

Ladies and gentlemen, dear fellow citizens, dear guests!

“A person is only forgotten when their name is forgotten.” This sentence from the Jewish Talmud guides our Stumbling Stone project in Göttingen. The first stone was laid on a private property 11 years ago and as of today there will be 97 stones commemorating the names of people who once lived among us in Göttingen. On behalf of the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, I would like to welcome you to this 8th laying of Stumbling Stones. As you know, there was not only approval, but also strong protest against this project in Göttingen. There were Jewish and non-Jewish people who did not want to allow the names of the victims to be trampled underfoot again. The fact that people suddenly pause in the middle of their everyday lives on their way through the city and bend over, even bow down, to read the names on the stones did not convince them as an argument in favour of this kind of culture of remembrance. After years of discussion, a compromise was found in Göttingen that allows Stumbling Stones to be laid, provided the descendants of the people concerned give their consent. But since not every Jewish family had survivors whose descendants could be traced today, the number of Stumbling Stones in Göttingen is significantly lower than in other cities. In Brunswick, for example, there are over 400 stones, while we will only exceed 100 next year.

However, the compromise in Göttingen also has something good about it: because we require the consent of the descendants, every time a Stumbling Stone is laid we are involved in a personal dialogue with people whose ancestors lived among us. Occasionally, the laying of a Stumbling Stone has turned into a veritable family reunion of people who are related to each other through their ancestors from Göttingen, but who otherwise live in completely different places or even countries. For me, meeting these people is one of the most rewarding experiences of our Göttingen Stumbling Stone project.

And so I am very pleased today that we have so many members of the Fränkel family among us as guests – Mrs. Krause mentioned them all by name earlier – and I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you. Unfortunately, the descendants of the Löwenherz family, who live in the USA, Israel and Switzerland, were unable to attend this event, but they will be involved in the ceremony indirectly through the texts and photos we will send them. But instead members of the Local History Association and the mayor of Lauenförde are present, as the Löwenherz family lived in this small town apart from their last years in Göttingen. We will hear more about this later. A warm welcome to you, too.

I would like to thank the sponsors who pay for the Stumbling Stones: in this case it is Mrs Katharina Ochse , a long –time friend of the Fränkel family, who has taken over the sponsorship of their Stumbling Stones, as well as the Rotary Club Göttingen-Süd, which has sponsored the stones for the Löwenherz family.

My thanks also go to the historians from the Göttingen Historical Society, who contributed with their expertise to the preparation of the laying of the Stumbling Stones, and to the team from the City of Göttingen, above all Mrs. Kalisch, who, as head of the City Archive, coordinated the joint work for this laying. Although we as the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation are officially in charge, without the work of the Stumbling Stone team and our longstanding well-established cooperation, we would not be able to carry out the laying of the stones in this form.

Welcoming speech von Esther Heling-Hitzemann, Gesellschaft für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit
Stolpersteinverlegung am 20. November 2023

I would like to thank the renowned solo violist Ulrich von Wrochem for his musical contribution to this 8th Stumbling Stone laying ceremony. He travelled all the way from Frankleben in Saxony-Anhalt to bring us music by Jewish composers and play it into our hearts at this festive opening. With the piece "Monologue" by the composer Ben Zion Orgad, born 1926 in Gelsenkirchen, died 2006 in Tel Aviv, he got us in the mood for this opening. Before we set off together to the first installation point, he gives us the opportunity to listen after all these words to the unfinished Suite by Ernest Bloch, born in Geneva in 1880, died in New York in 1959. Dear Mr von Wrochem, thank you for these very special sounds.