



Jewish Community of Hamelin

Member of the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany

Member of the World Union of Progressive Judaism

Member of the Central Council of Jews of Germany

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Program for December 2009 • Kislev–Tevet 5770

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

Tuesday, December 1	9:00 a.m.	Monthly Board Meeting
Saturday, December 5	10:00 a.m.	Saturday morning services and Torah study, with D. Vogelhuber
Monday, December 7	12:00 noon	“Judaism,” a course in Russian, with W. Pesok
Friday, December 11		Rabbi Irit Shillor’s Visit
	4:00 p.m.	Religious class with L. Blase
	5:30 p.m.	Friday night services with Rabbi Irit Shillor
Saturday, December 12	10:00 a.m.	BAR MITZVAH JOSHUA WENDT
		Festive Kiddush luncheon served after services
Sunday, December 13	3:00 p.m.	Congregational Hanukka Party Kindling of the third candle, gift raffle and festive Kiddush Hanukka Concert with Boris Orentlicher and Lia Simagina Members: free Guests: 5 Euros
Wednesday, December 16	11:00 a.m.	Russian Book Club with A. Konstantinova
Saturday, December 19	10:00 a.m.	Saturday morning services and Torah study with R. Dohme
	3:00 p.m.	Netzer Hanukka Party for kids and teens with G. Golberg and J. Weinberger
Sunday, December 20	4:00 p.m.	Senior’s Café with M. Dvortsis Concert with T. Romanova and L. Majeseeva, 2 Euros
Tuesday, December 22	4:00 p.m.	“Russian Afternoon” with M. Olvovska, Art History class

Dear members, friends and supporters,

We have been fortunate to have had an almost month-long visit from Eva and Harold Brown from Sydney, Australia. Eva Brown is the granddaughter of the last president of the Jewish Congregation of Hamelin and beloved physician, Dr. Siegmund Kratzenstein. Dr. Kratzenstein was imprisoned in the Buchenwald concentration camp after the Pogromnacht and destruction of the synagogue on November 9, 1938. He was released at the end of the month but died as a result of the brutal beatings he suffered at the hands of the Nazis on November 28, 1938. He was secretly buried in the Jewish cemetery, and our congregation helped erect a stone for him in 2006, with the help of Josef Speckmann, the man who prepared the grave so many years ago.



This is the third visit of the Brown family to Hamelin, and we always feel honored when they are with us. This visit is particularly important. The Browns have been invited by the city's museum's director, Dr. Gesa Snell. Their family's story will be part of the museum's new permanent exhibition. Using their family as an example, the story of Hamelin's Jewish population during the Holocaust years will be told. Our community is very proud to partner with the new city museum in this very important historical and educational project.

Commemorative services for the 9th of November began on the evening of the 8th of November with a Klezmer concert performed by our newest musical group, "Benkschaft." Our members Uwe Wolandowitsch and Rudi Brückner, accompanied by pianist Petr Chrastina and special guests "Duo Tora Ora," took listeners on an eastern European musical journey with their bittersweet melodies.

The next afternoon we gathered at the site of the former synagogue for memorial services. Students of the local high school read the names of the more than one hundred Jewish citizens of Hamelin who were murdered by the Nazis. The students also prepared a short biography of the Birnbaum family. Bishop Hans-Georg Koitz read a psalm, and Cantor Andrej Sitnov performed pieces on the clarinet. Senior Mayor Susanne Lippman laid a wreath, and Dieter Vogelhuber and Aron Kaplan laid a wreath on behalf of our congregation. More than 100 people were in attendance.

After the service, Harold and Eva Brown met with local citizens in the Lutheran church for a question and answer session, organized by the Society for Christians and Jews. Hans-Georg Spangenberg led the session. Listeners were fascinated with her story of escaping Nazi Germany in 1940 and immigrating to Borneo, only to become prisoners of the Japanese several years later. Because her father was a doctor and the Japanese needed his services for their wounded, the family was taken out of camp and survived the war. After the war, the family of four (Eva's brother Peter was born in Borneo) set up their lives in Australia.

The day began with the Browns being given a festive reception by Mayor Ina Loth. The Browns signed the Golden Book of the city in an official ceremony.

The highlight of their visit was a festive reception, held on November 11th and organized by the Museum. Our synagogue choir "Shalom" opened and closed the reception musically. Christa Bruns spoke for the Society of Christians and Jews, as did Klaus Arnold and Dr. Snell for the Museum and Rachel Dohme for our congregation.

Eva Brown and her brother, Peter Cranston, have lent family's heirlooms, documents, and photographs for the new permanent exhibition. A beautiful silver Besamin box (spice box), once belonging to Dr. Siegmund Kratzenstein, was lent along with a family album. The Museum also produced a film with Eva, which will be part of the permanent exhibit.



Museum Board President Klaus Arnold sees these valuable items as a way to make the suffering and terror of the Holocaust tangible. Congregational president Rachel Dohme said, "We are proud to be part of this important project. The new exhibit will give the Holocaust in Hamelin 'a face'. This is especially important for the many school classes who will visit the new exhibition, to give them a way to understand the tragedy on a human level, to make history real. The Holocaust needs to be understood in its totality. It was more than the murder of six million Jewish men, women, and children. It was also the destruction of Jewish families and dispersal of those who survived. Last year, as a result of our community's efforts, other members of the Kratzenstein family who live today in Ireland, England, and Germany met the Brown family for the first time. We wish Dr. Snell success with the new and important exhibit. We thank the Brown and Cranston families for sharing their family's heirlooms and memories. May these efforts help to ensure a world where the horrors of the Holocaust can never again occur."

We thank the local media for covering the different aspects of the visit. Of special note were several podium discussions between the Browns and high school students. The students were grateful for the



opportunity to speak with them and hear their experiences first-hand. The congregation welcomed the Browns to many congregational activities and services. We thank them for all they gave us this month and for their generous contribution to the synagogue building fund.

Another interesting program in November was the inter-religious women's group. We met in the city's mosque and heard an interesting lecture about the "Sacrifice Festival." We enjoyed a lively and informative discussion along with homemade cakes and steaming cups of tea. Our congregation feels such programs support Reform Judaism's policies of mutual tolerance and respect.

In next month's newsletter, we will report on the play, *We came from the Stettl*, written by Josef Pelts, of blessed memory, and performed in memory of him.

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](#) (PDF) and [Russian](#) (PDF) 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. 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. We appreciate any and all support.

Jewish December

We are all looking forward to Rabbi Irit Shillor's visit in December. She will light the first Hanukka candle with us before celebrating Friday night services. Hanukka, the Festival of Lights, brightens the world during the darkest months of winter.

The Hanukka story is well known, yet its message is current. We delight year after year in the re-telling of the victory of the Macabees over Assyrian oppression so many years ago. The rededication of the Temple, the rekindling of the Temple Menorah, and the legend of the tiny flask of oil that burned miraculously for eight days until fresh oil could be brought from northern Israel still fills our children's hearts with awe. We remember the Macabees and their followers, strengthened by their unyielding faith and their passion to fight for the right to live as Jews.

Traditionally, we celebrate the holiday by retelling the story, eating foods fried in oil, playing Dreidel, and singing and exchanging gifts. This tradition is alive and well in our community, and our congregational Hanukka party will begin on Sunday, December 13, at 3:00 p.m. After a short service we will enjoy Latkes and jelly doughnuts and a Hanukka raffle. We are pleased to welcome Boris Orentlicher and Lia Simagina, who will offer a Hanukka concert. We thank the generous support of the Central Council of Jews of Germany's cultural program for providing our congregation with these artists.

We hope to celebrate next Hanukka in our new synagogue, giving this holiday a very special meaning!



Joshua Wendt will celebrate his Bar Mitzvah on December 12th



Joshua Wendt will be called to the Torah for the first time on Shabbat Vayeshev on Saturday, December 12, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. Rabbi Irit Shillor will lead services with Joshua. Joshua and his proud parents invite everyone to share the joy of this day with them in our synagogue. Everyone is invited to a festive Kiddush luncheon after the service. Joshua has worked, studied, and prepared for two years for this special day, and we are happy to celebrate with him. Joshua has learned Hebrew, has practiced reading from the Torah, and has concentrated on the history of the Reform movement and its establishment in Germany. He feels ready for his Bar Mitzvah and hopes many members and friends will share this important moment in his life.

Such celebrations in our congregation are living testimony to the rebirth of Reform Judaism in our city. Our youth are our future. We want to praise and show our respect and support for the young people in our congregation who say "yes" to their Jewish identity. Please join us on Joshua's Bar Mitzvah, which is also the beginning of our festival of Hanukka.

Joshua says, "I am excited, but it's a happy excitement. So many people have helped me during these past two years. I am looking forward to my Bar Mitzvah!"

Rebekka Dohme's CD "Shabbat Melodies"

We are pleased to announce that "Shabbat Melodies," the first CD by our young cantor, Rebekka Dohme, has been released. The CD has Shabbat melodies from the Friday night and Saturday morning service. One hundred percent of the money raised through the sale of the CD will go to our synagogue building project. We hope many of our friends from around the world will purchase the CD. Buying the CD affords one the performance of a double Mitzvah: contributing money to the building project and listening to Shabbat liturgy. We wish to compliment Rebekka on her beautiful voice and thank her for the love she invested in the creation of this CD. We thank Max Dohme for the graphics and layout of the CD case.

If your congregation is interested in buying or selling the CDs, please contact Rachel Dohme at racheldohme@jghreform.org.



New Position in our Congregation

Thanks to the support of the Employment Office, we are pleased to announce the creation of new position in our congregation. A local organization, which serves at-risk immigrant youth, will share the full-time position with us. Mrs. Svitlana Banschukova will begin mid-December. She will be available to accompany members who are in need of support to doctor and administrative appointments. She will also visit the sick and elderly. Because of the shared position, those requiring Mrs. Banschukova's services are requested to contact her directly.

We wish to thank Mr. Nico Schoebel of the city's Employment Office for his assistance in creating this position, which will give employment to one of our members and support those in need.

UPJ Winter Machene from December 22 to 29 in Lohr

The Youth Department of the Union of Progressive Jews of Germany (UPJ) is offering a Winter Machene during school holidays in the beautiful city of Lohr, Germany. The winter camp is open to youth aged 12 to 18. The cost is 200 Euros. Those in need of financial assistance should contact the UPJ Youth office.

Greetings from Jerusalem

Our former Abraham Geiger rabbinical student, Adrian Schell, is spending his third year in Jerusalem. Adrian sends everyone his very warmest wishes for Chag Hanukka Sameach, which we wish him in return. May we all find joy in the glow of the Hanukka candles.

Donations — Tzedaka

We are grateful to the many people who continually support our work and our plans to build a new synagogue.

We wish to thank: The Hamelin Teacher's College seminar for Lutheran religion, the Pesok family, Mr. Petr Chrastina, Mr. John Smith, Lutheran Women's Breakfast Group, Mr. Lior Blase, Harold and Eva Brown, Australia, and the Dohme family.

May all donors be blessed for their generosity.



Tree of Life — Etz Chayim

Who will contribute the next leaf? Each leaf not only adorns our sanctuary but also helps us raise funds for our synagogue. Leaves can be ordered through our office or by contacting [Rachel Dohme](#) or on this Web site: [Tree of Life](#). Each leaf costs a minimum of \$100 (quadruple *chai* plus expenses). Please contribute a leaf and help us to build our synagogue!

Mazel Tov — Congratulations

Congratulations to Mr. Eike Kerstein, sponsoring member of our foundation, A Synagogue for Hamelin, on being awarded the German Medal of Honor.

Congratulations and best wishes for health and happiness to Mr. Lippold von Klencke, Advisory Board President of our foundation, A Synagogue for Hamelin, on his 65th birthday.

Thank you — Toda Raba

We appreciate and thank our community members who helped make our holidays, services, and celebrations special. The homemade dishes were delicious, and we thank everyone who helped with the planning, organization, and implementation of our festivals.

Many thanks to our choir "Shalom" for their performance at this year's "Peace Festival," for brightening the afternoon for seniors at St. Monika's Home for the Aged, and for their performance at the Hamelin Museum's reception for the Brown family.

We also thank the congregation's newest music group "Benkschaft" for their concert on November 8th, in remembrance of the 71st anniversary of the Pogromnacht 1938.

We wish to acknowledge and thank those who planned, practiced, and performed the play *We came from a Stet*, written by Josef Pelts, of blessed memory. We especially wish to mention Faina Pelts, Svitlana Banschukova, and Wladimir Model. Our thanks to all involved in this special day to remember and honor Josef.

Thank you to Matvej Dvortsis for organizing the concerts in December and looking after the artists who were our guests.

We thank Dieter Vogelhuber for his work in preparing grant proposals for the Central Council of Jews of Germany.

A very special thank you to Harold and Eva Brown and Eva's brother, Peter Cranston, for their willingness and generosity in sharing their family's heirlooms and history with the Hamelin Museum and their new permanent exhibition. It was a pleasure and an honor to have them with us for the month of November, allowing so many people the opportunity to meet them and hear their story. Through their support, the new Museum's permanent exhibition will make history, and the lessons it teaches us, very real. Our congregation was proud to be a facilitator in this undertaking. The new exhibit will reach and teach young and old alike. Thank you, and a safe trip home. We hope to see you for the Museum's and our synagogue's opening in 2010!

We are grateful to each and every person and every organization, in Germany and America, for their support of our community.

Yahrzeit in December

Rosa Kirica	December 1, 2000 / 4th Kislev 5761
Frida Dachkevich	December 3, 2001 / 18th Kislev 5762
Grigori Drabkine	December 7, 2005 / 6th Kislev 5766
Igor Fuksa	December 6, 2006 / 15th Kislev 5767
Genrich Leimunskis	December 29, 2006 / 8th Tevet 5767

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,
—Your Synagogue Board

