

European Union for Progressive Judaism

March 2019 Newsletter

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Twinning success creates opportunity

Twinning can provide very important exchanges between communities. It also helps younger communities to grow through mentoring by and support from more established communities.

The connection between long-established GIL Geneva and the relatively new Beth Hillel Rome is a clear example of active twinning, where both parties are truly able to gain something from each other and where the relationship is flourishing.

This was successfully demonstrated when members of the GIL community visited Beth Hillel in Rome in February – the first step in affirming a new twinning relationship between the two Progressive congregations. The visit took place from February 8 to 10. It was a great opportunity for members of different communities to be able to exchange ideas and get to know one another.

The delegation from Geneva was headed by President Alexander Dembitz and included Rabbi François Garaï and members of their board. On the Beth Hillel side, the board was present with President Stefano Ridolfi and Rabbi Joel Oseran.

On February 8, there was a joint board meeting

of the two congregations in which Beth Hillel Rome illustrated its five-year strategic plan. During the meeting, GIL members presented the main highlights about their congregation.

In the evening, the Kabbalat Shabbat was led by Rabbi Joel Oseran and Rabbi Garaï gave a very meaningful *drasha* (sermon). The service was followed by a lovely community dinner during which



members of GIL met and socialised with their Beth Hillel counterparts.

On Shabbat morning, Rabbi Oseran led the Shacharit service. At the end, the traditional Roman *Birkat HaCohanim* (Priestly Blessing) was given to all participants in celebration of the special occasion.

A Shabbat lunch gave the opportunity for board members and leaders of

both communities to get to know each other better and discuss their common areas of responsibilities. These included culture, education, finance, religious affairs and administrative matters.

Continued on page 2



Twinning success cont...



L-R: Stefano Ridolfi and Alexander Dembitz

A special Havdalah ceremony and dinner were held in a restaurant in the Trastevere neighbourhood of Rome at premises that were once occupied by an ancient synagogue dating back to the ninth century CE. The evening was an additional occasion for the GIL delegation to get to know more members of Beth Hillel.

On Sunday morning, the GIL delegation enjoyed a guided tour (in French) of the Jewish Ghetto, Museum and Synagogue.

Lunch took place in a kosher restaurant and was dedicated to identifying the objectives of the

co-operation with practical proposals for joint projects. In appreciation for and in recognition of the visit, congregation Beth Hillel presented a plaque to the GIL congregation, thanking them for their visit and commending them on undertaking this important twinning relationship.

A special thank you goes to Michael Reik of the EUPJ and Community Connections, who helped the two congregations to team up and start the journey towards a stronger future together. – **Mario Castelnuevo and Fabio Benjamin Fantini, Co-ordinators of Twinning Geneva GIL and Rome BHR**

Reflections of a past Chairman

It's nearly a year since I stepped down and passed the baton to Sonja Guentner. So much has happened in those 12 months, most of it very positive. Below are a few highlights:

In November, we had the official launch of the EUPJ's European Union Office in Brussels. Led by Bill Echikson, an experienced lobbyist, we are gaining higher visibility and credibility in the corridors of European power.

In Italy, a national federation of the four Progressive congregations has been formed and is already making an impact both within these four and also in the wider Italian Jewish community. The benefits include raising awareness as well as gathering respect.

Twinning arrangements among European communities have mushroomed. Under the leadership of EUPJ Vice-Chairman Michael Reik, this project has really taken wings – as you can see in our cover stories.



The European Rabbinic Association (ERA) goes from strength to strength. Although it is a relatively young organisation, it is already playing an important role giving religious guidance as well as supporting our rabbis and communities. Rabbi Dr René Pfertzel reflects on his rabbinic career, which has culminated in his leadership of the ERA, in *Rabbinic*

Ruminations.

We have also updated the EUPJ website, which will now include a news feed and a few other exciting new features, and are reassessing our Facebook page to make it more active and inclusive.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. There will be much to discuss when we close the circle that started in Prague, took us to a ground-breaking launch in Brussels and sees us together again in Rome this May.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the next EUPJ Shabbaton in May. – **Miriam Kramer**

East meets West: Bringing Europe closer together

Over the past few months, Community Connections has been very busy in helping to maintain the valuable and worthwhile twinning arrangements it has helped set in motion.

We can already confidently say that over the past year, we have helped to maintain and support congregations in Progressive communities in the Ukraine, where congregations may have previously felt isolated and somewhat alone.

One such example can be seen with the twinning of Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue (NPLS) with Teiva, the Liberal Jewish community of Lviv, who also connected with LJG Amsterdam on a recent trip to the city. Nataliya Tolok gave us an overview:

"In February, with the assistance of LJG Amsterdam, a few people from the Lviv community visited Holland and got to experience the activities of other Jewish communities in Europe.

"We attended a terrific concert in the synagogue/museum in Coevorden and another one in Odoorn. Part of the first concert included an amazing performance by the wonderful and well-known Klezmer group, Di Gojim. We performed some Israeli dancing while they played," she said.



"We were so excited with the conversation during our meeting with the rabbis in Amsterdam that we forgot to take photos. It was a very fruitful meeting. We discussed the opportunities to run projects for our youth, who have already been invited to Amsterdam for a Shabbaton with the Dutch youth, which will include a trip through all the historical Jewish places in the city.

"We discussed participation in our international volunteer summer camp for Dutch and Ukrainian youth, as well as family root trips for people from the Dutch community whose origins are in our region. And all these options are open to anybody who would like to connect with us from all countries!

"We are so grateful to you, Community Connections, for connecting us with the Amsterdam community. It was a real pleasure and inspiration for



Nataliya Tolok and Katerina Stepanyuk with members of Di Gojim, Sjaak van der Reijden, Eric Roelofsen, Alysia van Horik, Jaap Mulder and Tseard Nauta

us to meet them. We do hope for further co-operation in the future. And you are all always welcome to Lviv," said Nataliya.

Staying in the Ukraine, we have also twinned the Haver Synagogue in Cherkassy with the Sukkat Shalom Synagogue in Wanstead. Sukkat Shalom produces a monthly magazine and sends it to congregants of the Haver Synagogue, which helps

to connect the two communities and aids in building a meaningful and special relationship. We also hope to have a new relationship up and running soon between Shirat HaYam in Odessa and a British community, with the possibility of a French one as well.

Community Connections is now focusing on twinning between Western European Communities and building meaningful and long-lasting relationships. One such example is the above-mentioned twinning between GIL Geneva and Beth Hillel Rome.

In addition, there has been a recent visit by members of the Stockholm Jewish Progressive Community to the Finchley Progressive Synagogue in London. – **Michael Reik**

Odessa: L-R: Rabbi Julia Gris and Rita Fruman (Shirat HaYam) with Galina Polskaya (Cherkassy Reform)



Connecting Europe with Israel



Under Domim, relationships between Israeli and European Progressive Communities have also progressed, with Keren Or in Lyon now twinned with Or Chadash in Haifa. Celia Naval provided an update:

“So far, it has been confined to a first project concerning the youth who are preparing for their B’nei/B’not Mitzvah. The very different structures in the two synagogues have made this quite a challenge.

“In Haifa, they have several three-month intakes per year with a very quick preparation period, whereas our youth spend at least two years in our classes, and often, several years from pre-school upwards,” she said.

“However, events like the Chanukah project, which involves performances through a video link, are easier as they involve the community on both sides.

“Linked to this partnership, both our rabbi and rabbinic student have, in the past, been in Haifa and been in direct contact with Or Chadash and its team. This picked up in the summer after Anna Kislanski was in Europe and the teams decided on a first project involving our Bar/Bat Mitzvah students,” Celia said.

“After written exchange, a video conference was held between the adults involved on either side to define the objectives.

“We decided to get the students to do research on their own families, to exchange information, to write and enact one another’s stories, due to come to fruition for Purim. They filled in a questionnaire

about their families, presented this information to their peers with pride and emotion, and then started tracing their family trees. Some exchanged the information with their partners in Haifa.

“Hebrew classes on related vocabulary, texts and poems are planned in Lyon, which will culminate in a display of the family trees and other texts on boards for the rest of the community to share,” she said.

“We are also encouraging the youngest members, who are not yet directly involved in the project, to think about their families, drawing all family members into the fun.

“In addition, a WhatsApp group is planned between the two groups of youngsters in Lyon and Haifa who are involved in this year’s project.

“The Chanukah link-up worked well despite last-minute technical hitches. Timing was a juggling act as Israel is ahead of France in time and activity, but we managed and were pleased to meet those we could,” said Celia.

Above photo: Live link-up between Keren Or and Or Chadash

Find a twin community

If you are interested in being part of a twinning project, or would like any further information, please email [Michael Reik](#) or [Sarah Smerald](#) at Community Connections.

March 2019 Contents

Community Connections	1	European Rabbinic Assembly	7	Germany	15
Reflections of a past Chairman	2	Gathering of the Torah Scrolls	9	Italy	16
Editor’s Note	5	Czech Republic	10	Israel	16
Newsletter deadlines	5	EUPJ EU Office publicity	11	United Kingdom	17
Who’s who in the EUPJ	5	France	12	WUPJ	20
EUPJ Conference in Rome	6	Switzerland	14	Jewish Education	20

Editor's Note: Times they are a changin'

May you live in interesting times – the curse disguised as a blessing – seems especially relevant to our current experience. Turbulence, disorder and trouble seem to be key words in the political arena with Brexit imminent, revisionism taking hold in Europe, anti-Semitism on the rise, and the possibility of major change in Israel looming.

But life continues and we still celebrate our beautiful lifecycle events with family and friends, delight in our entertaining festivals like Purim, and reflect on our history and freedom while filling our stomachs together during Pesach.

Our communities are constantly reaching out to each other across borders and connecting in ways that are bringing us closer together despite the efforts of outside forces. New congregations are being formed, Jewish youths are making their voices heard in the corridors of power more than ever before, and our interfaith efforts are getting stronger every day.

History may repeat itself, but with each iteration, our values, ideals and ability to fight for what we believe in secure us our place in this world. Our belief in equality and pluralism is reflected in



organisations like Women of the Wall, which recently celebrated 30 years amid violence and abuse, but stood tall and proud and continued to pray at the Kotel on Rosh Chodesh.

We Jews, we Progressive Jews, are nothing if not formidable. We will always stand up and be counted!

And now down to business...

The EUPJ Shabbaton in Rome is around the corner. It has taken a while for us to get the registration process up on the website, but you can now go online and register.

You'll be able to read more about it further on, but don't delay. We'd love to see you all there.

Chag Purim Sameach and Shabbat Shalom. – Darryl Egnal, newsletter@eupj.org.

PLEASE NOTE

While every effort is made to provide accurate information and correct spellings of names in this newsletter, sometimes gremlins step in and mistakes appear. This is not intentional and we apologise in advance if we have offended or upset anyone.

Who's who at the EUPJ?

Honorary Life Presidents

Leslie Bergman
Ruth Cohen

President

Gordon Smith

Vice-Presidents

Miriam Kramer
Robert Weiner

Chairman

Sonja Guentner

Vice-Chairman: Governance

John Cohen

Vice-Chairman: Finance

David Pollak

Vice-Chairman: Israel & Twinning

Michael Reik

Vice-Chairman: Education and Interfaith

Rabbi Menno ten Brink

EUPJ Rabbinic Assembly

Rabbi Dr René Pfertzel,
Chairman

European Beit Din

Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein,
Chairman
Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick,
Convener

EUPJ's European Union Office

William (Bill) Echikson, Director

Administrator

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Rome is calling! EUPJ Shabbaton coming up

Did you know there were Jews in Rome long before the Christians arrived? And that Rome has one of the oldest, continually surviving Jewish communities outside Israel?

These, and other interesting tidbits that you're sure to discover when you visit Rome, are facts shared by travel journalist, Steve Meacham, in his article on '[Rome and its Jewish quarter](#)'.



Why do we mention this? Well, the EUPJ's Shabbaton, European Assembly and Executive Board meeting will be held in Rome in less than two months – and we want you all to join us.

The conference takes place from May 17-19, and Beth Hillel Rome, the only Progressive Jewish community in the capital, will be our hosts for the weekend.

As mentioned in our February issue, the



programme will start on Friday with a few seminars and discussions on a variety of topics. Rabbi Joel Oseran will lead all the religious services, the first of which will be the usual warm, inclusive Kabbalat Shabbat service. It will be followed by a dinner in the evening.

Saturday will include a Shacharit service for the community. In the afternoon, different tours around the city will be offered, with one of them taking you on an interesting, historical Jewish tour.

Sunday morning will begin with additional workshops and seminars. After lunch, the European Assembly and Executive Board meeting will be held, and the weekend will conclude in the afternoon.



Beth Hillel will celebrate its fifth anniversary with a gala dinner at which Franca and Giorgio Coen will be honoured for their contribution to Judaism in Italy. This is not part of the EUPJ events and seats to this dinner are limited. Please get in touch with [Beth Hillel](#) if you would like to attend.

There have been a few delays with registration due to technical difficulties, but you can now reserve a place on this exciting weekend. Don't delay. [Book your space now](#).

EUPJ Newsletter Deadlines

MONTH	COPY/PHOTOS	PUBLISH
April	Wed 04/04/2019	Wed 17/04/2019
May	Wed 01/05/2019	Thu 16/05/2019

Please note: These dates are subject to change.

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Rabbinic Ruminations: Rabbi Dr René Pfertzel

This year marks the 10th anniversary of my rabbinic journey. I am not talking about my ordination, which took place in 2014, but the first time I set foot on the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) Jerusalem campus to start the rabbinic programme.

I loved my life in Jerusalem. It wasn't without challenge though. Suddenly, I had lost my social status, I had to share a flat in my middle age; I had to adapt to two new languages: English and Hebrew (I am French, for those who don't know); and I had to adapt to this unique mix of American-Israeli culture around the college.

However, you never get bored in Israel. There is always something happening. I even remember the morning symposium of cats gathering at the bottom of my building. They were arguing so loudly that sometime I had to ask them to keep it quiet. I don't know what they were arguing about, but I guess it was some obscure feline *Halachah* on which they were disagreeing.

The Liberal community of Lyon, Keren Or, at which I served as a rabbi until 2016, sponsored me. I met them during the High Holy Days in 2004 and our relationship grew strong over the years. My decision to become a rabbi emerged from my experience with them. Keren Or is a lively community with a very strong drive and a solid and committed lay leadership.

Lyon is a fascinating case. In 2003, the former community split up, and one of my goals was to help them to come back together. It wasn't an easy situation, but we did it. In 2013, the two communities merged again and created Keren Or (Ray of Light). It was a team effort based on good will.

This was when I discovered my passion for mediation. There is always a solution to a crisis, insofar as we take it as an opportunity to learn from it and to grow. My ordination address drew its inspiration from Moses, not the lawgiver, but the leader who struggles with a challenging people.

I would advise anyone wanting to become a rabbi to meditate using Moses as the example! My other biblical hero is Aaron who is, according to our tradition, *rodef shalom* (pursuer of peace). He too has greatly inspired my rabbinic practice.

For some time, I have been commuting between Lyon and London, where I served several communities of Liberal Judaism: Finchley Progressive Synagogue, then the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, and finally Kingston Liberal Synagogue where I am now settled permanently.

I learned an enormous amount by working in those two countries. Firstly, a French liberalism that is more like British Reform, and a British liberalism that is akin to American Reform. And secondly, a different flavour: the French Jewish community is

largely Sephardi, whereas in Britain, the tone is more Ashkenazi. This reminds me of a sticker I used to see in Israel: "There are many ways to be Jewish."

As a French man born in Strasbourg, Alsace, at the heart of Europe, having served a French community and now living happily in Britain with my partner Graeme, I am a passionate European. I love the idea of a group of countries that used to be at war coming together and trying to overcome their differences for the common good.

When Rabbi Ruven Bar-Ephraim asked me if I was interested in chairing the ERA, I was at once humbled – am I

able to lead a rabbinic body at this stage of my life? – and also very excited, because I strongly believe we need more Europe and not less.

It is exhilarating to travel all over the continent, to meet Rabbis and communities with so many different backgrounds and life stories, searching ways to work together to make our Progressive voice heard.

I am convinced that, as Progressive Jews, we have strong messages for Europe: diversity is not a threat, but an enrichment; repairing the world involves also repairing the self; the Golden Rule, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself", is valid for anyone, at any time and in any place; and finally, God's love for humankind extends to all human beings from all persuasions and to the whole of creation.

But there is still much work to do. – **Rabbi Dr René Pfertzel**, rpfertzel@gmail.com



I am a passionate European. I love the idea of a group of countries that used to be at war coming together and trying to overcome their differences for the common good.

Rabbis and Cantors available

One of the responsibilities of the European Rabbinic Association (ERA) is to ensure that communities that don't have a regular rabbi or cantor have the opportunity to receive one for the High Holy Days and other important holidays.

In this issue, we have two people who have offered their services to a European community during this year's High Holy Days. They have shared their information with us.

Feel free to contact them directly or get in touch with [Rabbi Pauline Bebe](#).

Rabbi Corrie Zeidler

I was ordained in 2006 at the HUC-JIR in Jerusalem and have more than 13 years of rabbinical experience. I served in Israel for seven years as the rabbi of Kehillat Ma'alot Tivon in Kiryat Tivon, and thereafter, I spent five years as the rabbi of Kehillat Aree Hanegev, Tilburg, in the Netherlands. Simultaneously, I was the rabbi responsible for Kehillat Adat Yeshurun, Dieren.

Currently, I am not serving as a congregational rabbi and there is no rabbinic position opening up here in the near future.

I teach and co-ordinate the nationwide course for conversion in Amsterdam, and



work as pastoral caregiver in Dutch prisons for Jewish (and other) inmates.

I would like to be of help to a congregation that doesn't have its own rabbi for the High Holy Days. I am a native Dutch speaker and speak fluent English. My Hebrew is also excellent, having lived in Israel for 25 years and being married to an Israeli.

I prefer not to stay more than a few days at a time with the congregation, but I am willing to fly in as needed. I can come alone or with my husband, depending on the arrangement with the congregation.

Our children are all grown and not living at home any longer. Email [Rabbi Corrie Zeidler](#)

Cantor Wendy Shermet

In June this year, I will retire from Temple Israel in Omaha, Nebraska, after having served for 18 years. They have honoured me with the title, Cantor Emerita.

My husband and I are eager to find an opportunity overseas as the prospect of learning about a new Jewish community is very exciting. It will give me the opportunity to continue to share with others and teach them all I have been able to learn over the years.

As you know, cantorial graduates of HUC-JIR are ordained as well, and therefore, I am flexible and will be happy to act as your cantor or spiritual leader, or both.

I have had many shared experiences with both the non-Jewish communities and our denominational brethren. Temple Israel is the founding member of Tri-Faith, and I teach and learn alongside our church and mosque partners.

I have co-led trips to Israel for our community teenagers with the Orthodox and Conservative



rabbis, each respectful of what the others bring to our Jewish community. I have also led about five college trips for potential students so they could experience Jewish life on campus, and this year, took our 9th and 10th graders on the L'Taken trip to

Washington, DC, where we met with our elected representatives.

One of the privileges of the Cantorate is to be with people in both their happiest and saddest moments. In one day, I have held the hand of someone who was dying and placed a Torah scroll in a student's arms for the first time. I have been responsible for sermons and eulogies, welcomed new Jews to the community, and performed every manner of pastoral care.

Jewish music defines Judaism for me; it is our time, values and beauty. When people sing with me because they are motivated to offer their own voices, it is

meaningful. I love to sing the modes and chants along with traditional and modern music. Teaching is critical, from helping to prepare a student for Bar or Bat Mitzvah, or engaging an adult in all that Judaism has to offer. Email [Cantor Wendy Shermet](#)

A gathering of the Torah scrolls



Since our article on the [Memorial Scrolls Trust](#) in the January issue, the largest-ever gathering of the Trust's Torah scrolls has taken place.

An assembly of more than 70 Torah scrolls from war-time Czechoslovakia took place at Temple Emanu-El in New York, thanks to the Memorial Scrolls Trust of London, which was set up to care for the 1564 scrolls that survived the Shoah and were brought to London. Some 1400 have since been allocated to communities and organisations around the world.

Around 800 members and friends of the MST and Temple Emanu-El participated in the event on February 5, with a procession of the scrolls taking place through the synagogue.

The event marked 55 years since the scrolls arrived in London on February 7, 1964.

It was timed to mark the opening of a new exhibit in the shul's museum called: "The Guiding Hand: An Exhibition of Torah Pointers, Past and Present", which will display 200 Torah pointers of all styles



and national origins, some up to 400 years old. The exhibit will be on display through May 30.

You can read more about the event on The Memorial Trust's [Facebook page](#) and in an article published in [The Jewish Standard](#).

There is also an [interesting video](#) of event, which you can watch. – [Jeffrey Ohrenstein](#), Chairman, Memorial Scrolls Trust

The Torah Scrolls in all their glory



Calling all rabbis

We introduced the *Rabbinic Ruminations* column last year to enable readers to find out a little about the EUPJ rabbis who serve our communities. This is not a column for the *parsha* of the week or religious studies. It is a way to get to know the various rabbis across Europe. If you would like to contribute to this column, [please email Darryl Egnal](#) for details.

The birth of Ec Chajim (Tree of Life)

After several months of discussion and preparation, Ec Chajim held its inaugural Kabbalat Shabbat service and dinner at the Hotel Modré Růže Blue Rose Hotel in Prague on Friday March 8. About 120 people aged between one and 91, attended the event.



Student rabbi David Maxa with Ambassador Daniel Meron, who lit the first candle

Dignitaries included Daniel Meron, the Israeli Ambassador to the Czech Republic, and his wife, Jill; Tomáš Kraus, Secretary-General of the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities (FJC), and his wife; Rabbi Edward van Voolen and Professor Ralph Selig, representatives of the Abraham Geiger College; David Pollak and Jonathan Wootliff, representatives of the EUPJ; members of the Ec Chajim Board; František Fendrych, the President of EUPJ member-community ZLU, and many friends and members of the Prague Jewish community.

The service was led by student rabbi David Maxa accompanied by Judita Maxa Bergmannová (his wife) and Ralph on keyboard. David delivered an uplifting sermon and Tomáš delivered a fascinating account of the history of the Jewish community in the Czech Republic over the past 30 years.

During the ceremony, Ec Chajim remembered the 3792 Jews from the Terezin family camp, who were murdered in Auschwitz on the March 8, 1944. It was the biggest mass murder of Czechoslovakian citizens ever. Four candles were lit, each one representing about 1000 Jews.

As our honoured guests, Ambassador Meron and Secretary General Kraus lit the first two. Judita lit the third one in honour of her father, Pavel Bergmann, who was a survivor of the Terezin family camp.

Anna Weberová was asked to light the final candle because she was the first Bat Mitzvah at which student rabbi Maxa officiated two years ago.



Student rabbi Maxa and Chairman Anna Nosková

A group of 30 young adults from the VJS Nord, a Jewish group of students from the North of Germany, who were on a four-day cultural tour of Prague, joined the celebration on Friday evening. They livened up the proceedings with some enthusiastic singing and dancing during and after dinner.

Ec Chajim was born as a direct result of discussions that first took place immediately before the EUPJ Biennial Conference in Prague in April last year. Following that meeting, the EUPJ formed the Prague Steering Group to offer further support and guidance in the development of pluralistic Judaism in the Czech Republic.

The board is chaired by Anna Nosková and includes Anna, Katka Weberova, Mirek Daniel Rux, David Kraus and Judita Maxa Bergmannová, all of whom made significant contributions to the EUPJ conference last year.

L-R: Student Rabbi David Maxa with board members Katka Weberova, Anna Nosková, David Kraus, Mirek Daniel Rux and Judita Maxa



The birth of Ec Chajim cont...

Jonathan Wootliff continues the excellent work he has given for many years to Progressive Judaism in Prague in the shape of Bejt Simcha and ZLU. His contribution cannot be understated.

The next day, I facilitated a meeting of the Ec Chajim management board during which all members expressed their goals for their new community and came up with ideas on how these goals could be reached. They also decided who would take responsibility for each of the various tasks that would culminate in Ec Chajim becoming

a fully-fledged member of the EUPJ.

Under the leadership of the soon-to-be-ordained student rabbi David Maxa, the management of Ec Chajim, the guidance of the Prague Steering Group and the EUPJ, we should all take pride in this addition to the EUPJ family and we wish them all *yasher koach* and *b'racha* in the coming months and years.

This is a significant development in and addition to the story of Progressive Judaism in Prague. –

David Pollak



Student rabbi David Maxa with (L-R): Tomáš Kraus, Judita Maxa Bergmannová and Anna Weberová

Postscript: On Monday March 11, an historic event was added to Ec Chajim's story. Student rabbi David Maxa officiated at the Bat Mitzvah of Elya Ernyei in the Jerusalem Synagogue, originally

built as a Reform synagogue in 1906. It is still equipped with the original organ and after the Bat Mitzvah, Professor Selig treated everyone to a few tunes on the magnificent instrument..

EUPJ EU Office

Gaining recognition in the media

Since the launch of the [Holocaust Remembrance Project](#) in January, many articles have been published internationally.

They include coverage of the launch event in January (mentioned in our February newsletter) as well as articles and opinion pieces written as a result. We've included these articles here, with links, for your interest.

Europe/US: *Politico*, European edition of the American news organisation

[Study finds Holocaust revisionism rampant in EU's East](#)

[What's behind Europe's surge in anti-Semitism?](#)

Spain: *La Vanguardia*

[Denuncian que la memoria del Holocausto se resiente con auge del nacionalismo](#)

Belgium: *La Libre Belgique*

[Des pays européens n'ont toujours pas clarifié leur rôle dans l'Holocauste](#)

The Balkans: *Balkan Insight*

[Holocaust Revisionism Widespread in Croatia, Warns Report](#)

Israel: *The Times of Israel*

[Holocaust revisionism on the rise in parts of Europe](#)

[Romania lights the way in fighting Holocaust revisionism](#)



Young adults discover Judaism in Paris

The Progressive communities in Paris hosted 12 young adults from the Klal Yisrael Fellowship for a week of discovery, learning and networking in the French capital.

The [Klal Yisrael Fellowship](#) programme is designed to bring participants face-to-face with Progressive congregations across Europe, learn about their growth and challenges, and listen to larger issues facing our movement and the Jewish people.

There were four participants from Israel, four from the US, and one each from Poland, Ukraine, Guatemala and Germany. This was the second seminar of their 2019-2020 fellowship year and it took place in the French capital from March 3-10.

Participants on the Klal Yisrael Fellowship programme, aged 21-30, meet for three seminars over the course of 10 months – in Israel, North America and Europe – to collaborate and develop their capacity to impact an area of Jewish life that is important to them.

With the generous co-operation of Rabbi Pauline Bebe, Rabbi of CJL, and other Progressive congregations in Paris, participants

spent the week meeting with a range of rabbinic, student, religious and local leaders.

Kabbalat Shabbat and Shabbat dinner were held at CJL with Rabbi Bebe and young adults from Tamar France. On Shabbat morning, participants met with

MJLF's Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur and visited her congregation to talk about current issues facing Jews in Paris, including anti-Semitism.

During the week, they attended a talk with Rabbi Jonas Jacquelin from ULIF Copernic, about his experiences as a young rabbi in the oldest community in Paris.

The Klal Yisrael Fellowship is a joint programme of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), and the Israel Movement for Progressive and Reform Judaism (IMPJ).

The young adults had an amazing time and the trip was filled with many highlights. Read about some of them on the [WUPJ website](#).



Progressive Judaism shines at Limoud Paris

Limoud is an exciting, innovative, fun experience that combines learning, entertainment, community, social networking and more. Organised almost entirely by thousands of volunteers, Limoud is celebrated in more than 80 communities around the world.

Liberal Judaism was well represented at the 14th Edition of Limoud France, which attracted 650 participants over the weekend of March 8-10.

Student rabbi Iris Ferreira led the Shabbat services, while community members led conference discussions on a variety of topics including: "The attributes of God" (Jean- François Levy), "Are we all mutants?" and the "The extreme right in the United States" (Benoit Gobitz).

MJLF's Talmud Torah Director, Revital Berger-Shloman, presented a session on "Hebrew Renaissance" and hosted two *chavruta* study sessions entitled, "From origins to originality", with teachers, parents and other delegates.

Gad Weil, MJLF President, and Gali Geberovich, Director of the Young Adults Division at the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ), held a discussion on "The future of Liberal Judaism in France and in Israel".



Gali Geberovich and Gad Weil spoke about the future of Liberal Judaism. Seen here with translator Perlette Ley (far left) and moderator Robert Ley (far right)

Both spoke optimistically, convinced that Progressive Reform Judaism offers Jews of all backgrounds a meaningful response to the challenges of modern life in their respective countries. Their session was moderated by Arzenou France.

Arzenou set up a stand for information and invited the Liberal communities to get involved. MJLF Paris and Keren Or Lyon participated.

In addition to all the discussions and presentations, Limoud participants shared sessions in music, dance, comedy and other types of entertainment.

There were activities for young children, teenagers and young adults, and every person of every age contributed to and enjoyed the weekend in one way or another.
– Robert Ley

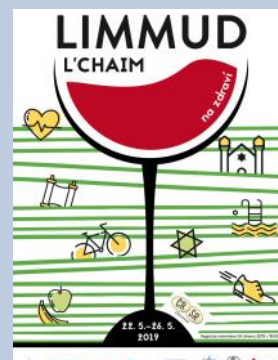
Gad Weil and Gali Geberovich drew in the crowds for their discussion on the future of Liberal Judaism



Limmud events coming up in Europe

Diverse, grassroots Jewish learning 'Limmud' events will take place throughout Europe. The next few events are [Limmud Freiburg](#) (April 7), [Limud Mallorca](#) (May 11-12), [Limmud Czech Republic](#) (May 22-26), and [Limoud Marseille](#) (May 26).

Keep checking the [Limmud website](#) to find out when Limmud takes place in your country. (Note: *Limmud is spelt differently in each language, hence the discrepancies in this article.*)



French-speaking youth visit Jerusalem

In early March, a group of 29 B'nei Mitzvah from Progressive communities across France and French-speaking Switzerland were welcomed to Beit Shmuel as part of a mission organised by



the World Zionist Organization under the supervision of Gusti Yehoshua Braverman.

The youngsters toured Israel and met with peers from Progressive communities. They spent Friday evening at Kol Haneshama in Jerusalem, and met with young people from Progressive congregations in Mevaseret Zion, Harel and Kol Haneshama. Many of the visitors had previously attended MachaNetzer, the Reform Zionist youth movement annual summer camp in France.

On the last day of their visit, they met with Lior Argaman, Director of Youth and Young Adult Engagement at the WUPJ, who took them on a tour of the WUPJ/HUC-JIR campus, spoke to them about the history of Progressive Judaism in Israel, and gave them an overview of young adults' activities worldwide.

Judith Guy, a *madricha* (leader) with the group, shared her experiences on Shnat Netzer, the Netzer Olami/WUPJ gap-year Israel programme.

The trip concluded with participants sharing their experiences and what they felt they would take away from the week-long programme. An overwhelming majority of the B'nei Mitzvah said they would continue the friendships made during the trip and the positive connection they felt towards Israel. And the many souvenirs would, of course, be there to remind them of this memorable Israel encounter.



Switzerland

First youth parliament

Jewpa, the first Jewish Youth Parliament of Switzerland, will initiate engagement at a forum for youth to participate, discuss and shape their future on Sunday, March 31 from 10:00 to 17:00.

This is an event of the Swiss Union of Jewish Students (SUJS) in co-operation with the umbrella organisations SIG and PLJS as well as most of the Swiss Jewish communities.

The newly-formed parliament's aim is to bring young Jews (including children of mixed marriages where only the father is Jewish, and children whose families are in the process of conversion) between the ages of 16 and 35 together to identify their specific concerns; and, whether by consensus, contradiction or compromise, to define the opinion of their generation and pass it on to the established institutions.

Get your youth to [register now](#) and spread the word.



Switzerland

The scripts of Qumran

What do the discoveries of the Dead Sea tell us today? On more than 2000 ancient and authentic parchment scrolls, all written by hand, we read in the Qumran-Scrolls about the daily life of the Jews living during that period in Jerusalem and Qumran.

These scrolls contain rituals, messianic hopes and biblical comments. Furthermore, they grant us a glance into the Genesis of Christianity.

Migwan Liberal Jewish Congregation in Basel will host an evening shiur with academic, Dr Richard Breslauer, who will take participants on a fascinating

journey to Qumran on Wednesday, March 27 at 19:30.

Dr Breslauer was born in Zurich in 1951. From 1980 until 1984, he studied political science and Jewish philosophy at Bar Ilan University in Israel. In 2001, he received his PhD in Judaism at the University of Luzern. Dr Breslauer has been teaching Jewish studies for many years at the Zürcher Lehrhaus and at the universities of Basel and Luzern. He also is the director of a bank in Zürich.

Please email [Migwan](#) or [Ofek](#) to book your spot or find out more.



Qumran National Park: Home of the Dead Sea Scrolls



Dead Sea Scrolls found in 1947 in the Qumran caves

Germany

Hamelin community celebrates 22 years

Children, young people and new members of our community probably take it for granted that our synagogue exists. But everything has its beginning and so it was for us too.

On February 18, 1997, our Jewish community was founded – the first synagogue to open in Hamelin after the Shoah. As a religious community, we have since taken our place in the religious, cultural and social landscape of the city and the county, and continue to deepen our commitment to Reform Jewish life in all its versatile and pluralistic forms.

The birthday party for our congregation on Sunday, February 17 was a virtual thank you note to

everyone who has helped us to establish and grow our community over the past 22 years. Some of the founder members attended and it was a pleasure to thank them personally.

We honoured Polina Pelts and Hans-Georg Spangenberg, a Catholic deacon, for their contribution to and support of the foundation and development of the Hamelin Jewish community. It was a bitter-sweet day as we had to honour Polina in absentia due to illness and say goodbye to Hans who is moving away due to retirement.

Gabriele Lösekrug-Möller, Senator of the German Parliament and a member of our Synagogue Foundation, pointed out the significance of our community to the city and county of Hamelin.

Chairman, Rachel Dohme, thanked everyone for their kind words, and then presented Hans-Georg Spangenberg with a painting of the synagogue in recognition of his 22 years of support for the community, which member, Borys Kagan, had painted especially for him. Read the full article in [English](#), [German](#) or [Russian](#).



L-R: Artist Borys Kagan with Hans-Georg Spangenberg and the painting

History of Progressive Judaism in Italy

March 19 marked what we hope is another milestone in the growth of Progressive Judaism in Italy.

Il Pitigliani, the Roman Jewish Community Centre belonging to the Orthodox Community, was the venue of a discussion on the History of Reform Judaism in Italy. Speakers included Jewish Historian Bruno di Porto, Franca Eckert Coen and Joyce Bigio, co-Presidents of the Italian Federation for Progressive Judaism (FIEP), Carlo Riva, President of Lev Chadash, one of Milan's Progressive congregations, and Daniele Naim, Board Member of Il Pitigliani.



Our leaders explained our Progressive movement in Italy, our objective to achieve recognition from the established body, UCEI, the Progressive approach to ritual, prayer and Jewish practice, our policy of conversion, our love of Torah and our dedication to Israel.

As Joyce Bigio explained, "We can be proud of our Progressive role in Italian Judaism. We represent modern Jewish practice springing from the Enlightenment; we believe that we, as Jews, continue to interpret Torah in light of our modern life and that Judaism continues to develop as it has done for millennia. This continuum allows our people to survive and to thrive," she said.

"We give women complete equal rights in prayer and in practice; we give a safe haven to all members of inter-religious marriage, eliminating the stigmatism against a non-Jewish spouse and welcoming their children into our communities; we offer a home to the LGBTQ community; we offer liberal, enlightened Jewish education and thought; and we offer a democratic approach to Judaism – free of the auspices of a chief rabbinate. This and more," said Joyce.

More than 100 people took part in the event.

Left L-R: Franca Coen and Joyce Bigio, co-Presidents of FIEP; Daniele Naim, Board Member of Il Pitigliani; Bruno Di Porto, Jewish Historian; and Carlo Riva, President of Lev Chadash. Below: An enthralled crowd



Israel

100 years of *Haaretz* to go online

Haaretz turns 100 this year. As part of its celebrations, it has signed a deal with the National Library of Israel to digitise all its newspapers since it started publishing. *Haaretz* will become part of the JPress-Historic Jewish Press website, which includes millions of pages from more than 300 Israeli and Jewish newspapers published in 16 languages from dozens of countries since the end of the 18th century. [Read the full article.](#)

L-R: Oren Weinberg, National Library Director and Amos Schocken, Haaretz Publisher, signing the National Library of Israel-Haaretz Agreement, with David Blumberg, Chairman of the Board of Directors, National Library of Israel. (Courtesy/National Library of Israel)



Paying it forward: Supporting each other

Liberal Judaism's 2019 Day of Celebration focuses on the role of communities play in supporting their members in a variety of different ways. The event will take place at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in St John's Wood, London, on Sunday June 23 from 09:30 to 16:00.

The focus will be on how we can directly support individuals and how we can empower our members to, in turn, support others inside and outside the synagogue walls.

Come and celebrate the current best practice, the Jewish textual basis for community relationships, and the deeper questions around community responsibility vs state responsibility. Keynote speakers will be Dame Margaret Hodge and Jean Gaffin OBE.

Dame Margaret, a Labour MP and former Minister for Children, will be in conversation with Jean, an eminent figure in British healthcare. Both have a distinguished history of enacting social change: Margaret making policy and Jean carrying it out.

The two women will be addressing their experiences and looking at the things communities can do to help build the fabric of society – either on their own or in collaboration with the state. The session will cover 70 years of social history in Britain from the founding of the NHS right up to austerity and Brexit.

LJY-Netzer will be running a parallel programme



Dame Margaret Hodge MP

for children aged between six and 15 and there will be a fully-staffed crèche for the youngest delegates.

[Read the full article and book your tickets.](#)

For those looking to make a weekend of it, Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue (NPLS) will once again host the LJ Music Day on Saturday June 22.

The theme will be 'Music reflecting the text' and it will look towards our new siddur and in what direction that might take our synagogue music. Some elements will then continue through into the music track at the Day of Celebration.

[Book your space](#) for the Music Day event.

Focus on inclusion and diversity

Surat-Shaan Knan, Liberal Judaism's Heritage Project Manager, made a presentation to a key National Lottery Heritage Fund event in February.

Shaan spoke about Liberal Judaism's heritage and history projects, emphasising the need for inclusion and diversity and the fantastic results that can bring.

The event, which took place at the London Metropolitan Archives, was one of a series around

the country that sets out the vision and principles that will guide the National Lottery Heritage Fund's investment over the next five years.

During that time, around £1.2 billion will be invested in the UK's heritage, with an increasing focus on well-being, capacity-building and innovation.

Shaan has headed up a number of projects for Liberal Judaism supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund, including the LGBTIQ+ oral history projects, Rainbow Jews and Twilight People.

"Shaan's speech inspired so many people on the importance of inclusion and diversity being at the heart of successful projects," said Stuart Hopley, Head of National Lottery Heritage Fund London.

"The whole day was a huge success. We've had some lovely feedback and clearly, lots of people are now buzzing with ideas."

L-R: Sue Bowers, NLHF Deputy Director of Operations; Shaan Knan, Liberal Judaism; Blondel Cluff CBE, Chairman of the London Committee; and Stuart Hopley, Head of NLHF London



Honouring 13th century female pioneer



Two members of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue (LJS) are part of an exciting bid to erect a statue of Licoricia of Winchester with her son Asser in the centre of the city.

Licoricia was England's most prominent Jewish businesswomen in the 13th century. She was a pioneering figure who raised funds for Henry III and Queen Eleanor, and for other projects including the core of Westminster Abbey.

Maggie and William Carver are members of the LJS who live in Winchester. They are trustees for the project, which aims to raise money for a life-sized bronze statue to be placed outside the Discovery Centre Library in Jewry Street, Winchester, near where Licoricia lived.

"We hope the statue will not only educate about the important Jewish community in Winchester and the rest of the UK before the expulsion of 1290, but will also inspire women and foster diversity today," said William.

Following a competition, the commission to do the work was won by [Ian Rank-Broadley](#) FRBS – one of the UK's leading sculptors. There are no known illustrations of Licoricia so Ian used his daughter and grandson, both of whom are Jewish, as his inspiration.

Find out more about Licoricia of Winchester and the Winchester Jewish community on the [website](#).

Part of the statue of Licoricia of Winchester

Wimbledon turns platinum

Two hundred guests gathered at the Courtside Restaurant of Wimbledon's All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in early February to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Wimbledon Synagogue. They were entertained by actor and comedian John Sessions and were delighted to welcome Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, Senior Rabbi of Reform Judaism, and Geoffrey Marx, Reform Judaism Chairman.



"The community is the envy of many a synagogue south of the River Thames with the finest Jewish nursery in London (Apples and Honey), one of the largest *chedarim* (religion schools) in British Reform Judaism, and the most extensive adult education programme," said Julian Samuels, Wimbledon President.

"We are particularly honoured that Her Majesty the Queen sent a message of congratulations on this occasion."

Funds raised at the event will benefit the synagogue and the Woodlands School in Leatherhead for children with severe learning difficulties, very complex needs or autism.

Left: President Julian Samuels. Above: Rabbis Laura Janner-Klausner and Tony Hammond. Photos: Dr Simon Joseph

Inaugural awards honour community members

Edware & Hendon Reform Synagogue (EHRS) celebrated in style members of the community who make extraordinary contributions to society. The first-ever EHRS Awards took place on Tuesday February 26.

Jonny Benjamin MBE was recognised for his outstanding work in raising awareness of mental health. Dr Jackie McRae received an accolade for the way she helps stroke victims to eat and talk again, and achievement that has also been recognised at national level with a National Health Service award. Also acknowledged was 15-year-old

Gideon Futerman for his amazing efforts in combatting global warming.

Other recipients included Shelly Dannell for turning young lives around, Ian Crooke for services to countless charities, Danielle Blumenblatt for saving lives through donating stem-cells, and the synagogue's two Senior Rabbis Danny Smith and Steven Katz for lifetime contributions to the community.

"By honouring these members of EHRS, we can be so proud to know each and every one of them a little better and to understand how selfless they all are," said Keith Price, Joint President of EHRS.

"I can't recall the last time I felt so honoured and humbled to be asked to host a ceremony," said Phil Dave, Broadcaster and EHRS Chairman of Adult Education. "Not only do I get to say I was there, but I can also call these amazing individuals my fellow congregants."

Alison Gunusen, daughter of one of the recipients added: "It was a wonderful and very moving evening and made me feel very proud to be part of our community."



Shirei Chagigah 2019

Shirei Chagigah is about singing, being together, creating community and learning new melodies, but that's not all. Shirei Chagigah is an opportunity to relax, enjoy, be spiritually uplifted, learn how to compose, study the history and development of music in our services, and further develop as the service leader or choir leader you've always wanted to be.

Reform Judaism will hold its Shirei Chagigah at Alyth Reform Synagogue in London from July 11 to 14 from 15:00 to 20:00.

Shirei Chagigah blends the traditional and the new, whether you want to incorporate *nusach* (the music of prayer) or drumming, new melodies or old standards into your services, this is where you will find like-minded individuals and teachers to support you.

We will be joined by four fantastically-talented musicians and educators as well as our very own Cantor Zöe Jacobs. Zöe fell in love with Judaism and Jewish music while sitting in concentric circles both on the floor of FRS and at RSY-Netzer Shemesh. Zöe was ordained in 2009 at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

(HUC-JIR), having studied in Jerusalem and New York, and she is now the Cantor at FRS.

[Book your spot now](#) and be ahead of the game.

– Photo: JMB Photography

Cantor Zöe Jacobs



United Kingdom

A Progressive take on Birthright

Sign-ups for the Birthright Israel Progressive trip are now open. Join young adults (19-26) from across the UK, including alumni of RSY-Netzer and LJY-Netzer, and those looking to learn more about Progressive Judaism.

Our Birthright Israel UK trip is this summer from August 26 to September 5. [Register your interest today!](#)

If you don't have a dedicated Progressive Birthright trip scheduled for your country, you can speak to your community leaders or visit [Birthright's website](#) to find out how you can participate.



Birthright Israel UK is once again offering a **Birthright Israel Progressive trip** with Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism.

EXPLORE ISRAEL!

28th August - 6th September

WUPJ

Bergman Seminar

The Bergman Seminar for Progressive Jewish Education is an intensive 10-day programme for Progressive and Reform professionals working in the field of Jewish Education around the world. 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 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. This year's Bergman Seminar takes place in Jerusalem from July 4-14.

For more information, please [visit the website](#).

"I feel so much more informed about Israel. The discussions we had built upon one another and deepened my love for and understanding of the people and the country. From here, I plan to go forward and inspire."

**The Bergman Seminar
for Jewish Education**
July 4-14, 2019 | Jerusalem, Israel

Learn to Inspire | Apply Today

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Paideia

Project-Incubator

The Paideia seminar is Europe's leading programme for supporting project development and social innovation in the Jewish sphere.

It is a method-orientated 10-day summer course focussing on acquiring the necessary tools and support structures for getting projects off the ground.

The programme gives participants the keys, the inspiration and the networks needed to convert their ideas into action.

Since its inception in 2006, more than 200 individuals have participated, resulting in over 220 new projects for Jewish life and culture in Europe. These projects have reached hundreds of thousands of individuals across Europe, and their managers are active in over 30 different countries.

The Paideia Project-Incubator takes place from July 1-10 in and near Stockholm. The deadline for applications is April 15, so apply [here](#).

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PAIDEIA
PROJECT-INCUBATOR

2019

Dates:
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Place:
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Application deadline:

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to honor visionary global Jewish leaders

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SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, May 29, 2019

THE PIERRE

2 East 61st Street, New York

Six-Thirty in the Evening

Invitation to follow

For more information visit wupj.org

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