

UU Ministers Association Torda450 Pilgrimage

By Rev. Roger Bertschausen, Executive Director, UUPCC



I had the honor of co-leading the first-ever UU Ministers Association (UUMA) pilgrimage with Rev. Koppándi Zoltán, the minister of the Unitarian Church in Déva, Transylvania. The peak experience of a pilgrimage with many highpoints was a three-day joint retreat with members of the Ministers Association of the Hungarian Unitarian Church. You can see our combined group in the photo above—with most of us wearing wonderful commemorative t-shirts created by our Transylvanian colleagues.

We shared deeply about our ministries, our theologies, our families, and our Transylvania, Canadian and American cultures. We played ping-pong and foosball (*at right*) and we worshipped together.





Rev. Shari Woodbury delivering her Torda450 winning sermon in Székelyderzs

The Torda450 sermon contest winner, Rev. Shari Woodbury of Westside Unitarian Church in Fort Worth, TX, gave her award-winning sermon on **Dávid Ferenc and religious freedom in a nearly 800-year-old church**. An amazing band of Transylvanian colleagues shared powerful contemporary spiritual music following Rev. Woodbury's service.

The joint retreat was bookended by joining in the celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Edict of Torda and the dedication of the stunning House of Religious Freedom in Kolozsvár on the front end and a sacred service commemorating the martyrdom of Dávid Ferenc for our faith in the Deva Citadel on the other end. Our stay in Kolozsvár included attending a service at the central Kolozsvár Unitarian church in which UUA President Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray preached and one of the Torda450 theologian panel discussions, appropriately the inaugural educational event at the House of Religious Freedom.

We also enjoyed a bus trip to Torda and the Aranyos Valley highlighted by a service in Torockó that was a traditional Transylvanian Unitarian service but with all the spoken words in English. Torockó minister Rev. Csécs Márton began his sermon by noting that there was a similar all English service in Torockó for international Unitarians following the 300th anniversary of the Edict of Torda—back in 1868!

Another highlight was when the Hungarian Unitarian Church (and current Bálazs Scholar) Molnár Lehel and fellow pilgrim Rev. Claudia Efferdink shared their research on a fascinating meeting point of Transylvanian, US, and British Unitarians in the 1830s.



Rev. Rácz Norbert, Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray and Rev. Fulgence Ndagijimana after leading a service at the Unitarian Church in Central Kolozsvár

During the trip, lifelong bonds with each other and with our Transylvanian colleagues blossomed.

Afterwards, the US and Canadian ministers talked about the pilgrimage's transformative impact on their theologies and ministries. (See the 'Unexpected Gift' article for one pilgrim's reflections.)

Hopefully this will be the first of many UUMA pilgrimages!



A contest to identify which fruits were featured in nearly a dozen different jams.



Back of the commemorative joint retreat t-shirt

An Unexpected Gift: Reflections from the UUMA Director of Education

By Rev. Darrick Jackson

(reprinted with permission from the UU Ministers Association e-publication UUMA Weekly)

In July, I had the privilege to join the UUMA pilgrimage retreat in Transylvania. It was an amazing experience and one that I wish every UUMA member could have. During this time, I was forced to face assumptions that I did not even know I had. I discovered places within myself that I did not know needed to be healed and I made connections that will sustain me long into my ministry.

We started in Kolozsvár, where Francis David first shared his message of Unitarianism and religious freedom. There we celebrated the dedication of the new House of Religious Freedom. We traveled to various towns and villages, experiencing the expression of Unitarianism today while witnessing to 450 years of Unitarian history. I realized that I had brought assumptions about a faith stuck in the past, and quickly learned that Hungarian Unitarianism is a faith rooted in its past, living in the present and growing into the future.

In the middle of our travels, we participated in the first retreat between the UUMA and ULOSZ (Hungarian Unitarian Ministers Association). We started gingerly, not knowing what to expect from each other. As we spent more time together, we began to grow closer through asking questions, worshipping, eating, and playing games late into the night. They shared with us their ministries, their avocations, the places where they went to school, the churches they served. They taught us what Unitarianism means for them. It amazes me how much they do. Not only do they minister to their congregations, but most also teach religion in the local school, and work in other sectors as well.



*Rev. Darrick Jackson,
UUMA Director of Education*

In choosing to go to Transylvania, I was aware of the cultural concerns around LGBT marriage. I wondered whether I would be welcome. I was pleasantly surprised that my mention of my husband was received in the same manner as anyone speaking of their spouse, and without judgment. It is clear that there is work to be done in Transylvania on LGBT issues. And, I should not bring my United States cultural expectations to their work. They are operating within a different political and cultural system, and I need to recognize my privilege when I talk about change.

During our time with our Hungarian colleagues, something shifted within me. As part of my formation, I have done much work reconciling my Christian upbringing with my Unitarian Universalist faith. I had thought that work was complete, but then, in the middle of a 900-year-old Unitarian church, I had a moment of healing that I did not know I needed. I understood how Unitarian Christianity was the bridge between the faith of my childhood and the faith of my present and informs the faith of my future. This was a gift I never expected to receive, and I'm so grateful to my colleagues for creating the space for that transformation to happen.

We finished our pilgrimage in Deva. We worshipped with the congregation there and were treated to a lovely church picnic. We had the privilege to worship at the memorial site where Francis David died. It was a fitting end to our travel. I left Transylvania feeling hope. I left feeling inspired to live my UUism as truthfully, as honestly, and as proudly as I can. I pray that we can continue to offer this experience for future UUMA members. I hope that the relationships fostered during this time will grow and strengthen. This was a holy time in a Holy place. I will be forever grateful for this experience.

**Holy One of blessing, Spirit of journey and transformation,
May we continue to learn.
May we continue to have experiences that challenge us and helps us grow.
May we approach each day with open hearts and minds,
Greeting the day as a new adventure.
May we be transformed by these experiences
Into our best and extraordinary selves.
Blessed Be.**

A Mindful Walk – Inaugural Pilgrimage on Foot

By Rev. Roger Bertschausen

This new pilgrimage, co-sponsored by the UUPCC and Starr King School for the Ministry, centered on walking from village to village through the beautiful Unitarian heartland in Transylvania.

Prof. Megan Dowdell, UU minister and Assistant Professor of Sociology and Ethics at Starr King, and Rev. Andrew Weber led the trip while UUPCC Travel Coordinators John Dale and Csilla Kolcsár handled logistics. The group (pictured here at the Straw Hat Museum in *Bözödkörispatak*) consisted of ministers (including me on the right), seminarians, and lay people from congregations in the US and Canada. Some of the seminarian participants received immersion credit for participating in the pilgrimage.



A Mindful Walk - another UUPCC first in 2018!

Generous financial support from the UU Panel on Theological Education, the Bálazs Scholars program at Starr King, and the UUPCC's Cathy Cordes Travel Fund helped seminarians afford the pilgrimage.



Pilgrimage co-leader Megan Dowdell talking with bus driver as we were dropped off for the day's hike.

This was an amazing way to see and see the countryside and experience the Unitarian faith so alive in the villages. Eight days of the pilgrimage was spent walking as much as 16 miles a day. Sharing spiritual practices with one another helped us walk mindfully. Some of the days were quite rugged, others easier. We lucked out with moderate summer temperatures but encountered a fair amount of rain.

Spending time with Transylvanian ministers and lay members in the villages we traveled through helped us delve deeply into the history, beliefs, and culture of our kinfolk in faith. Megan and Andrew led Zoom sessions before and after the pilgrimage that helped make the spiritual and physical journey even more impactful.

We stayed in guesthouses and home stays in Bözödkörispatak, Tordátfalva, Székelyderzs, Homórodszentmárton, Felsőrákos, and Nagyajta. We ended the pilgrimage by climbing up in silence to the citadel in Déva where Dávid Ferenc died imprisoned. (We didn't take the funicular, or cable car!) A bus occasionally took us to a different stretch, and happily the sag wagon meant that we didn't have to hike with our luggage. All in all, a wonderful pilgrimage!



Pausing for a rest along the way



Pilgrimage co-leader Andrew Weber—ready for anything!

UUPCC Events at General Assembly in Kansas City

By Rev. Roger Bertschausen

Hundreds of people came to programs the UUPCC collaborated on at the UUA General Assembly and at Ministry Days preceding GA.

HIGHLIGHTS OF UUPCC ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

- Co-leading the opening worship for the 400 or 500 ministers at Ministry Days with Rev. Eric Cherry from the UUA's International Resources Office (UUA IRO) and Rev. Sara Ascher from the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU).
- The Torda450 panel of international theologians providing the keynote address at Ministry Days. Rev. Rácz Norbert (from Transylvania) and Rupaia Lamarr (NE India) were there in person; Ellen Nugroho (Indonesia) and Rev. Fulgence Ngadijimana (Burundi and now Canada) were there in person. Rev. Dr. Nicole Kirk from Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago graciously agreed to fill in for a panelist who couldn't be there. This was the first time Ministry Days devoted its opening worship and keynote to our global U/U faith.
- An international worship service jointly sponsored by the UUPCC, the ICUU, and the UUA's IRO featuring messages from UUA President Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray and U/U leaders from Transylvania, Burundi, NE India, and South Africa and beautiful music led by Elizabeth Norton from First Parish in Concord.
- A Torda450 workshop featuring Rev. Rácz Norbert and Rupaia Lamarr.
- The UUPCC's 25th annual meeting in which the Louis C. Cornish Living the Mission Award was presented to Bálazs Scholars volunteer extraordinaire Jay Roller and Steward of Partner Awards presented to Lee Edwin Chipps-Walton (UU Church of Tallahassee, FL), Claudia Kern (UU Church of the Upper Valley in Norwich, VT), Tina Main (Fox Valley UU Fellowship in Appleton, WI), Justine Magara (Unitarian Church of Kisii, Kenya), Gwyn Reid (UU Fellowship of Boise, ID), Tony Salsich (Fox Valley UU Fellowship in Appleton, WI), Joel Schrag (River Road UU Church, Bethesda, MD), and Carole Watson (First Unitarian Church, St. Louis, MO). We also conducted the business of the UUPCC and elected Rev. Howard Dana (First Parish in Concord, MA), Gwyn Reid (UU Fellowship of Boise, ID), and Rev. Ilene Tompkins-Gillispie (UUs of Transylvania County, Brevard, NC) to our Board of Directors. Barbara Weber (Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA) was elected to serve on the UUPCC's Nominating Committee. And we thanked our outgoing Board members for their generous service to the UUPCC: Rev. Eric Cherry, Ann Gary, Rev. Diane Rollert, and Rev. Catie Scudera.
- The beautiful UUPCC banner decorated with a twenty-fifth anniversary ribbon in the GA banner parade.
- The UUPCC, ICUU and UUA IRO co-hosted a well-attended and fun reception.
- UUPCC Office Manager Katrina Priese and several volunteers staffed our busy booth.

(photo gallery follows)



International faith leaders who spoke at the GA international worship service



Elizabeth Norton and friends share a musical setting of the Edict of Torda in Hungarian at the international worship service!



Rev. Eric Cherry sharing the benediction at the international service



Rupaia Lamarr and Rev. Rác Norbert at the Torda450 workshop



Cornish Award recipient Jay Roller with UUPCC Board Chair Rev. Morgan McLean and Steward of Partner recipients: Tina Main, Carole Watson and Tony Salsich, Rev. Roger Bertschausen, and Rev. Charlotte Lehmann (accepting award on behalf of Lee Edwin Chipps-Walton and Justine Magara



Rev. Morgan McLean and Rev. Roger Bertschausen thanking outgoing board members Rev. Catie Scudera and Rev. Eric Cherry

A light moment with Jay Roller and Tina Main after the Annual Meeting



The UUPCC booth in the exhibition hall



UUPCC Online – Easy as 1, 2, 3!

The [UUPCC website](#) is your portal to a wealth of Partnership information and now it's your way to make your support of Partnership quick and simple.

HINT: you might want to save/print this article for future reference!

1. Log into your Partnership account

To renew a membership, donate, or update your account information, logging in to your existing account takes just a minute. And if you've forgotten your login information, no worries! When the login box comes up (see image), just put in your email address in the lower 'Recover Account' area and you'll be sent a reset link. Use it to make a new password and be sure to record it somewhere for future use.

Log in to your existing account, or enter email address in the 'Recover Account' option below. (Please make a note of your login information for future use)

Log in with an existing account

Log in with your username...

Login Name

Password

Not sure if you have an account or you forgot your login information?
Enter the e-mail address associated with your account and we'll send you a link to recover your login information.

Email Address

2. Join (or Renew) and become a UUPCC ‘Sustaining Member’!

Life is busy, so if you’re joining or renewing with us, our secure site will automatically notify that your card has been charged for the next year.

Sustaining membership is a wonderful way to stretch your support by reducing our paper mailings and expiration follow-ups!

New Membership

Membership Type and Level: *

- Institutional Membership (\$75 if under 150 members)
- Supporting Institutional Membership (\$250 if under 150 members)
- Institutional Membership (\$200 if over 150 members)
- Supporting Institutional Membership (\$600 if over 150 members)
- Individual Membership
- Family Membership (\$75)


Check this box if you'd like your membership to renew automatically in the future

Donate to the Cathy Cordes Travel Fund:

SUBMIT

3. Renew Your Membership:

If you log in and your account shows this message: **‘You do not have an active membership’** please click the **‘Join Now’** link as highlighted below. Or you may use the *‘What would you like to do?’* pulldown menu to go straight to **‘Renew your membership’**.

 UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
PARTNER CHURCH COUNCIL

Welcome Kate Doe (Account# 5507)

What would you like to do? ▾

You do not have an active membership. **Join Now**

New Membership

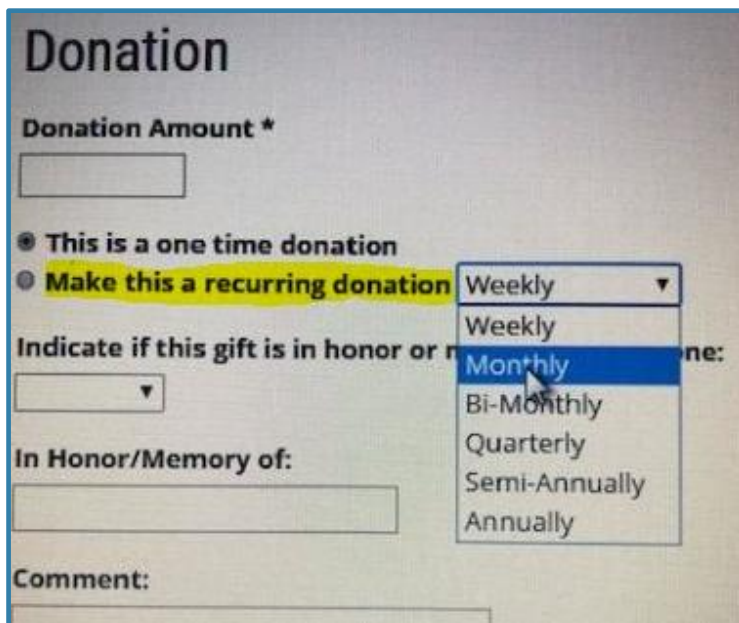
Membership Type and Level: *

- Institutional Membership (\$75 if under 150 members)

4. One-time and Recurring Donations

We've worked to make it easier than ever to donate to Partnership. Just go to our [Donate page](#) and log into your account.

And yes, we'd love for you to choose the budget-friendly option of a Recurring donation!



The screenshot shows a 'Donation' form with the following fields and options:

- Donation Amount ***: A text input field.
- Radio buttons**:
 - This is a one time donation
 - Make this a recurring donation** (highlighted in yellow)
- Frequency dropdown**: A dropdown menu with options: Weekly, Weekly, **Monthly** (highlighted in blue), Bi-Monthly, Quarterly, Semi-Annually, Annually.
- Indicate if this gift is in honor or memory of:** A dropdown menu.
- In Honor/Memory of:** A text input field.
- Comment:** A text input field.

5. Amazon Smile



Are you an Amazon shopper? Turn a portion of your purchases into a donation to Partnership - with no extra charge!

By using our unique UUPCC 'Smile' link smile.amazon.com/ch/94-3224113 every time you order from Amazon, we may receive a donation by Amazon. Although not every order is eligible for this, it all adds up for more Partnership support!



Our wonderful bookkeeper, Libby Hanna, shared this trick for how she remembers to use our Amazon 'Smile' shortcut every time she orders.

"I put our UUPCC Amazon Smile shortcut in my Bookmarks toolbar at the top of my browser. Then as long as I'm ordering at my computer (which I do to avoid ordering on my phone - it feels so impulsive!) the 'Smile' donation is just a click away."

6. Renew by Phone or Mail

No, you don't have to go online to the website! You are always welcome to donate, join, or renew your membership by mail or over the phone.

You may download a membership form from the website [here](#) or if you prefer, email us at office@uupcc.org and we'll send you one by email or snail mail – your choice. There's a donation option on the membership form too!

You can always call us at 314-918-2618 and leave a message. While we aren't in the office every day, we strive to get back to you within 48 hours. We'll be happy to help you by answering questions or taking your payments by credit card over the phone.

Whatever way you choose, your membership and donations are vital to keeping our Unitarian / Universalist partnerships thriving across the world. We can't do it alone, but together we can make it happen!

Thank you for your past, present and future generosity.

Two November Partner Video Conference Calls

Our quarterly video conference calls give partner participants a chance to check in about their partnerships and talk about what's going well and what they're facing.

NORTHEAST INDIA PARTNERSHIP CONGREGATIONS

Thursday, November 8 at 8:00 pm Eastern/5:00 pm Pacific

The call will include an update about what's going on with the Unitarian Union of Northeast India and with the UUPCC.

Here's how to connect to the UUPCC's Zoom account for the video conference.

Topic: UUPCC Indian Partnerships

Time: Nov 8, 2018 7:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: <https://zoom.us/j/912274153>

Or iPhone one-tap :

US: +16699006833,,912274153# or +16468769923,,912274153#

Or Telephone: (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location)

Dial: US: +1 669 900 6833 or +1 646 876 9923

Meeting ID: **912 274 153**

International numbers available: <https://zoom.us/u/ab2i78PAH>

PHILIPPINES PARTNERSHIP CONGREGATIONS

Thursday, November 15 at 8:00 pm Eastern/5:00 pm Pacific.

The call will include an update about what's going on with the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines and with the UUPCC.

Here's how to connect to the UUPCC's Zoom account for the video conference.

Topic: Philippines Networking Meeting

Time: Nov 15, 2018 7:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: <https://zoom.us/j/975903620>

Or iPhone one-tap :

US: +16468769923,,975903620# or +16699006833,975903620#

Or Telephone: (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location)

Dial: US: +1 646 876 9923 or +1 669 900 6833

Meeting ID: **975 903 620**

International numbers available: <https://zoom.us/u/adoOp4t9Nb>

**Questions? Contact Rev. Roger Bertschausen (roger@uupcc.org)
or Trina Priese (trina@uupcc.org)**

Upcoming Torda450 Theologian Panels



The Torda450 panel will continue its theological exploration with online sessions in November and December. The exact dates and times haven't been set yet, so stay tuned for information on the **Torda450 Facebook page** as well as at www.torda450.org

Eliot's First ZOOM Online Partner Meeting a Success

By Trina Priese, UUPCC / Eliot Chapel Partner Church Committee

Since 1990, Eliot Chapel has maintained a partnership with our fellow Unitarians in Nyárádszentmárton (St. Martin-on-the-River), a rural village in Transylvania. This September, three members of Eliot's partnership committee traveled to our partner church village with the UUPCC Thanksgiving Pilgrimage. On the Saturday evening before their Thanksgiving Sunday our members, along with our partner minister (Sándor Kiss) and congregants of all ages participated in a ZOOM video conference.

Holding a Zoom meeting first came up during a summer partnership committee meeting as we brainstormed ideas to increase our partnership relationships. No one (except myself) had used Zoom before, but Bill Coalson, our committee chair who was registered for the Thanksgiving

trip, volunteered to learn it so he could help our partners participate while they visited. This would be much simpler than trying to relay how to use it to our partners over the distance and language barriers.

We offered a trial meeting beforehand in case any Eliot participants wanted to try it out. We shared the meeting plan on Facebook for our Partner friends, and emailed directions and the Zoom link to anyone who wanted to participate.

To accommodate the 7-hour time difference, our partner meeting was scheduled for Saturday morning (CST) and evening (Romanian time).



On Saturday evening (after a baptism at the partner church), parishioners gathered at the parsonage along with Eliot members (**including three board members and minister Barbara Gadon – above, top left**) who joined from various locations and the meeting began. Notes were exchanged in the Zoom ‘Chat’ window (**image below, to right of participants**) and the video was recorded.

Rev. Sándor (*center left*) did his usual outstanding job of translating what we said back to his group. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces from our last trip in 2016 and to hear their laughter when we shared amusing moments. Everyone was smiling as questions were asked and answered, and greetings exchanged.

Discussion centered on how we could support and increase our relationship, and on that front, **we were told very clearly that although they appreciate our monetary support, the main thing they want is to see more of us - in person!** Following that statement, they asked us what they could do for us, which we weren’t expecting, but shows clearly that the **UUPCC’s tagline of “Parity, not charity”** truly is at the heart of current day

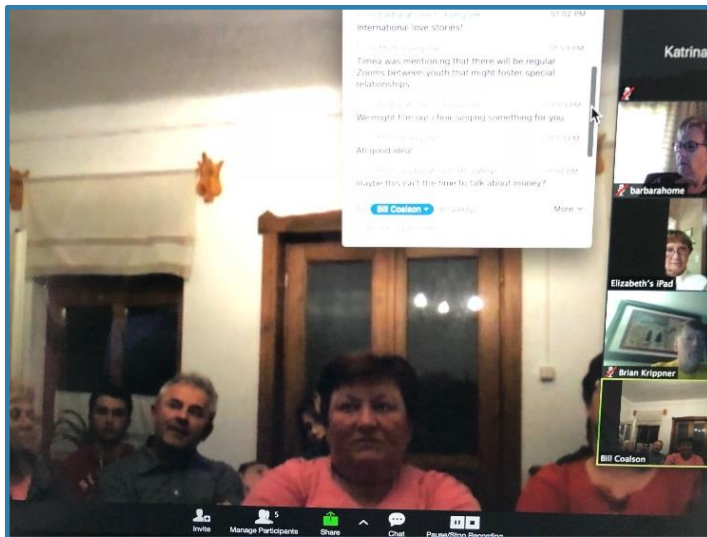


partnerships. Things have changed considerably in the 25-plus years of partnerships, including less need for North American financial support as school is free and money is more available to restore and improve church buildings.

Other topics included setting up monthly Zoom calls with different constituents such as youth, the women’s committee, and between our two board of directors to learn more about how we govern our churches. We talked about exchanging videos of congregational happenings, setting up a private summer UUPCC pilgrimage and the possibility of some of their congregants to come to St. Louis, including their youth advisor and young adults.

At the end of the 90-minute call, Zsuzsánna (Sándor’s wife – also a Unitarian minister) and two of their children came on camera and giggled as they waved hi and goodnight, then we all said our goodbyes.

Everyone agreed that the Zoom call helped us toward our goal of continuing and strengthening the ties between our two congregations. We’re looking forward to many more such connections!



ZOOM INFORMATION:

Zoom is a free, easy-to-use online service that allows people to connect from a computer, smart phone or tablet anywhere there is internet. The UUPCC uses it for our virtual board meetings and to work with partnership folks all over the world. It was easy to set up a training meeting with Bill and it only took him a few minutes to get the hang of using Zoom on his tablet.

Below is an example of the ‘Join Zoom meeting’ directions.

Meeting details below:

Sat AM Nyárádszentmárton Partner Meeting
Sept 29, 2018 - 11:30 AM Central Time (US & Canada) and 7:30 PM Romania Time

Click <https://zoom.us/j/790234675> to join from a PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android computer, tablet or smartphone.

Or iPhone one-tap :
US: +16699006833,,790234675# or +16468769923,,790234675#

Or Telephone:
From the US dial: +1 669 900 6833 or +1 646 876 9923
From Romania dial: +40 31 630 1088)
put in meeting ID: 790 234 675

ADDITIONAL NOTE:

In September of 2016, 13 members of Eliot, including minister Rev. Barbara Gadon, traveled and stayed in our partner village.

Information about our partner village and pictures from that trip are [here](#).



The Nyárádszentmárton church is undergoing restoration from damage caused by the communist regime in the 1990's.

UU Society of Schenectady Hosts Transylvanian Youth

By Lois Porter, Schenectady Partner Church Committee

On Wednesday evening, August 22nd, seven youth along with the Rev. Csaba Kecskes and Lazlo Vonya, President of the Marosvásárhely Stony Hill Congregation, arrived at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady. Plans for the visit had been in process for many months. All the visitors stayed with host families. The youth and adults who made the trip had all been involved in welcoming 12 individuals (8 youth and 4 adults) from UUSS who traveled to Transylvania two years ago. There were many happy reunions as well as new relationships forged.



Youth and adults from both congregations visited the New York State Museum, hiked, danced, and played games together, ate a great deal at pot lucks and a barbeque, and visited a local aquarium. Youth from both congregations had the opportunity for an overnight at the church.



There was great participation from the Schenectady congregation at an all-church potluck and folk dance, as well as Sunday morning worship. The Maros youth sang three songs in Hungarian and one in English during the service. Rev. Csaba shared a reflection regarding the 15 year history of our partnership and the Revs. Wendy Bartel and Lynn Gardner honored the spiritual truth of our shared history.

The Transylvanian youth served lunch to low income children at a local park and visited an Art Center in Schenectady which focuses on African and African American art and culture. The visitors had the opportunity to swim in a backyard pool as well as in the Mohawk River. Their final night in the Schenectady area the combined group went to a minor league baseball game. Our Partners were able to spend the night before flying home (out of JFK) at All Souls Church in NYC. That enabled them to see Central Park, the NY Public Library and Times Square.



When asked what the most surprising thing for her was, one youth replied, "I was surprised that the people were so concerned about the environment and animals and were so kind. I thought Americans were just interested in accumulating more things."

Building strong connections between UU youth here and Unitarian youth in our partner church gives us great hope for the future of our partnership and for the future in general.

First UU of Albany Pilgrimage to Visit Szőkefalva Partners in Transylvania

By Betsy Wright, First UU Society Albany

In late May 2018, 11 people from the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany in New York went to Transylvania for a tour sponsored by the UU Partner Church Council.

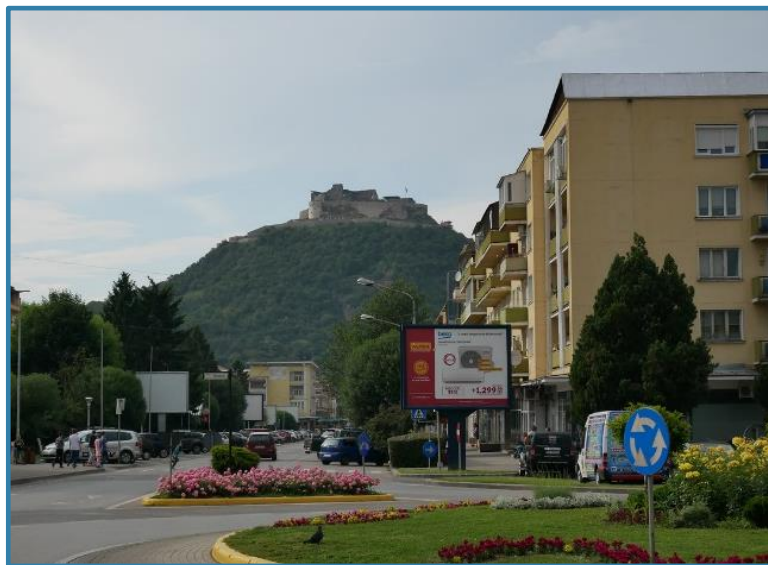
The following days with our guides John, Csilla, Magda and our driver Zoltan resulted in a very rich experience with many varying layers.

Our pre-trip itinerary taught us a lot about Unitarian history. It started in Kolozsvár/Cluj (*there is a Hungarian and Romanian name for every city*) and proceeded in a J-shaped route to Torda, Alba Iulia, Deva then west and north to Torockó, the Torda gap, then back to Kolozsvár. Torockó (pronounced To'ros-ko) is a particularly lovely village framed by the magnificent Carpathian Mountains. Its citizens at one time had all been Unitarians. The Torda Gap was a high point of the trip as it is so beautiful.



Pre-trip travelers in Torda

This J-shaped route is important to UUs, as Ferenc Dávid (Francis David) had traveled this route. Having experimented with a variety of the religions during his lifetime in the early 16th century, Dávid was an originator of the anti-trinitarian, God-is-One doctrine that arose in Transylvania at the time. Francis David won a 10-day religious debate in Alba Iulia. This victory led to the Edict of Torda, which is possibly the first edict to address the concept of religious freedom. Francis David eventually was interned in the citadel in Deva (*on hilltop at right*) when the winds of religious belief turned against him.





ABOVE: Betsy celebrates the Torda Gap

BELOW: View of Torockó village's [kopjafák](#)



The next part of our trip was to the North in Maramures. The Maramures is famous for its beautiful churches and monasteries built entirely of wood. (Women reside in many of the monasteries, not men.) John and Csilla explained many things to us while we were on the tour. For example, the reason why wooden churches were built is that the majority religion of the day (either Roman Catholic or Orthodox) wanted to discourage minority religions from building churches, so it prohibited their use of stone. The minority religions thus turned to wood. In Kolozsvár, we also learned that the majority religion prohibited Unitarians from building their church on the main street in town. Unitarians then built on a parallel street, which soon became the new main street in town.

The Maramures city of Sighetu-Marmatiei brought home to us some of Romania's troubled history. Not only was our delightful pension, the Flamingo, just blocks away from Eli Wiesel's childhood home and the site of a ghetto constructed for the deportation of Jews in 1944, but

**Rev. Zoltán Koppandi
Minister, Deva church**



In Deva, as throughout our trip, we stopped at various Unitarian churches and generally spoke with the ministers there.

Sunday, back in Kolozsvár, we attended a Unitarian service in Hungarian. The genders sat together not separately as is the traditional way. We met the Bishop of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church (imagine, a bishop!), saw the Unitarian elementary school and toured the Unitarian High School. We ate at Unitarian restaurants – and shopped at a Unitarian grocery store. Later, we would buy crafts at a Unitarian shop in Korond, to the east of Kolozsvár and not far from our partner church in Szokefalva.

**Maramures
wooden
church**



there is a museum there, called the Gulag, which has become a monument to people imprisoned during the Communist Era (1947-1989).

Now was the time for us to travel to our partnership church in Szőkefalva (Soo'-ka-falva) and meet our host families. I had been nervous. Would the hosts like us? Would we unknowingly offend them with our different manners and less religious ways? Would I have the proper gifts for my hosts?



Upon our arrival, these worries immediately dissipated. The village minister and host families were wonderful. In fact, our host families spoiled us with good food, good conversation, wonderful activities along with their charm, hospitality and laughter.

Our Szőkefalva partners took us around their area of Transylvania. Among the sites we saw was a monastery (*above*) and the 1699 UNESCO world heritage church, which has no UUPCC partner.

On Sunday, we attended our second church service and sat in the traditional way (women separate from the men).



Albany and Szőkefalva partners after service



Reverend Szász Tünde (*last name first - pictured right*) mounted the pulpit, which was built on the wall about 5 feet above the pews and gave the sermon while looking down on her flock. Looking up, I thought of the many, many years when the Unitarian Church had been the binding thread of Hungarian Unitarian families. I thought of how the Transylvanian Unitarians had fought so hard to keep their religion intact despite persecution and troubled times. (During the Communist Era, Unitarianism had been considered a cult.) I thought of all the generations who had, like me, sat with heads up receiving the guidance of the minister.



That evening, our host families prepared goulash for us. The goulash was cooked in the “stone soup” manner with a huge metal pot and a hot-burning fire. Our families arranged to have a local school group come in to dance for us.

Monday, all too soon, we said our last good-byes and set off once again for Kolozsvár. Each of us held our host families so warmly in our hearts as we continued our journey.



Albany UU’s “pilgrimage” to Transylvania was indeed a success. John, Csilla and Magda (Csilla’s sister who was with us in our host village) are highly skilled guides – very knowledgeable, flexible, adaptive to the members of their tour, and available all day and most of the night. They picked comfortable hotels for us to stay in and provided us with gourmet food. Hungarian food is good! So, for you UUs who haven’t had the pleasure of a pilgrimage, seriously consider one!

Was this pilgrimage fun? Yes!

For example -- one unscheduled experience I particularly enjoyed occurred in the Maramures.

There was a farmhouse on top of a hill where one could have a terrific view of the valley. Telling us that we could offer to buy any sheep cheese the farmers might have in exchange for the view, Csilla suggested that we pull into the farmer's drive. We bought sheep cheese – and some pine syrup as well, which our members cheerfully mixed with their evening pálinka (Pălincă -Romanian name).



In sum, our Albany pilgrimage was an experience not to be missed!

Do You Have a Partnership Story to Share?

We'd love to hear from you. Please send us your stories and pictures and we'll try to feature them on our website or in our newsletters.

Share your story!

Email to: [**office@uupcc.org**](mailto:office@uupcc.org)

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