



Dear members, friends and supporters,

What a trying, frightening time the world is facing. We hope that, at least now, everyone appreciates how important the health guidelines are. We need to stay at home in self-quarantine, wash our hands with soap and hot water and practice social distancing.

Our synagogue is closed until further notice and we are only staffing the office and phones. We need to see these rules as our social responsibility for ourselves, our loved ones and others. We, as a congregation, can still keep in touch with one another by phone or social media and can help each other as much as possible. Rabbi Offenberg is also only a phone call away.

In April, the entire Jewish world will celebrate Passover. Please borrow a Hagaddah and hold a family Seder at home. Pesach supplies are available for purchase in the synagogue. Call the office and let us know what you need.

Rabbi's Thoughts

We live in unusual times. A month ago we could not have imagined that the routine of our lives could be so disrupted. Of course we know about tragedies that can throw our lives off the rails: illness, accidents, divorce, unemployment and other things. An invisible virus has put the whole world in an emergency situation and that is difficult for us to understand. What initially looked like a local event in a faraway place has now overtaken almost all the countries in the world. Countries and states close their borders, travel traffic worldwide has collapsed and public life has almost come to a standstill. The consequences for the economy are not yet in sight and with the exception of grocery stores and pharmacies; all cultural and sporting events have been canceled. We do not know how many human lives this virus will take, who will be affected by it and when we can return to normal life. Now we sit in our homes and try to arrange our lives in this uncertainty and social isolation.

In an unexpected way, we begin to understand what truly is important in our lives. The progress in science, technology and social organization has led us to believe that we have everything under control. Now we are learning anew that so much is not in our hands at all. That teaches us humility and gratitude. Our sages have ordered that people should say 100 blessings every day. We learn that not putting our desires and what we lack in the foreground, we can recognize what is best for us every day. These blessings span getting up in the morning and include thanks for our bodily functions, for our food, even for a glass of water. All of these are blessings that we often accept thoughtlessly because we focus more on what we don't have. If we manage to develop a more grateful attitude, it helps us to deal with the inner restlessness that we feel because we are forced to rest externally. Our way of praying may also become more intense.

Corona not only threatens our health but also our social cohesion. It is very difficult for us to accept that avoiding contact is the order of the day. If we want to show affection and care for our sick and elderly we have to do it without personal visits. They are the most vulnerable group in the population and it is everyone's duty to protect one another from infection. We cannot delegate responsibility "from above" the government, the district office or other authorities. We have to act carefully for ourselves and towards our neighbors. Please respect the quarantine and restrictions. It is up to all of us to limit the health and social impact of the corona crisis. Now is the time to let your imagination run wild and to find other options; by phone, electronically and also very traditionally by letter and postcard. The biblical prophet Isaiah gives us this thought: "Go, my people, into your rooms and lock your door behind you; hide yourself for a moment until the fury is over" (Is. 26:20).

We are grateful to all those who now work in the medical services and in the vital areas of business and administration which ensure our well-being. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the women and men in our community who work in hospitals, doctor's offices and nursing services who take care of the sick and the elderly to the point of exhaustion. Even if isolation alone currently helps against the transmission of the virus, the only remedy that helps against isolation is solidarity. The strength of our community will be shown by how we maintain charity and cohesion in the crisis. I ask all of us to look carefully and ask, "Who needs help? Who is in quarantine right now?" Please get in touch if you can or contact our office staff. I can be reached by phone and e-mail too.

Shalom and best wishes for all of you
—your Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg

A few days before Purim the women in our community baked "Hamantaschen" and the sweet aroma of poppy seeds and jam filled the rooms and corridors of our synagogue. These triangular shaped cookies are meant to resemble Haman's hat or Haman's pockets or Haman's ears, depending on which tradition one follows. The sweet filling hidden in the middle indicates God's hidden participation in the history of Purim.





We thank the lovely ladies who sang as they baked, enjoying the tradition of preparing for the holiday and doing for others. Lyubov Pesina, Larisa Dvortsis, Feana Engler, Tamara Ovcharenko, Maria Bilau, Eva Gerr, Ioulia Berkhovska, Anna Anikina, Irina Grach, Genrietta Bashmachnikova, Zoya Pupiseva, Olga Gerr, Petr Shurupov and our caretaker Heinrich Moos. Thank you all!

We were able to deliver many “Shlachmones,” sweet gift bags, to our elderly members, confined to their homes or in hospital.

The day before Purim, we gathered in the congregation to celebrate International Women’s Day. Valery Bogachik congratulated all the women present on behalf of the men, followed by the men’s gift of a red carnation.. We did not forget the women who could not join us for the afternoon. Svetlana Banchukova visited them at home and congratulated them on behalf of the community with flowers.

Kristina Gordadze and Sergey Kolmanovsky created a wonderful musical atmosphere in our sanctuary. Ms. Gordadze, an opera singer of international renown, and Mr. Kolmanovsky’s performance on the piano made for a magical afternoon. Applause and calls of “Bravo!” were well deserved.

The evening ended at the festive table, prepared by Zoya Pupiseva. We thank her, Valery Friedmann, and Faina Pelts for organizing this memorable concert. Many thanks to the Aktion Mensch project for their kind support.

The following day, it was finally Purim!

Rabbi Ulrike Offenbergs read, and we heard the story of Purim from the Megillah, the scroll of Esther in biblical Hebrew, interspersed with chapters read aloud in German and Russian by various members. Everyone protested loudly, stamped feet, whistled and swung their graggers when the name of evil Haman was heard.

A special treat was our theater group’s Purim Schpil — a play prepared by our members under the direction of Valery Bogachik. Beautiful costumes, songs, dances and humor delighted young and old. Purim, a holiday with a serious message was remembered and retold with merriment.

Once again, we have shown the spirit of our congregation despite all the current obstacles. Did everyone understand every word? Our polyglot Rabbi may have been the only one. But really, there was no need to understand every word. The fun and talents of everyone involved was enough. Dayenu!

We would like to recognize those who deserve our applause and thanks: Valery and Dorothy Bogachyk, Vladimir and Nadia Pesok, Faina Pelts, Matvey Dvortsis, Eva Shkolnikova, Elvira Nikolayzes, Hiltrud Schulz, Petr Shurupov, Mark Ovsievich, Svitlana Hladchenko and Valery Friedmann. Kol haKavod!

Jewish April

Passover Pesach

Passover, our celebration of our redemption from Egyptian slavery, must be spent behind closed doors this year. What a contrast to the 24 years of happy, communal Seder celebrations in our synagogue!

When the Israelites were ready to leave Egypt, they were instructed to sit in their houses while the angel of death “passed over” their homes. (The literal translation of the Hebrew word "Pesach"). In this way, they were spared. The parallels between the first Passover in Egypt and this year's Passover festival are obvious. Even if we are challenged this year to celebrate Seder on a small scale within our individual households it could just be an opportunity to think about what Jewish history and liberation means for each and every one of us.

Unfortunately and for the first time in 24 years, *due to the Corona virus*, we won’t be able to celebrate the holiday together. Our office is staffed and you can purchase Pesach supplies and even borrow a Haggadah. Make a festive meal for yourself, read the traditional texts and add reflections from your own biography. Create your own Pesach Seder at home.

After picking up matzah and wine in the office, go to the supermarket and purchase chicory or radishes for bitter herbs, eggs for the burnt offering, apples and nuts for the Charosset. The annual ritual of a communal Seder has to be canceled but see it as a chance to rediscover Passover for you. Passover is not limited to the Seder evening — we eat matzah for a week and do without Chametz — and this change in our everyday life can offer an interesting and welcome difference to the monotony of the confinements to our homes.

Chag Passover Kascher Vesameach,

Your Rabbi Ulrike Offenbergs wishes you a happy Passover festival despite the adverse circumstances.

Yom HaShoah and Yom HaAtzmaut

The Corona Virus makes no stop at any border and so even in Israel, this year, these important celebrations won’t be observed as usual. But we will never forget those who were murdered during the Shoah and hold in respect those who established the modern State of Israel.



Get well soon

We wish all people in our community, who are currently going through difficult times, a good recovery. Our thoughts and hearts are with them.

Donations — Zedakah

We would like to thank the members and friends who supported us with generous donations. For the donations in March our thanks go to Pastor Mau, Lutheran Church, Segelhorst, Mrs. Ute Gibas, Mrs. Niedert and Mrs. Rachel Dohme. May all donors be blessed for their generosity.



Tree of Life — Etz Chayim

Our tree offers members, friends and supporters the opportunity to help our congregation. Special occasions can be commemorated, e.g. Birth, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, wedding, words of thanks, Yahrzeit, fond memories or honors, and so help us maintain the synagogue building. Forms are in the office.

Chevra Kaddisha

Accompanying a person before burial is one of the greatest Mitzvot in Judaism. A Chevra Kaddisha, the Holy Funeral Society, has been working in our community for many years. A group of men and women perform the ritual washing of the deceased. We are currently looking for volunteers for these groups. Please contact the office.

Condolences

Our condolences to the family of our long-standing member, Polina Peker. She was buried on March 24th in our Jewish Community Cemetery. Rabbi Offenberg officiated.

Yahrzeit in April

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



May the memory of our deceased be a blessing for us.

Shalom

—Your Synagogue Board

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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 • Email: igh@ighreform.org

Office: Neue Heerstraße 35, 31840 Hess. Oldendorf

Tel.: 05152/8374 • Fax: 05152/962915

Email: racheldohme@ighreform.org