



European Union for Progressive Judaism

March 2018 Newsletter

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A Tale of Two Cities

The Progressive Jewish community in Europe may be made up of many different countries, but it is one family that shares a love of all things Jewish, especially the music. Music has always been known to bring people together and this time, it has connected England and France.

Singers from the Liberal Jewish Synagogue (LJS) in St John's Wood, London, had the pleasure of travelling to France to sing with two Progressive communities in Paris. A few weeks later, the singers from Paris were welcomed at LJS's Shabbat services in a



LJS singers in Paris

reciprocal event.

Cathy Heller Jones, Music Director of the LJS and instigator of this project, together with Rabbis Alexandra Wright and Rachel Benjamin, co-ordinated with Rabbis Pauline Bebe of the Communauté Juive Libérale (CLJ) in Le Marais and Rabbi Tom Cohen of Kehilat Geshet in the 17th arrondissement.

In late January, a pop-up choir of singers from the LJS Members' Choir joined by other singers from our community made its début at the Friday evening service at the CJL. We were given the warmest of welcomes... *cont.../2*

Vice Chairman's Message

Spring has finally arrived, to a different degree, in all corners of our continent. I recently returned from a trip to the south of Europe and it was so delightful to see the first trees in bloom.

When I came home, I found this year's "Pesach parcel" waiting for me. In case you're wondering, even though I live in a city with a million inhabitants, of which about 1% is Jewish, there is not a single shop where or anywhere near where one is able to buy matzot, matzah meal and all the other ingredients required for a successful Seder and

culinarily-authentic Pesach week.

Therefore, our goodies always come by mail order. Too bad if I forget anything on the order as there will not be enough time for another shipment. I know that many of you are familiar with this situation. Why do I bring this up? We are all very proud of the diversity and pluralism

of our movement and the many representations this diversity has in all aspects of our Jewish lives. I would like to bring into focus for a moment the fact that we experience diversity on all levels, down to the comparatively trivial aspects of shopping for Pesach, and that these aspects also inform the way in which we relate to our wider Progressive European and global family.

Whether you can choose from a variety of matzah brands at your local supermarket or need to imagine the taste from looking at a catalogue, I wish you all a meaningful and enjoyable Pesach! – **Sonja Guentner**



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A Tale of Two Cities



LJS and Kehilat Gesher choirs together

from Rabbi Bebe and the entire community. There was much joyful singing from our choir during the service and the congregation joined in enthusiastically.

After a delicious Chavurah supper and much chatting in French and English, the congregation stayed to hear our little concert, and absolutely insisted on an encore, which we were happy to do. We shared a Yiddish-inspired folksy version, of Adon Olam.

The following morning, we set off to Kehilat Gesher to take part in the Shabbat morning service. Again, we were given a wonderful reception. The synagogue choir, led by Tom MacFarlane, was truly magnificent, and by turn, we sang separately and together. An excellent Kiddush was provided.



Singers from Kehilat Gesher

On Friday March 2, undeterred by the snow, members of Kehilat Gesher made a return visit to the LJS. They sang with us during the service and following the Chavurah supper, gave a highly enjoyable concert, ably led by Juliette Regnaud. The two choirs sang together for the Shabbat morning service, with Kehilat Gesher also singing some pieces by themselves, including an especially beautiful version of Oseh Shalom, which the LJS singers are now keen to learn.

The trips were a fascinating and positive experience for all concerned. A special camaraderie has now developed between communities in Paris and London which everyone is keen to develop further. We're already looking forward to next year's exchange programme. — **Judith King, LJS**

EUPJ

Protecting Personal Data

On 25 May 2018, the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into effect in the UK. For the EUPJ, the GDPR presents a significant change in how we both use and store people's information. We need to ensure that we do not consider this as "our data to use". It is data that individuals are allowing us to use.

The key concept is that any information that is identifiable is personal data. So our aim needs to be to minimise the amount we share.

EUPJ as a legal entity is a data controller because we decide the purpose and manner in which information is processed. The administrator and any volunteers in the office are data processors.

The best way to understand what is covered by the GDPR is to think about it this way – anything that is not administration is marketing and is therefore covered. We also need to be aware of, and ensure compliance with, the new Privacy and E-Commerce Regulations, which will have a particular impact if and when we decide to embark on email marketing and fundraising campaigns.

The challenge for organisations under the GDPR like the EUPJ is that we will all need to develop a policy that makes certain we inform those individuals whose information we hold that we are keeping it.

In developing this policy, we will need to both ensure that we are fully compliant with the new legislation and that we maintain the excellent communications skills we have developed over the years.

In particular, we will need to consider the impact of the new legislation on how we collect, store, retrieve and use data as well as the impact on the subscribers to our newsletter and delegates to our conferences.

Over the next few weeks, we will be sending a detailed communication to all individuals and organisations on our database explaining how they can "opt in" in order for the EUPJ to be able to continue communicating with them. Please take a moment to agree to this when the communication arrives.

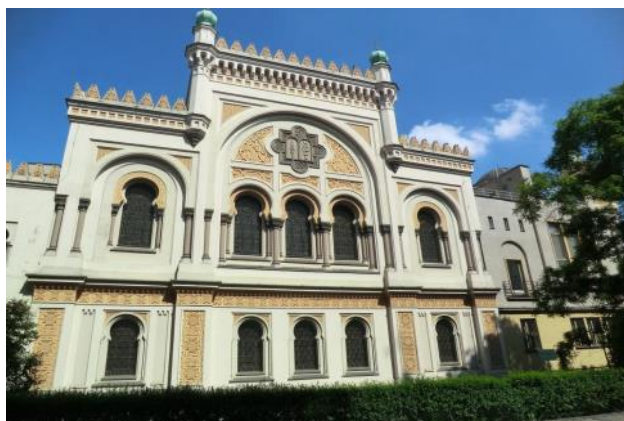
Watch this space! — **John Cohen**

Regeneration: Building the Future

Prague * Thursday 26 - Sunday 29 April 2018

Last Chance to Register: Don't Miss Out!

So, we're finally almost there. Just weeks to go to Prague and only days before we close the registration site for the conference, tours and the Rabbinic Kallah. We now have a full complement of workshops and panellists and all delegates are



encouraged to review the selection of workshops and the Shabbat afternoon tours. Click [here](#) to go to the site and select "Skeleton Programme" to see what's on offer. You can also feast your eyes on the selection of Shabbat afternoon tours. It's a good idea to decide early which tour you want to take because, as soon as they are made available, it's very likely that the available places will be snapped up very quickly.

Instead of the usual secondary booking form, we are introducing an app that everyone can access via their mobile phone, laptop or other device. The app will carry all the latest information and allow you to make selections with the minimum of effort. Welcome to the 21st Century!

We're also waiting for your applications to the Dragon's Den on Sunday morning. Projects and initiatives that have delivered positive results can be shared with other communities in a light-hearted competition, can win your community recognition and respect from the EUPJ membership AND win you a cash prize and a trophy. One of the most successful workshops of 2016 can be just as great again – but only if you submit your applications.

Another event will definitely add excitement for conference is our cabaret! Since our "Faith in Action" conference in Dresden in 2014, the late-night Saturday cabaret has become a regular feature of our conferences. It relies on your talent and willingness to entertain others. We already have a star-studded line-up of acts from six countries and there is still room for more, so if you believe that conferences should be fun, then look no further than Saturday night.

Conferences are a great place to meet old friends and to make new ones. There are many individuals and communities within the EUPJ that make successful "Connections" (using the WUPJ conference tagline) with other individuals and communities during these brief weekend interludes.

Twinning between European communities and those in the FSU has existed for many years. Now is the time for our members to make twinning



arrangements with each other so that each can learn and benefit from their "twinning" community. Some have made their connections already.

"Regeneration: Building the Future" in Prague offers the perfect opportunity for you and your community to join hands with another community. Don't miss out. Grab the moment and remember Prague as the place and time you created a new and brighter future for everyone. Be prepared for a conference you will never forget. – **David Pollak**

European Assembly Meeting

The 2018 European Assembly meeting will take place on Sunday, April 29 at 11.45 at the Prague Marriott Hotel during the EUPJ Biennial Conference.

All delegates attending the conference are welcome to join the Assembly meeting, but only

delegates from Constituent Members are entitled to vote on the proposed resolutions. The Notice calling the Assembly meeting was issued on March 23 and the Notice and all documents attached are available on the EUPJ website. Click [here](#) to read them.

Editor's Note

Witnessing the collaboration and cultural exchange between different countries is heart-warming. As you've read in "A Tale of Two Cities", England and France got together to share music from their respective communities, which was an enormous success.

It's always so rewarding to see how easily music unites individuals and communities. Let's hope this is one of many between the Progressive communities throughout Europe and internationally.

Purim is the most colourful festival celebrated by Jews. It puts Halloween to shame, especially in Israel, and it shows how connected Jews are to their history, traditions and Jewish culture. Although not everyone sent us photos of their communities' celebrations, those who did give us an idea of what went on around the world and how much fun this festival can be.

Next up is the season for celebrating, remembering, mourning and celebrating again. From Pesach to Yom Hashoah and Yom Hazikaron and ending with Yom Ha'atzmaut, Jews the world over will commemorate these events in their own



special ways.

We'd like you to share your interpretations and send us photos, articles and stories of your communal and national events. Send everything to us as soon as you can after each event and we'll do our best to include them in our April (Pesach and Yom Hashoah) or May (Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut) issues.

Please note: When sending photos, please do not make them into collages. Each photo must be emailed separately, preferably as an attachment or in the body of the email/document.

May the upcoming holidays be meaningful. – **Darryl Egnal**
(newsletter@eupj.org)

EUPJ Newsletter Deadlines

Please note: These dates are subject to change.

MONTH		COPY/PHOTOS	PUBLISH
April (pre-conf)	Fri	13/04/2018	Mon 23/04/2018
May (post-conf)	Wed	16/05/2017	Thu 31/05/2018
June	Wed	13/06/2018	Thu 28/06/2018

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Purim Celebrations

Purim Fundraiser Aids Refugee Organisation

IJC Brussel's Purim Masquerade Ball was a huge success. Not only did it celebrate the Jewish holiday, but it also raised money for Our House Project, an organisation bringing aid to Syrian refugees.

When asked what prompted this type of event, co-organisers Lisa Kelman and Anya Topolski gave an overview of their reasoning.

"I've been aware of Our House Project for some time and have been very impressed by their efforts to help integrate refugees who have recently arrived in Belgium," said Lisa.

"Their focus is on a respectful exchange of cultural awareness between both the arriving and receiving cultures, which I think is wonderful. Anya and I wanted to find a way to support this great organisation and we thought that a party celebrating Purim could be a fun way to bring people together, have a fun night and also do some good," she said.



Anya added: "Part of the story of Purim has to do with what it's like to be outsiders in society and the persecution that often accompanies this status. As Jews, I think we feel great empathy for any outsider group for we know what it's like to be refugees and to face discrimination. This party was just a small way to give back to a group we believe is doing important work."

The party was held at the home of Lisa and her husband Joris Visser, who have also generously opened their "temple" to other IJC events in the past.



The large space, decorated with candles and Purim-inspired decor, welcomed about 40 guests.

A musician got the party moving and by the end of the night, nearly everyone was dancing and singing along with the music. Our House provided food for the event as part of the catering services offered by the organisation.



A big thank you to Lisa and Anya for organising this fantastic event, one we hope will be held again next year. If you'd like to learn more about Our House Project, please visit the [website](#). The organisation has a restaurant in Ixelles that is run by the refugees and hosts brunch and lunch four days a week.

Corrections

Shabbaton in Valencia

In our February issue, we published an article entitled, "First-ever Progressive Shabbaton in Spain". This article was incorrect. It was supposed to read "the first Progressive Shabbaton in Valencia, Spain". Others have been held around the country previously. We apologise to the Spanish communities for the error.

Kol Chai Induction of Rabbi Naomi Goldman

In the caption attached to the article on Rabbi Naomi Goldman's induction at Kol Chai, we used the incorrect last name for her. We apologise to Rabbi Goldman for making this mistake.

Please note: While we do our best to publish accurate information in our newsletters, sometimes mistakes happen and errors occasionally make appearances in our content. This is not intentional and we do not mean to offend or upset any of our readers.

A Multi-lingual Purim

Beth Hillel Rome celebrated a very exciting and unusual Purim at the Grand Hotel Gianicolo in Rome. The reading of the 10 chapters of the Megillat Esther (Book of Esther) was done in nine languages – Hebrew, Italian, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Yiddish, Polish and Russian!



Rabbi Joel Oseran engaging the community

Our Megillat Esther is an ancient scroll that was donated to us four years ago by the Libertad Temple in Buenos Aires.

The evening continued with a Purim parade and a competition for the best outfit, an exciting event in which all the children participated. Afterwards, everyone enjoyed a community dinner where a musical duo directed by famous musician, Gabriele Coe, played Klezmer music.



Rabbi Joel Oseran celebrating with the children

It was a very successful Purim celebration run by our wonderful Rabbi Joel Oseran, who appeared in a very unusual costume with multi-coloured hair! – **Fabio Benjamin Fantini**



Members of Beth Hillel Rome

Hiding Behind Masks

The Bet Orim Reform Jewish Community in Hungary celebrated Purim with an Oneg Shabbat informal gathering. The children created their own unique masks with the help of Zsuzsa Ujj, our artist in residence.

Showtime came afterwards with a spectacular puppet show. Our puppetry professional, Gyula Majoros, and the talented hands of the Soup Puppet Company members presented the book of Esther to the community. The story of the Megillat Esther came to life in a



different and wonderful way accompanied by excellent Middle Eastern live music. We also commemorated Purim with the sweet-scented Haman Taschen and other cakes.

It's important to celebrate the joyful Jewish holidays. These entertaining events make connections between the children and adults and bring them closer together. Moreover, it ensures the development and growth of the congregation.

– **K Csi Komor**



Purim Celebrations

Courage in Numbers: The Excitement of Purim

Purim was well celebrated at Hungary's Sim Shalom community this month. As always, we read through the Book of Esther from beginning to end. Most people ended up in costume, but the process was interesting, giving insight into our members' bashfulness.



came dressed as a French-Canadian lumberjack; not too hard to do with a plaid shirt and a red beret.



But when I arrived, the only other person in costume was a little girl dressed as an angel.

Then the Rabbi came out in something flowery called the "Spirit of Spring" and suddenly everyone started pulling out bits and pieces to dress up in. They just weren't going to be the first or possibly the only one to be in fancy dress! – [Jess Weil](#)

Purim in Portugal



(L-R) Celebrating in Porto

Portugal celebrated Purim in style in both Lisbon and Porto. In Lisbon, with the help of the shlichah, Dr Annette Boeckler, the Megillat Esther was read and then followed by an entertaining dinner with plenty of laughter and wine. The youth movement in Porto



also enjoyed the Purim excitement with the children reading from an "Emoji" Megillah. All had fun and enjoyed the making of groggers (Purim noisemakers) and the excellent food. – [Ana Scherer](#)

(L-R) Celebrating in Lisbon



Purim Celebrations

Making Mishloach Manot in Switzerland

Or Chadasch Zurich's youth and Hebrew School children celebrated Purim together on Sunday March 3. The fun-filled event started with the Megillat Esther play, which was rewarded joyous applause, noisemaking and plenty of laughter.



After a delicious brunch, the children and their parents made "Mishloach Manot" (Purim baskets), which were then delivered to the local Jewish

nursing home. All sorts of paper flowers, painted napkins and handmade Megillat Esther were packed up as presents.

After all this "work", it was time to relax at the "make-up bar" where everyone got themselves made up to look like their favourite characters. To end the day, Purim songs were sung.

A big thanks go out to all our volunteers, the teachers from our Hebrew School, the Madrichim from the youth group, Noar Jachad, our make-up artist, Ruth, our youth group director and last, but not least, our Rabbi Ruven Bar Ephraim. The children and their parents had a wonderful and memorable party! – [Tamar Krieger](#), translated by [David Feder](#)



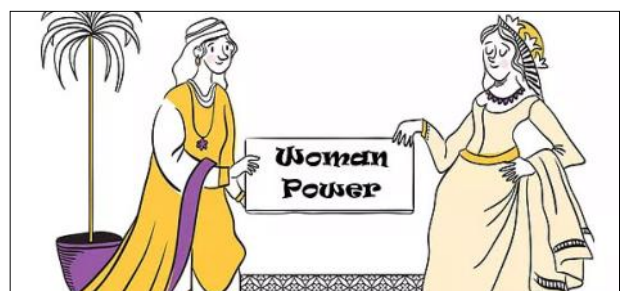
Purim and International Women's Day

The Book of Esther tells the story of two queens who coped with their king's demands: in one case by means of a forceful no, and in the other by cunning agreement, placation and supplication. One queen was expelled while the other secured her objective and saved her people.

The story of these two strong women could be read as an illustration of two different perceptions of the concept of "woman", thereby allowing us to reflect on what International Women's Day actually means.

To read the full article connecting feminism and

Purim by Noam Geva, head of IRAQ's New Media Department, click [here](#).



Remembering the Exodus

Preparing for Pesach

Pesach is around the corner. It's a time to remember what our ancestors experienced in Egypt and their long walk to freedom – literally and figuratively!

IJC Brussels in Belgium took the opportunity to prepare for Pesach while celebrating another “Super Shabbat” with approximately 40 participants from across the community.

The youngest new members (just a few months) joined members of all ages on this lovely day.

The community and Hebrew School first participated in an abbreviated family service enjoying the children's Siddur and participation by the school.

After Kiddush, which featured a scrumptious IJC-baked cinnamon challah, the school organised some activities for the children, which included making Seder plates. These were fun and educational for all the youngsters.

The adult morning programme began with a choice between a relaxing Jewish yoga class or mental stimulation in the form of linguistic comments on the

text of the Haggadah led by member Harry Swalef. Thereafter, we all shared a delicious and warm community pot-luck lunch.

After re-fuelling, the afternoon featured more choices of activities. Adults could discuss reading the Torah through ecological eyes and how this

might apply to the Ten Plagues; a personal ‘spring cleaning’ session taking stock of resolutions made during the past High Holidays to improve ourselves and the world around us; and a look at the Haggadah as a symbol of the Jewish story of origin looking at art work parallels from tribes around the world.

Activities for children

ranged from a workshop on how to engage young people in a fun and meaningful way in the Seder to Jewish music for Pesach and a Jewish arts and crafts session making decorations for the IJC Seder on March 30.

It was a “Super Shabbat” and great fun was had by all. – [Diana Kanter](#)



Unusual & Different Seder

West London Synagogue will celebrate Pesach with a difference. Led by Rabbi Sybil Sheridan, the second night Seder, entitled “Peace By Piece” (note the spellings) is the WLS project that brings together Jews and Muslims to build bridges of co-existence, learn together, and actively participate in the world for good alongside our shared values.

This Seder will include families of our religion school students who are part of the teenage “Peace by Piece” programme and participants of our year-long adult “Peace by Piece” co-existence course.

Join us on Saturday 31 March 2018 at 18.00 for a unique insight into the Pesach Seder, building on many of the themes of our co-existence work together.

Click [here](#) for more information or to join any of the other Pesach Sedarim at WLS.

Creating Seder Plates

Radlett Reform's Hebrew School children made their own Seder plates in preparation for Pesach. It was great fun for everyone and they now have their own Seder plates to use at home during Pesach.



Pesach in Europe

Most EUPJ communities hold communal Pesach Sedarim not only so that members can celebrate together, but also to make sure no one has to be alone on Pesach. It's a time for us to welcome the stranger “for we were strangers in the land of Egypt”.

Ohel Jacob in Lisbon, for example, has

extended a personal invitation to anyone who is in the city for Pesach. Please see the information [here](#).

And they are not alone. If you don't have anywhere to go, please either download the [WUPJ app](#) to find a community, or go to the [EUPJ website](#).

France

Reinstating the Tree of Life

When Keren Or inaugurated its new premises in August 2015, it brought into the building elements from the two former communities that were reuniting. One was the Tree of Life from the CJL.

The decision was made that instead of solely commemorating loved ones who are deceased, the leaves would also mark other lifecycle events and the history of the congregation.

A very moving ceremony, held on Friday March 16, saw the dedication of a number of leaves, ranging from those honouring parents (including one put to death in Algeria) and grandparents to those marking B'nei Mitzvah. There were even two to mark the return to Judaism of descendants whose parents or grandparents were murdered by the Nazis. This drew a happy mention of "rebirth".

A moving remark was made by one of the participants: "I've dedicated one leaf to my

grandmother, a victim of the camps in Poland, and also one to my confirmation. I see there can be a link – that from roots, new leaves can sprout."

Rabbi Haim Casas explaining the significance of the Tree of Life.



Portugal

Educating the Next Generation

Earlier this month, a group of 32 students from a Middle School in the Algarve region (three hours



south of Lisbon) and their teachers visited the Ohel Jacob Synagogue in Lisbon to learn about Judaism.

Adriana Souza and Ana Scherer took turns answering questions and explaining our traditions to the group. There were many questions from students and teachers alike and everyone reported that they really enjoyed learning about Progressive Judaism. One of the teachers said, "I could stay here all afternoon listening to you!"

Ohel Jacob is actively reaching out to the schools of Lisbon in order to teach the youth about Judaism. "Portugal is a place particularly welcoming to Jews; however, we must take the initiative and teach about our traditions to the general public. Education is the best antidote to hate," says Ana Scherer, a board member of the Ohel Jacob Synagogue.

Switzerland

Middle East: A Time of Uncertainty

Dr Hasni Abidi, a political scientist specialising in the Arab world, will speak about the Middle East at GIL in Geneva on April 16 from 18:45-21:45. The evening will include a buffet dinner (for a small fee).

Dr Abidi is Director of the Center for Studies and Research on the Arab and Mediterranean World (CERMAM) in Geneva, the only scientific centre in Switzerland that focuses on the affairs of the Arab world, both internally and externally. His research examines the effects of the presence of Islam in Europe.

He is also a Visiting Professor at Paris XIII University and a lecturer at Geneva University's

Global Studies Institute. In addition, he is a consultant to several international institutions and foreign foundations.

If you'd like to register for the event, please email [GIL Geneva](mailto:GIL.Geneva).



Chavurah Gescher Celebrates 20 Years

It has been an interesting journey for the Chavurah Gescher Freiburg community... from the small, near-secret early meetings in the late 1990s to the large public celebration held in the Historical Merchant's Hall on the Minster Square downtown on Shabbat Zachor... and the community recently celebrated this milestone event in style.



(L-R) Sitting: Founding member, Richard Ernst.
Standing: Cornelia Haberlandt-Krüger, Chavurah Gescher President; Sharona Butnaro and Daniel Kempin

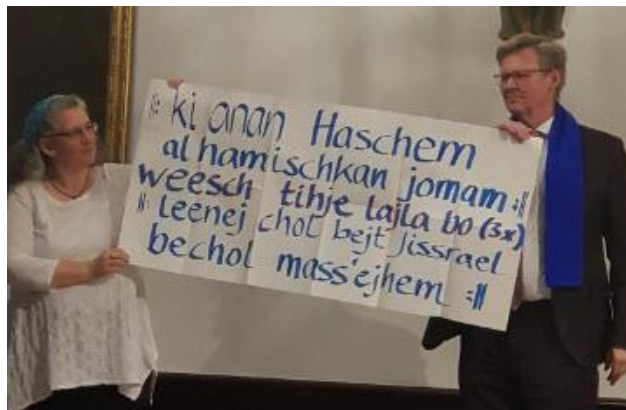
In addition to Shabbat services led by the congregation's Rabbi Diane Tiferet Lakein and visiting Cantor Daniel Kempin from Frankfurt, a workshop about Amalek and Purim was offered by Rabbi Walter Rothschild from Berlin, who served the congregation as part-time Rabbi until 2013.

There was also a workshop about the musical motives of the Jewish liturgical year facilitated by Cantor Annette Böckler from Zurich, who has led Yom Kippur services for the congregation for many years.

The anniversary weekend – held in the impressive Emperor's Hall – began Friday before Shabbat with an introductory lecture and discussion about contemporary liberal Jewish ideas and practices by Rabbi Tiferet Lakein.

Representatives from both the local Protestant and Catholic churches offered short congratulatory speeches, as did the Mayor Dr Dieter Salomon and his colleague, Ulrich von Kirchbach. The "Domim" programme in Jerusalem enabled our sister community, the New Reform Egalitarian Minyan in Bat Yam, Israel, to send its President, Sharona Butnaro, to participate in the festivities in Freiburg.

Following Havdalah, Daniel Kempin (guitar) and Dimitry Reznik (violin) rounded out the celebration with a concert of Hebrew and Yiddish songs – and even got the audience to sing along. All-in-all, it was definitely an event to be remembered and an experience from which to draw strength in the years to come!



On the poster held up by Rabbi Diane Tiferet Lakein and Mayor Ulrich von Kirchbach are the words from the *Book of Exodus (P'kudei 40: 38)*: "For over the Tabernacle, a cloud of YHVH rested by day, and fire would appear in it by night, in the view of all the house of Israel throughout their journeys." [Translation: *The Contemporary Torah: A Gender-Sensitive Adaptation of the JPS Translation (JPS 2006).*]

Daniel Kempin composed a melody for them, which he sang in call and response with the audience at the final concert after Shabbat

Adult Education

A Study Experience in Israel



The Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem welcomes students from all over as part of its diverse community of learners. [Become a Pardes student](#) to delve into classic texts and contemporary issues within an open, warm and challenging environment.

We are now accepting applications for [Summer 2018](#) and [2018-2019 academic year](#) so please don't forget to find out about the [Pardes European Leadership Fellowship](#).

Contact [Erika](#) to explore the programme that's right for you and ask us about scholarships for WUJP community leaders.

Italy

Keeping Memory Alive in the 21st Century

Shir Hadash in Florence, with the help of Rabbi Leigh Lerner and the organisation Per Non Dimenticare Do Not Forget ONLUS*, took Holocaust Remembrance Day one step further and held various activities in schools around the city for almost two months.

This extended presence in the schools is a major improvement over the usual Remembrance Day activities that become an excuse for many Italians to keep up the pretence of Italiani Brava Gente (i.e. Italy had no responsibility – everything horrid was imposed by the Germans).

Exposing thousands of students to a compassionate, progressive rabbi who was able to tie history to the reality of their lives (such as the growing problem of bullying and cyber-bullying) and to our traditional texts is a powerful act. The school councils have already asked Rabbi Lerner to do this again next year.

Rabbi Lerner (rabbi emeritus of Temple Montreal in Canada) was in Florence for his sixth consecutive three-month stint as volunteer rabbi at Shir Hadash.

Per Non Dimenticare Do Not Forget ONLUS* was founded in 2009 after the discovery of Villa La Selva, a concentration camp in Bagno a Ripoli just outside Florence. (* Non-profit organisation of social value.)

Although the organisation focuses on educating people in general, focusing on schools and the youth is a major part of its activities. Read more about the organisation in Italian or English here. –

[Lenny Robbins](#)



Plaque commemorating those interned at Villa La Selva



This sculpture, *The Gate of Memory*, is located at the entrance to Bagno a Ripoli. The monument honours all those who fought and subsequently lost their lives, during the resistance

Hungary

Sim Shalom Returns Home

The renovations in the Jewish Community Centre called Balint House were finished this month and Sim Shalom returned to its usual premises. We held our last service recently in the premises in Buda owned by our good friends, the Methodist Church of Hungary. They have been most gracious, changing their usage a bit to accommodate our programmes, and even putting up a mezuzah at the entrance to make us feel more at home.

We invited them to stay for our last service after which we had a small ceremony to thank them. We gave them a special gift to remember us – some hand-painted silk made by one of our talented members.

Although we are very grateful to have had the use of the Methodists' Iskola utca premises, we are happy to be back in Balint House, where there is more space, both for programmes and for storage of books, the Torah and other things we need for Shabbat and the festivals. It is also great to be back with the many other Jewish organisations that use Balint House.

The biggest news for our community is that we may be able to make another move into premises that would be our own sometime in the next year. I was pleasantly surprised when our bid to rent a large flat owned by the Seventh District of the City government was finally accepted by the Seventh District Council.

However it's a bit too soon to start celebrating. Much has to happen before we can even think of moving in. The place has been empty for 10 years and the heating, water and electricity all have to be put into good order before it is legal to sign a contract. In addition, we'll have to negotiate a lower rent than anticipated to make it feasible for us financially and to do renovations to make it usable as a synagogue and teaching space.

So wish us luck in all our future endeavours. We're excited about the future and look forward to continuing as a vibrant Reform community in Hungary. – [Jess Weil](#)

Spain

Shabbaton on the Spanish Valencia Coast

The Bnei Sefarad congregation in Valencia hosted its very first Shabbaton with the organisational help of Bet Januká, Rota and Bnei Israel, Galicia, earlier this month.

The weekend of non-stop activity began with the fixing of a mezuzah on the new synagogue door, and prayer services were led by Rabbi Alona Lisitsa, the sponsor rabbi for Spain and Portugal from the EUPJ.

On Saturday afternoon, Rabbi Lisitsa hosted a shiur to discuss various elements of Jewish life, so as to prioritise and express our opinions on their importance in modern life. Our deepest appreciation



goes out to Rabbi Lisitsa for the wisdom and vision that she provides, not only to her students, but also to the local congregation leaders.

In a pleasant show of governmental support, two public officials attended services on Friday evening; Francesc Gamero Lluna, the Under Secretary to the Minister of Transparency, Social Responsibility, Participation and Cooperation of the Valencian Generality, and José de Lamo, Director of the Valencia Agency for Equality and Diversity.



Activities were rounded out on Sunday morning with a leadership assembly for community representatives from around the Iberian Peninsula, including Ohel Jacob in Lisbon and Etz Jayim Asturias Xixon.

A special thank you to Sonja Guentner, EUPJ Vice Chairman, for heading up this assembly and for your infinite patience and guidance. The Shabbaton was an enriching experience where old friends met up and new friendships were born. – Yosef Fraile

Funding Jewish Initiatives

JDC Europe Community Initiative Fund

This JDC Europe Community Initiative Fund encourages Jewish communities and communal organisations to pilot new initiatives or advance key programmatic expansions in areas related to leadership development, community development, young adults, voluntarism, security,

preparedness and resilience.

The mission of the JDC Europe Community Initiative Fund is to invigorate community life by encouraging new and grassroots programming, as well as support key programmatic expansion and development.

To achieve its mission, the JDC Europe Community Initiative Fund

invests in initiatives that bolster community development. Grants are especially geared towards the promotion of grassroots community initiatives, while placing a particular value on programmes that promote inclusive, pluralist and resilient Jewish communities.

Find out how to apply [here](#).



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Ending Loneliness

Andy Nazer, Campaign Manager at the [Campaign to End Loneliness](#) spoke to over 40 people representing 20 communities both in person and online at the latest Communities that Care networking meeting.

These meetings, part of Reform Judaism's Communities that Care Initiative, are an opportunity to plan and shape the future focus of the initiative and give a space for communities to share inspiring practice and learn from each other.

The initiative gives communities the opportunity to revolutionise welfare provision – for all ages and all needs.

Andy identified some of the causes of loneliness and spoke about the negative impact of loneliness on health and well-being. He also highlighted the work being done by the Jo Cox Commission to address some common misconceptions and breakdown the stigma of loneliness.

Karen Kaye, Immediate Past Chair of Glasgow Reform Synagogue, participated via video link.

"This was a welcome opportunity to establish connections and exchange ideas with professionals and volunteers from other Reform communities. I look forward to hearing more about how we, as individual communities, can learn from the benefit of shared experiences and work together to recognise and respond to individual needs appropriately," she said.

Joan Arnold, West London Synagogue Board Member was impressed by the discussion. "I found the exchange of ideas for helping to combat loneliness really helpful. I left the meeting with some useful strategies to try to include in our practice at WLS."

David Fox of Thanet and District Reform Synagogue found the session extremely powerful. "It convinced me that we can be doing more to link



those suffering the effects of loneliness with those who want to reach out to them. In particular, I was struck by how much the younger age groups want to help."

According to Rabbi Miriam Berger of Finchley Reform Synagogue and the initiative steering team, the statistics nationally are shocking. "But our members are at a huge advantage by being part of a community. Now our task is to ensure we bring those from the margins into the centre of our concerns."

"The task may feel too big especially for our ageing communities, but perhaps it was best said by our sage Rabbi Tarfon, 'It is not our duty to complete the task', yet every phone call, visit, opportunity for companionship goes somewhere to making a difference for somebody."

Possible topics for the next stage of the Communities that Care Initiative include volunteering, joining a wider national campaign on this issue, creating a robust care system and learning from good practice and successes in our communities.

Small teams will work on these topics and feed into the initiative's programme at Chagigah, Reform Judaism's Biennial celebration in June. Click [here](#) to find out more about the conference.

Progressive Students Reconnect on Retreat

Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism jointly hosted the first-ever Progressively-led Jewish retreat for students as part of a new Alliance for Progressive Judaism initiative.

Since the turn of the year, the Reform and Liberal student chaplains, Rabbis Daniel Lichman and Leah Jordan, have teamed up for a united effort on campuses around the UK – allowing them to reach more people than ever before.

The co-chaplains are also working alongside Maya Skaarbrek, who is the fieldworker for Reform Judaism's "Jeneration" initiative for students and Ellie Lawson, LJY-Netzer's movement worker with responsibility for students.

Together, they put on Reconnect: A Retreat for Jewish Students, held in the Peak District. The retreat was designed to give participants the chance to come together and reconnect to the parts of

themselves that may have become lost or forgotten over the course of the academic year. Read [here](#) for the full story.



Commonwealth Day at Westminster Abbey

Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers represented Reform Judaism at the Commonwealth service, "A Celebration of the Commonwealth", at Westminster Abbey on Monday March 12.

Commonwealth Day is observed by people in many Commonwealth countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, the Pacific and Europe.

In London, Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth, members of the royal family and Prime Minister Theresa May attended a multi-cultural, multi-faith service at Westminster Abbey where a mixture of testimonies, performances and readings from throughout the Commonwealth took place.

Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers saying a prayer at Westminster Abbey



Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers (far left) with clergymen from different faiths

The event was broadcast live on BBC and featured a procession of Commonwealth flags, with a young flag bearer representing each of the 53 nations of the Commonwealth.

Rabbi Young-Somers read the following prayer alongside representatives of other faiths:

Peace and reconciliation within the Commonwealth

God of all creation, we stand in awe before You, impelled by visions of human harmony. We are children of many traditions – inheritors of shared wisdom and tragic misunderstanding. In that which we share, let us see the common prayer of humanity; where we differ, let us wonder at human freedom; in our unity and our differences, let us know the uniqueness that is God. May our courage match our convictions and our integrity match our hope. Amen

Reform Judaism Chagigah in June

Chagigah is our biennial celebration of Reform Judaism. Chagigah reflects the special atmosphere we will create over a weekend away, celebrating Reform Judaism and being part of something bigger. We look forward to welcoming you as one big community from June 22-24 at Eastwood Hall near Nottingham.

Something new we're introducing this year is a camping option in the grounds of the hotel. So if you fancy sleeping under the stars and have a tent, this could be for you – meals will be inside with everyone together and it is June so hopefully it will be beautiful and warm!

Last Chagigah, we launched our [Re-Imagining Leadership Initiative](#) through which over 170 leaders have been trained. Our [Communities that Care Initiative](#) has been directly responsible for raising awareness to the issues of loneliness and isolation

and creating care teams in at least two of our communities.

This year, as well as continuing the development of these initiatives, we have listened to, and worked with, our communities to launch our newest initiative: Re-Imagining Leadership: Money for Values-Re-thinking Synagogues' Finance. Read more about it [here](#).



13,000 Children Visit Newcastle Reform

Newcastle Reform Synagogue receives a large number of requests from organisations throughout the North East and beyond who want to visit the synagogue or to arrange for someone from the synagogue to go out and talk to them.

Brenda Dinsdale explains how these visits work and the impact they've had.

After retiring in 2008, Ruth Heyman started to help with hosting educational visits to our synagogue and gradually took over their co-ordination. The synagogue has built up a small dedicated team of mainly retired people who are happy to welcome visitors, talk to them about the synagogue and what goes on there, and demonstrate how Shabbat and festivals are celebrated in the synagogue and the home. We also get requests to talk about the Shoah (Holocaust) to both adults and children from age nine upwards.

Ruth has calculated that since 2009, the synagogue has hosted 382 visits from 198 different organisations. Some schools have visited several

times with different groups of children and many return year after year.

There have also been visits from children and adults with special needs, cubs, scouts, child care students, trainee teachers and priests, university students and adult education groups.

Nearly 13,000 children and their accompanying adults, and a further 250 adults, have come through the synagogue doors. That's almost 15,000 people who have learned about Judaism and, more importantly, come away with a positive view of Jews



and Judaism, which they can disseminate to family and friends.

As several teachers have said to us, many of these children come from communities which lack cultural diversity. Most of them have never met a Jew before, so it is important for us to counter possible prejudices and preconceptions by contributing to these children's knowledge of unfamiliar religions and cultures.

Read the full article [here](#).

Rabbi Lea Mühlstein New Arzenu Chair

Arzenu, the umbrella organisation of Reform and Progressive Religious Zionists, recently named Rabbi Lea Mühlstein as its new international chair.

Arzenu's chairman is tasked with the responsibility to ensure that the interests of Arzenu's constituent groups in 14 countries around the world, as well as Progressive Jews more generally, are represented within the governing bodies of the State of Israel's national institutions – these include the World Zionist Organisation (WZO), the Jewish Agency for Israel, the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemeth L'Israel) and Keren Hayesod.

This makes Rabbi Mühlstein the only British representative, and the only person under 40, on the executive of the Jewish Agency.

"It is a great privilege for me to have been elected as the international chair of Arzenu and I am grateful to my community, Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue, for allowing me to take on this volunteer position," Rabbi Mühlstein said.

"I am deeply committed to being a vocal and effective advocate for our Progressive values within the national institutions and using them as a vehicle to bring about real change in the State of Israel."

Read the full article [here](#).



United Kingdom

Birthright Israel Progressive Trip

With great excitement and much anticipation, we are happy to announce that Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism are hosting their third Birthright Israel Progressive Trip this summer from August 28 to September 6.

The trip is FREE and open to all 19-26 year olds who haven't been on an organised trip to Israel since they turned 18 (so you can come even if you've been on Israel Tour).

Expect to travel with a group of like-minded people through Israel, learning about the history of the country and immersing yourself in experiences such as swimming in the Kinneret, touring the Old City

of Jerusalem, shopping in the shuks (markets) of Tel Aviv, and spending Shabbat with Reform and Progressive families in Israel.

Throughout the trip, we will be meeting incredible



speakers that reflect the diversity of perspectives shared in the country.

This includes engaging with Arab Israelis, learning about LGBTQ history and women's liberation groups.

We know that you'll come back with lifelong friends, memories to last a lifetime, and a newly-inspired connection to Israel, so don't waste any time, [sign up](#) for

this trip now. Spaces are limited!

Read [this blog](#) about a young adult's experience on a Progressive Jewish Birthright trip in 2016.

Becoming More Jewish

According to Hava Fleming from York Liberal Jewish Community, in one sense, we are all becoming more Jewish day-by-day and year-by-year through our contributions to the tribe, to our local community and to mankind in general.

Hava has launched a project entitled "Becoming (ever more) Jewish: Why I identify as a Jew. What Judaism means to me!" in order to develop a new, creative liturgy for Shavuot.

She is appealing to everyone and anyone to send written contributions to her creative celebration of "Becoming Jewish" for use at the festival of Shavuot.

"Please think about sharing any heart-felt words you may have read or written, a song, piece of

music or a visual image, which could enhance the spirit of the festival, when we traditionally stand (again) at Mount Sinai and also affirm Ruth's words," Hava said.

"It does not matter if you think your idea is obvious; just send it in anyway, as a word doc, pdf, something scanned from a book, or a web or YouTube link. A few words about what your quoted piece means to you is also entirely appropriate and welcome, but not essential."

The deadline for submissions is May 1. All contributions and comments can be sent to Hava [here](#).

The Special Challenges of the Army of the Jewish and Democratic State

Join Rabbi Lea Mühlstein in conversation with Advocate Yaron Shavit to discuss the challenges of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) with a special focus on what it means to be a Progressive Jew committed to Jewish values in the IDF.

Shavit is the WUPJ Vice Chair:

Israel, former IMPJ chairman and current board member. The event will be held on Monday 23 April from 19:30 to 21:00 at Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue (NPLS). NPLS will be streaming the talk live via Rabbi Mühlstein's Facebook account. Click [here](#) to listen.

Click [here](#) for more details and [email Debbie Davies](#) to reserve your spot.



Reflections on Impact

The World Union's Beutel Leadership Seminar in February comprised 10 intense days of activities with hands-on classes on the streets of Israel.

The challenges and opportunities that exist in the land of Israel today considering its millennial history were the focus of the seminar.

The 18 participants, representing 13 different countries (Brazil, Australia, Zimbabwe, Belgium, Spain, the United States, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, Canada, Great Britain and Germany) had



intense debates on topics proposed by the Beutel Seminar's staff, Rabbi Steve Burnstein and Professor Paul Liptz.

The participants also learned about new outcomes, acts of resistance and dialogue in the human rights and advocacy arena led by the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC) under the direction of Rabbi Noa Sattah.

The seminar included a trip to Beit Hatfutsot, the Jewish People's Museum; a dialogue led by Rabbi Meir Azaru at Beit Daniel in Tel Aviv; a welcoming class at Sally Katz's home about ethical and ethnic dilemmas; and meetings with Rabbi Michael Marmur and several other leaders of our movement and representatives of the Association Reform Zionist of America (ARZA).

The conversation with young Bedouins and Jews of the Jewish-Arab Hagar School in Beer Sheva, who were on their gap-year programme, restored faith in the possibilities of co-existence between the two peoples, while the three nights at Kibbutz Lotan imbued all participants with a deep sense of belonging.

Read the full article [here](#).

Connecting through the Bergman Seminar

This year's Bergman Seminar for Progressive Jewish Educators, "Creating Meaningful Connections", is an intensive 10-day programme for educators from around the world.

Run by the WUPJ Center for Leadership Development and Education (formerly Anita Saltz International Education Center), it combines classroom and text study with site visits in Jerusalem and around Israel that will bring the texts and ideas to life.

The seminar's multi-disciplinary curriculum incorporates several conceptual approaches to culture, spirituality, language, history and memory.

The seminar will focus on the multitude of Jewish narratives inside and outside the Land of

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FIND A COMMUNITY

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Israel, and play off the creative tension that has existed between Israel and Diaspora communities throughout Jewish history as well as today.

The faculty will include some of Israel's finest teachers, offering an extraordinary opportunity for intellectual exploration. It takes place from July 12-22 this year.

Read more about it [here](#).

Don't forget to download the WUPJ's "[Find a Community](#)" app. It's a great resource for when you're travelling.

From Freedom to Independence

Stations of Israeli culture along the path from Pesach to Yom Ha'Atzmaut

The annual cycle of Jewish holidays naturally does not follow a chronological order. The Jewish calendar places festivals and commemorative days that have their origins in the Bible, in post-Biblical history, and in modern times alongside each other.

The contrasts and combinations of the Jewish calendar can be exciting for young people learning about their heritage. It also provides an opportunity to deepen and expand our understanding of the meaning of each festival or special day by examining it alongside others being celebrated and commemorated in close proximity.

The ancient sages themselves took this approach when they chose four weekly Torah portions to be read from Purim through to Pesach. Today, a similar opportunity is created by the proximity between Pesach and three modern commemorative days that follow the ancient festival: Holocaust Memorial Day,

the Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers, and Independence Day.

We invite you [here](#) to embark on a virtual journey from the Festival of Freedom (Pesach) through to Independence Day, marked by songs and readings from Jewish and Israeli culture.



Domim-aLike Celebrates World Jewry



Domim-aLike recently held a one-day seminar on World Jewry, and more specifically, on the connection with Progressive Jews not from North America, at Beit Hatfutsot in Tel Aviv.

Rabbis, professionals and lay leaders from IMPJ congregations learned and discussed with the WUPJ Beutel Leadership Seminar participants who hailed from 13 different countries.

The seminar also included a panel of IMPJ professionals speaking about the history of Judaism and Progressive Judaism in South Africa, Australia, South America, the Former Soviet Union and Germany.

The group finished with a tour of the fascinating and engaging Museum of the Jewish People.

Watch a brief video of the event [here](#).

Israel Reform Movement Biennial

Join us in celebrating Reform Judaism in Israel at our 23rd IMPJ Biennial. Share in a Shabbat weekend of engagement, learning, music and prayer with fellow Israeli Reform congregants, leadership, rabbis as well as our friends and partners from around the world.

This is the second time that we will be running an International Track at the IMPJ Biennial. As part of this track, you will enjoy lectures, workshops and panels in both English and Russian, as well as the musical performances, Kabbalat Shabbat and Shabbat morning services and other activities. The main opening plenary at the Biennial will be accompanied by translation into English.

[The International Track](#) will be held alongside the general Biennial programming, with more than 1,200 people in attendance, including members of our 50 Israeli congregations. Hebrew speakers coming from overseas are welcome to attend any of the Biennial programmes.

Registration and payment can be made through the Biennial's [secure website](#).

