and community level. The spectrum ranged from personal insults and anonymous letters to the deliberate destruction of the House of World Religion in Rinteln. An important discussion ensued concerning criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism. It became clear that there is still much need for clarification in order to recognize anti-Semitic arguments. The issue was also addressed as to how Christian pilgrimages and study visits by students of theology and religious education to Israel can be used to get to know not only biblical sites but also the modern Israeli society. The next network meeting will take place in January 2020 in Hanover.

## Choir Workshop

Faina Pelts attended a workshop in Bad Sobernheim for choir leaders. Cantorial and choir has a special tradition in our Reform tradition because of beautiful services and also the passage of our liturgy from generation to generation. We are very pleased that the skills and techniques acquired by Faina can be applied in cooperation with the group "Shalom." The seminar is led by the musicologist and Cantor Rokella-Rachel Verenina from Wuppertal. The participants came from twenty Jewish communities. Over the course of the several days, they practiced old and new melodies from our Sabbath





liturgy, psalms and modern Israeli pieces. With great professionalism, Ms. Rokella-Rachel Verenina also provided seminar participants with choral conducting methodology and vocal techniques, including breath control and articulation. A final concert on the last day of the seminar was performed with great enthusiasm.

### Circle of Friends

Our congregation has enjoyed the support and interest of our “Circle of Friends” association since our inception in 1997. It is our intention to show our appreciation by offering them additional opportunities to participate in specific activities. From time to time there will be events to which the members of the Circle of Friends, in particular, will be invited. We hope to facilitate a deeper relationship with them and interest new members. The opening event in February began with a Havdallah service with Rabbi Offenberg and her subsequent photo lecture on the “Women of the Wall,” a women’s group in Israel that has been committed for the past thirty years to ensure that women also have the right to worship at the Jerusalem Wailing Wall and read from the Torah. For over two hours she captivated the audience with her talk about this dedicated group and the complicated relationship between state and religion in Israel. Forty interested people from Hamelin and the surrounding area attended the evening lecture. It is our hope that such events will speak to our Circle of Friends.

### Jewish April

Passover is approaching mid-month with all its necessary preparations. This year the festival begins on Friday evening, April 19th, and ends with sunset on Friday, April 26th. Orthodox communities commit Passover a day longer. On Friday, April 19th, we will celebrate the “Festival of Freedom” under the direction of Rabbi Offenberg. Please arrive punctually for the festive Seder evening. It is read, prayed and sung in Hebrew, German and Russian from our multi-lingual Haggadah.

Our synagogue rooms will be made Pesachkoscher and we will remove all Chametz (all products containing leavening) during the week before the holiday. We ask all members and guests not to bring these products during the Passover week to the synagogue.



### Passover products for sale

Our synagogue office will be selling kosher Pesach products at cost for our members as we do every year. Israeli matzah in one-kilo packages, 0.75-liter bottles of Manischewitz sweet red wine and Matzah ball mix is on sale during office hours.

### Pesach Shiur

In the Torah we read that families in biblical times celebrated Passover by making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and eating the sacrificial lamb there. Our Seder evening and the way we celebrate Passover today seems to have changed quite a bit over the millennia. The lamb is no longer prepared and eaten; only a symbolic bone remains on the Seder plate. In preparation for the holidays, Rabbi Offenberg will offer a Shiur on Shabbat morning, Saturday, April 6th, at 12:00 pm, about the rules of Passover and introduce listeners to the history and structure of the Haggadah. If you are interested in what exactly Chametz is and why our menu for Seder today includes matzah ball soup and Gefillte fish and not freshly grilled lamb, you are cordially invited to this Shiur. Come and learn!



### Rabbinic word

“What makes this night different from all other nights?” This question is the starting point for the Seder. The children sing the song “Mah Nischtanah,” the four questions that refer to various characteristics on the Seder table. When the questions are sung only as a happy ritual, it is easy to overlook the fact that the aspect of questioning and the attention of the children are actually the essential purpose of Seder’s evening. Even in the Torah the commandment is repeated: “You shall tell your son about it” (and of course we mean our daughters today as well!). “It” refers to the story of our people’s slavery in Egypt and their liberation from it. We are instructed to retell it so vividly that the children feel this is also their story.

The American Rabbi Steve Greenberg says that questions lead to democratization: “Jewish thinking is based upon the assumption that nothing is taken for granted nor must anything be accepted without reason. On the night of the Seder, we teach our children to ask questions and learn because a good question is powerful, especially in the face of abusive power. Wisdom is power and it can lead to the achievement of freedom. That’s why God loves when we ask “why”? The moment we ask a good question, the Torah is given anew on the Sinai. “It is only through our questions that we succeed in experiencing a bygone event as relevant to ourselves as well.”

Here is my question to you. Have you told your children and grandchildren about the upheavals and deliverances in your own life? How can we stimulate their interest that the Jewish exodus from the former Soviet Union not only belongs to your biographies but also shaped them? The Seder night is not about stories thousands of years ago but about our Jewish life and that of our children.

—Your Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg

## *We wish you all Happy Passover!*

### **Chevra Kaddisha**

To prepare a person on their last journey is one of the greatest Mitzvot in Judaism. For many years a Chevra Kaddisha, the Holy Burial Society, has been working in our community. A male and a female group each perform the ritual washing and dressing of the deceased for burial. We are currently looking for volunteers for the women's group. Please contact the community office.

### **Donations — Zedakah**

We sincerely thank the members and friends who have supported our synagogue life with generous donations. For donations in March we would like to thank Eva Gerr, Mr. and Mrs. Pesok, Mrs. Meschede-Krasa from USA, Mrs. Rosenau and her students from the Barntrup Gymnasium, Mrs. Zischkale-Henßen and her students from the Ith Education Center, Dr. Mrs. Gronenthal and her participants from the European Studies Program in Vlotho, Mrs. Wellershaus and her 6th grade class from the Viktoria-Luise-Gymnasium, Mrs. Hölscher and Mrs. Pfohl and their 8th grade classes from the IGS, Mrs. Mentrup and her 3rd class of the Catholic Primary School, Mr. Rainer Dörnbrak, Mrs. Klara Behnke, Mrs. Niedert and Rachel Dohme. May all donors be blessed for their generosity.



### **Tree of Life — Etz Chaim**

Our Tree of Life offers members, friends and supporters the opportunity to do two mitzvot (good deeds) at once. One can honor special occasions, e.g. birth, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, wedding, thanks, Yahrzeit, memories or honors and so also donate to the synagogue. Forms are in the office. Many thanks! Here is a list of newly ordered leaves last month:

“Thank you! BAFzA—Bildungszentrum Ith 2019” — from the Bildungszentrum Ith.

“In thanks to Rachel Dohme” — by Ms. Zischkale-Henßen and the Bildungszentrum Ith.

“In memory of my husband Mykhailo Gerr” — by Mrs. Eva Gerr

### **Sympathy**

We express our condolences to the Konstantinov family on the death of their beloved mother, sister, mother-in-law and grandmother, Alexandra Konstantinova, s.A. The funeral took place under the direction of Rabbi Dr. Offenberg on Tuesday, March 26th at the Jewish cemetery Wehl.

### **Yahrzeit in April**

Tetyana Khodos	April 4, 1998 / 8. Nisan 5758
Anna Pototcaia	April 11, 2000 / 6. Nisan 5760
Eugenia Borishanskai	April 26, 2004 / 5. Ijar 5764
Boris Frid	April 28, 2011 / 24. Nissan 5771
Juriy Lebedinskiy	April 2, 2012 / 10. Nissan 5772
Alex Voronov	April 10, 2012 / 18. Nissan 5772
Ryssja Kochergina	April 27, 2015 / 8. Ijar 5775
Vilen Feldmann	April 24, 2016 / 16. Nissan 5776
Arkady Drejzer	April 4, 2018 / 19. Nisan 5778
Sinaida Gogulinska	April 19, 2018/ 4 Ijar 5778



May the memory of our dead be a blessing to us.

**Shalom,  
Your Synagogue Board**

## Program for April 2019 • Adar II–Nisan 5779

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

Friday, April 5	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, April 6	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit services, Kiddush and Pesach Shiur
	1:30 p.m.	Kinder Kehillah I
	2:30 p.m.	Kinder Kehillah II
Friday, April 19	5:30 p.m.	<b>Gemeinde Seder</b>
Saturday, April 20	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit services, 1 <sup>st</sup> day Pesach, Kiddush
<b>Outside the community</b>		
Thursday, April 25	7:00 p.m.	In cooperation with the Society of Christians and Jews: Lecture: Pastor Christiane Brendel and Mrs. Daria Leuthier: “Dietrich Bonhöffer—his life’s work”; House of Churches, Old City, 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

Bürenstrasse, Synagogenplatz 1, 31785 Hameln • Tel/Fax: 05151/925625

Web site: [www.ighreform.org](http://www.ighreform.org) • Email: [igh@ighreform.org](mailto:igh@ighreform.org)

Office: Neue Heerstraße 35, 31840 Hess. Oldendorf

Tel.: 05152/8374 • Fax: 05152/962915

Email: [racheldohme@ighreform.org](mailto:racheldohme@ighreform.org)

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