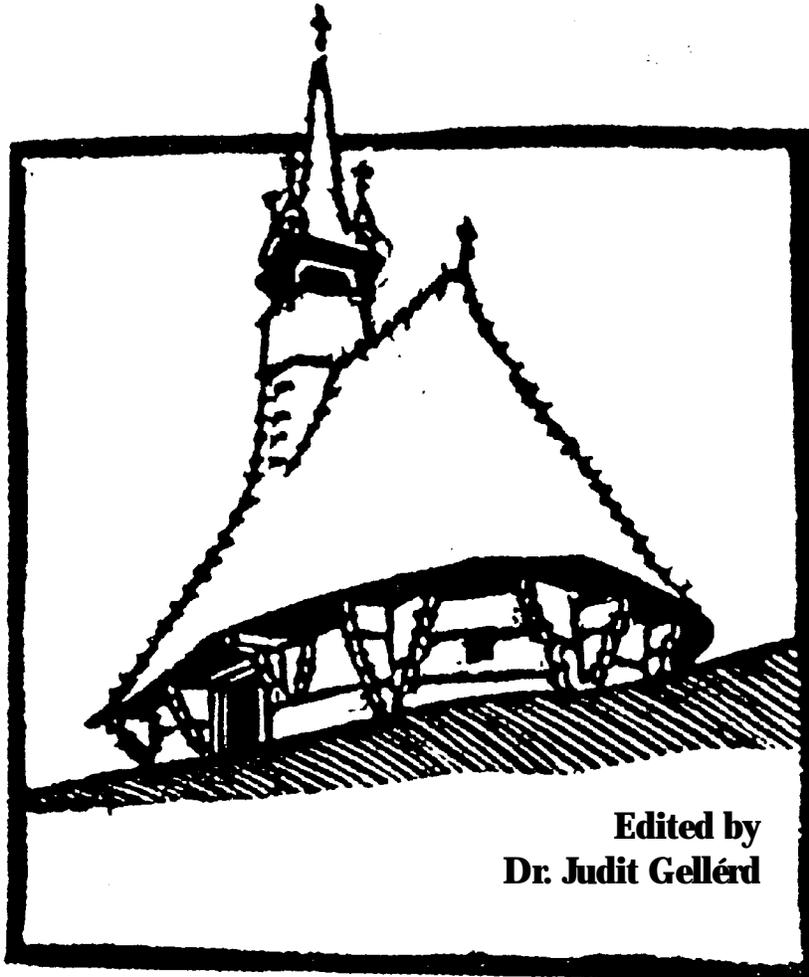


1997

Guidebook
FOR
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
PARTNER Churches



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Thanks must be expressed to all Unitarian Universalist ministers and laity who through many inspiring ways and mobilizing means, have served the cause of saving Transylvanian Unitarianism. Special thanks to those who contributed their articles and sermons to this volume.

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Judit Gellérd (editor), *In Storm, Even Trees Lean on Each Other UU Sermons on Transylvania**

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Proceeds from this book were used to help the Transylvanian Unitarian Youth Movement.

Please note a shift in pages in conversion to the internet version.

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The Diet of Torda, 1568. The famous picture of Francis Dávid (Dávid Ferenc) painted by Kőrösfői Kriesch Aladár

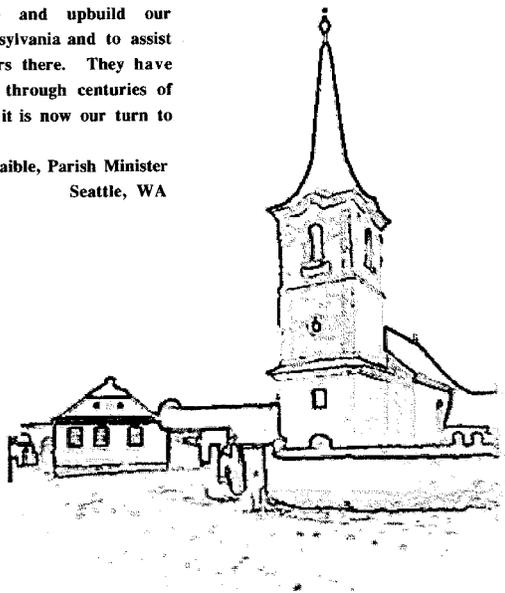
King John Sigismund's Decree of Religious Tolerance at the Diet of Torda, 1568

... in every place the preachers shall preach and explain the Gospel, each according to his understanding of it, and if the congregation like it, well; if not, no one shall compel them, for their souls would not be satisfied, but they shall be permitted to keep a preacher whose teaching they approve. Therefore none of the superintendents or others shall annoy or abuse the preachers on account of their religion, according to the previous constitutions, allow any to be imprisoned or punished by removal from his post on account of his teachings, for faith is the gift of God. This comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Join the Partner Church Council!

“...We, in the United States, have a challenge to preserve and upbuild our Unitarian faith in Transylvania and to assist our brothers and sisters there. They have kept alive a free faith through centuries of suffering and turmoil; it is now our turn to help them.”

- Dr. Peter Raible, Parish Minister
Seattle, WA



Preface

My letter of appeal to three dozen UU Partner Churches two months ago resulted in this collection of reports and reflections, sermons and projects. Churches and individuals are sharing their wisdom and vast experience in a most inspiring way.

This new *Guidebook* therefore is a historic record of “the largest and most heartening American UU grassroots movement of this century...” as President John Buehrens stated. This book also means to be a way of honoring Partner Churches and individuals for their admirable consistency, generosity, and inventive engagement in the program.

In my first “Save Transylvania *Guidebook* “ in 1992, I had to invent models, ways, programs, and find answers to many questions about church partnership. We acted from sheer faith and enthusiasm when we adventured into the unknown. We have made a difference in the lives of our partners in faith, and in the process our lives have changed, too.

We, Partner Churches and the Center for Free Religion, were sowing seeds for eight years, and the time for harvesting our collective experience and its results has come. These reports focus on the practical, motivated by the spiritual. This is why they are so inspiring. Hundreds of people in the United States and Canada set Partner Church matters as a priority in their lives—for a small group of Unitarians in a faraway land that now has become a shared and holy ground for all of us.

This *Guidebook* is the third volume of our yearly series. It is a more “advanced” version of my 1992 *Guidebook*; therefore I commend to all Partner Churches. You cannot have enough ideas, inspiration, or success stories. Read them and you will be filled with pride and humility, generosity and amazement. Did we create all of this from nothing?

How did twice two hundred churches become involved together? How did we raise more than \$850,000 to save the oldest Unitarian tradition? How did the English teaching program start and the new generation of theological school graduates speak English and use their own computers? How did UU-s of Fairfax, VA build a memorial medical clinic in their partner village? How did children of Northampton, MA raise money to

repair their partner church's 500 year-old bell-tower? How do congregations put together Hungarian dinners and cultural events and turn the profit to a project in Transylvania?

How has Transylvania become a land of pilgrimage for North American Unitarian Universalists? Peter Raible and Leon Hopper will answer this. Richard Beal's Travel Guide will help you put together your own pilgrimage. And Richard Geer will tell you the story of his and Nan's odyssey.

David Bumbaugh will encourage you to dream boldly. Jeanne Gilpatrick demonstrates how a small church can be an effective partner. Ruth and James Gibson envision new approaches to economic growth. John Robinson shares Eliot Chapel's success with a loan fund. Concord, MA serves as an example how to help Unitarian schools and students. Jay Hanks fascinates us with the \$50,000 the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley raised for many projects besides their own partner church. And Oakland keeps you inspired and involved with the Project Harvest Hope. Sarah Dorer of Bedford challenges dialogue in matters of prejudice, and Julie Jose of Spokane teaches patience. Rosalia Kiss of Transylvania amazes us with her project of turning a dying village into a community of youth and hope.

This handbook helps you in the Whats and Hows.

As the Partner Church Program extends beyond Eastern Europe, this Guidebook hopefully will serve as a "manual" of collective wisdom and experienced ways of engagement.

Proceeds from this book - as all of the previous ones - will help the Unitarian Youth movement in Transylvania.

Dr. Judit Gellérd
General Secretary, Partner Church Council,
Co-Director, Center for Free Religion

Chico, California, June 1997

I. TRAVEL GUIDE

Introduction

“TRANSYLVANIA: The Practical and the Religious”

by Rev. Dr. Peter Raible, President (1995-97), Partner Church Council and minister of University Unitarian Church of Seattle

A trip to Transylvania combines the important, but prosaic, with the religiously transformational. This brief commentary combines both concerns.

In the pages of this booklet are many useful hints and items of information which will make planning and accomplishing any trip in Transylvania less hassled and more enjoyable. Many far more expert than I will present these realities, I can only state my own personal list. I have reached the point in life where “roughing it” in travel may at times be tolerable for the end sought, but is not one of the joys of the journey. My own list read like this:

1. Take a translator, preferably one of our theological students at Kolozsvár. The cost is small and the trip will be far richer for you.

2. Consider renting your own van with driver, preferably the one the Partner Church Council can provide. Many of the places that any Unitarian pilgrimage should take you are hard to reach and often via haphazard roads. A van obviates many of the difficulties and allows you a more relaxed itinerary. If the cost seems too much, it is usually possible to arrange a shared tour.

3. Romania is a country which has limited tourist facilities and even those usually only in the cities. Do not expect all the motel or even bed and breakfast provisions you might consider normal in North America. In the villages be prepared to stay with families, which may not have in

door bathrooms.

4. Such reality might suggest that you carry some kind of footwear for say crossing a chicken yard and appropriate body cover for night trips outside. A few related items may help: a small flashlight (start with fresh batteries), tidy-wipes, a small plastic flask or thermos, a modest first aid kit with aspirin.

5. Pack light - a poncho camper's rain slicker, a light weight bathrobe, casual gear that can be turned into more formal wear - all such choices are helpful. You cannot count on assistance always with your luggage and in many places the terrain is such that "wheeled suitcases" do not work well. Baggage that is a knapsack or has carrying shoulder straps I'd call a must.

6. No gift is ever better than American money, particularly as inflation continues to rage, so make sure you have small U.S. bills. Hard candy for the children packs easily and does not melt; all purpose vitamins are expensive in Romania so are appreciated. The only real defense of gifts (other than pictures or items for a partner church) is that they provide empty space coming home. It is more than probable that you'll leave Transylvania with far more than you entered - the Unitarians are most generous!

7. On the subject of money, realize that Transylvanian hospitality is frequently abundant. Often food provided to you will be at great cost to your hosts. Do not sponge! You will usually find that Transylvanians will refuse all payment, but if you simply leave a note with American money behind, when you leave, it will not go into the garbage. We, who have so much, sometimes forget while abroad how taxing we can be to the limited resources of our hosts. As sensitive visitors, we would not want them to be worse off materially because we have come, and it is no excuse to say that they wouldn't hear of any payment.

8. The pace of life in Transylvania is not North American, which is one of its glories. If you are task oriented and tend to be compulsive about schedules and the like, you will find occasions in Romania when you'll be frustrated. No one can cure that except yourself, but you'll have a better time if you can "go with the flow." Above all do not count on tight connections and leave some "wiggle room" in your schedule. All travel will probably take longer than you expect and any visit to Unitarians will require eating, drinking, and extensive socializing.

9. There is a good bit of alcohol consumption in Transylvania, often at times of day that we deem a bit odd (e.g. at breakfast). Sometimes the pressure is great to participate, because your hosts may feel unable to

drink unless you join them. If you choose not to tipple you will have to find your own ways of refusal that are direct and forceful. Many have found that it is worthwhile carrying a note in Hungarian that says that you cannot drink for reasons of health (your translator could provide this).

10. Transylvania is a land of beauty and there is much to see and enjoy. The Unitarians there are friendly and hospitable to an extreme degree, so that you are apt to feel as if you are visiting royalty. Whatever minor inconveniences you may experience along the way will be more than offset by the glorious reception you receive. In my many travels I have never been anywhere where I felt more warmly welcomed with such a deep concern for making my stay memorable.

Many of us decided first to go to Romania to visit our lent to a Unitarian holy land, but I was not prepared for how, holy the trip would prove to be. The history is obvious in the architecture in simple village churches and also in the formidable fortress sanctuaries, as well as in the crafts and unpretentious works of art within the structures. Next, the Unitarians themselves are impressive, particularly in the villages. These people, who are often small farmers, cleave to the Unitarian religion generation after generation over the centuries. They have endured persecution beyond belief, even the late bishop of the church, who died in 1996, spent time in prison under the Communist regime.

What is so transforming, however, I found in no detached examination of our Transylvania movement, but in direct experience. To hear parishioners sing their long banned national anthem as tears stream down their faces is before long to feel wetness on one's own cheeks. To sit in a worship service, not a word of which one can understand, and feel the depth of spirit flowing. To encounter the talented young people who are studying for our ministry there is to feel the "soul's invincible surmise" that our small, fragile, precious faith in Transylvania has a future as well as a past.

My pilgrimage, as I suspect for most Unitarians, did not strive to create a religious experience, but I found it again and again. The experience, simply put, was transformative. I certainly cannot guarantee that all UU visitors will be touched in the depths of their being, but I have certainly spoken with many who have. Whatever North Americans may have done on behalf of Unitarianism in Transylvania is more than repaid by the religious experiences that have come to us by visiting there. We return, I think, more deeply grounded in our own faith, more consecrated to seeing our Unitarian Universalist cause continue on this continent, and more as

sured that our religion has much to give in the hard times of life.
In short, the right kind of trip to Transylvania can make an important difference in your own life.



A Pilgrimage of ministers with Francis David's chalice.

*****This section is out-of-date. Contact the PCC for current instructions.***
Rev. Richard Beal

PARTNER CHURCH TRIPS & TOURS

Introducing Groups and Individuals to the rich historical and cultural treasures of “the Land Beyond the Forest”. . . Each tour specifically tailored to introduce you to your Partner Church, its people, its community, its region, and its unique traditions... Each providing you with a safe, comfortable, and economical ride from pick-up to your destination.

Since the inception of the Partner Church Council we have been interested in helping North American groups make visits to their Partner Churches. In 1996, with moneys raised by the Center for Free Religion, the Rev. Denes Farkas [Farkas Dénes in Hungarian order], and the PCC, a nine passenger van was purchased for the Transylvanian Unitarian Church to facilitate these visits. With the co-operation of the church we are now utilizing the van, and the extensive experience of Farkas Denes in guiding North American visitors, to offer

- moderately priced
- Partner Church oriented
- individually designed tours of Transylvania and/or Hungary and
- chauffeured trips that provide van and driver, allowing experienced travelers to make their own meal, lodging and other arrangements

The van comfortably holds seven passengers, plus luggage and a driver and translator. For groups up to 14 an additional car or van can be rented. For groups over 14 we recommend looking at other tour operators. But in our experience smaller groups offer the best opportunities to get to know and begin to build relationships with the members of one’s Partner Church community.

We will work with you, via PCTours North American contact, Richard Beal, to design an itinerary specific to your group and its interests. To do so we can build in (depending on the time of year) visits to your Partner Church

- historic Unitarian sites

Travelers will be met at the airport (Otopeni) at the time of arrival, immediately outside the exit from Passport Control and Customs.

GUIDEBOOK & MAP

The best map is published in Hungary and gives place names in Romanian, Hungarian, and German.

Ask for a map titled “**Erdély/Ardeal/Siebenburgen/Transylvania**”.

We recommend **Romania**, published in London by “**The Rough Guide**” as the best guidebook available (short only on Magyar/Hungarian history, culture and place names).

PAYMENT

Trips: Because the kilometers driven will vary from trip to trip, payment will be made directly to the driver at the close of each trip, based on the number of days the van was required and the odometer readings at the beginning and end of each trip. An estimate can be given prior to your departure so you can bring the necessary dollar amount with you.

Tours: Because all but your incidental expenses can be known ahead of time and our arrangements for eventually purchasing a replacement van require us to maintain funds in a bank in North America, payment for tours need to be made to Rev. Beal prior to your departure. Pick-ups for tours cannot be made until payment has been received. Arrangements for paying both the per diem costs and the planning fee will be part of scheduling your tour.

IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING A PCTour/Trip and would like to initiate a conversation about planning it, please answer the following questions and send to

the Rev. Richard Beal
First Unitarian Church
809 S 4th Street
Louisville, KY 40203
Tel: 502-585-5110; Fax: 502-587-8446,
E-mail: RichrdBeal@aol.com

[A one-time “Planning Fee” of \$10 per person for groups from 1 to 7 and \$5 per person for groups from 8 to 14 will be paid when planning for the trip is requested. It will cover mailing, telephone and fax and other costs to the Partner Church Council.]

Your name, address, telephone # (day and evening) or e-mail?

Name of your Church/Fellowship?

Name of your Partner Church?

Is your tour already decided upon or is this exploratory?

Proposed PCTour/Trip dates ?

How many will be in the group (or an estimate)?

Has your Church/Fellowship made other visits?

Will your minister accompany you?

Has anyone from your Partner Church visited your Church or Fellowship?

Is there any other information that would be helpful to us in assisting you?

PCTrips&Tours is a NON-PROFIT Enterprise. Any proceeds beyond the cost of trips, tours, and the operation and eventual replacement of the van will go to the Transylvanian Unitarian Church for its projects and assistance programs.



TRAVEL TIPS¹

by **Richard Beal**

Things change very quickly in Romania. The “tips” here are probably going to be helpful. But then again, by the time you get there some of them may simply strike you as bizarre. If you discover some statement to have been rendered outrageous by time and circumstance, please, once you are over your outrage, let us know and we will make changes based on how much credence we give your observations. And finally, “tips” are a personal and subjective, not to say idiosyncratic matter. Perhaps you would not be caught dead in a pair of Miss Marple’s shoes, and got along fine in your six inch spikies. So write your own tips! Suggested title: “Lurching the Picturesque Lanes of Lokod, How to Make An Impression In Transylvanian Villages.”

PASSPORTS AND VISAS: If you do not have a passport it is not too early to get one. They sometimes take more time than expected. Visas are no longer required for Romania, if you stay less than a month. If you plan to stay longer, contact the Romanian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Don’t worry! Just go through the passport check as if you know exactly what you’re doing. But please note: when asked where you are going give the Romanian name of your destination, not the Hungarian. Say “Cluj,” not “Kolozsvar.” Whenever you are speaking to Romanians use Romanian place names, not the Hungarian. When speaking to Hungarians use the Hungarian place names. This is a simple matter of courtesy and has the added benefit of keeping you out of trouble. All government and most authorities, for example the police (even in Hungarian areas) will be Romanian and expect you to use Romanian references.

CUSTOMS, ENTRY: Cameras, electronic and video equipment used to be registered as you crossed the border into Romania. This was to

¹ The author wishes to acknowledge the inspiring guide of Carol I. Weiss

avoid problems of trying to prove that you didn't purchase them in Romania as you left. Currently the border people don't want to be bothered with this and wave you through. Should you lose or leave equipment there is still a chance you will be charged duty when you exit the country if there is a record of your bringing it in. I.e. don't lose your camera.

When you enter Romania you will be issued a small (approximately 1 1/2 by 3 inches) piece of flimsy paper. the so-called "statistics", Put it in the case in which you keep your passport and do not lose it. You will be asked to surrender it when you leave. If they want to hassle you they can delay your leaving if you don't have it.

It's a good idea to make three copies of the ID page of your passport. Leave one where it can be found back at home. Give another to the guide/driver for safekeeping. The third one secure on your person separate from your passport. If you lose or have your passport stolen (they still have great street value) these copies will expedite a replacement.

Purchase a small carry case that you can wear around your neck, inside your clothing. Your passport is extremely valuable to thieves. Belt bags can be easily unzipped. Pockets can be picked. Things you carry in your hand can be set down for a few minutes, unattended, or can be left behind in restaurants and shops. Buy the case and keep your passport in it, along with extra money, at all times. Mugging and assault is practically non-existent in Romania, at least as far as tourists are concerned. But theft is fairly common and cheating or otherwise taking advantage of the unwary is business-as-usual.

CUSTOMS, EXIT: You will probably be simply waved through Romanian, Hungarian, and American customs. On seven trips I have only had my luggage searched once. But if you are, you need to be prepared. Keep a record of your purchases, in English. Keep receipts and ask for them if they are not offered. It doesn't help you to fill out the customs forms you will be given on the plane as you come back if you don't have or can't read the receipt.

It is illegal to remove "antiques" from Romania. The rule of thumb is, if it looks like it might be old and is worth more than \$50 dollars, be prepared to prove it is not an antique. This is the 50/50 rule.

If you buy art - painting, print, statue - you need a permit from the district museum in order to take the art out of the country. If you buy from an art gallery, they usually provide you the permits, just ask for it. If you buy from the artist or from private collection, you need to have the ap

proval from the special office of protection of monuments (at the district museum).

WHAT TO TAKE?

As little as possible. Check with the airline regarding its luggage policies. In most cases airlines allow you two bags (70 lbs or under) and one carry-on bag. But luggage space in the van will be limited. The more room taken up by bags the less room for you.

PACKING. If possible, plan your packing in groups of three or four. One person in each group should bring a lightly packed hard suitcase. This allows each group to pack its breakable purchases in something that helps insure their survival on the return journey. Most everything else can, and should, be packed in light and easily storable soft nylon or canvass bags. The one really indispensable item is a sturdy, commodious, compartmentalized carry-on and carry-about bag. In this carry everything you really need. Your other bags are not always readily available. You have to have another roll of film? Everyone waits while the van is unloaded and your big bag is located and you root around in it looking for your film. **NOT!** Use your big bag as a depository from which you replenish your carry-bag (in the morning before you take off for the day).

YOU WILL PROBABLY RETURN WITH MORE THAN YOU TOOK. So pack lightly. You will still be allowed only the same number and weight bags on the return trip. Most airlines will let you weigh two bags that total 139 lbs, and not fuss that one bag weighs 39 and the other 100 lbs. But they don't have to do this. Allow room for bringing back gifts and purchases and extra time at the airport if you have to redistribute weight amongst the group.

THE SIMPLER THE BETTER. It's not worth it to carry a blow dryer for your hair. Or the adapter required to use it in Europe. A towel (only one) and a comb are sufficient. If you wear contacts bring a chemical, not electrical, disinfectant.

DO NOT LISTEN TO YOUR PHARMACIST OR YOUR MOTHER. The group as a whole should bring a sensible number of generic medications and first aid supplies. Individuals do not have to, and should not, lug a small drugstore with them. There are remedies available in Romania. It is not a dangerous country health-wise. Hospitals are best avoided. If you have a health condition that might result in your needing to be hospitalized purchase the kind of international health insurance which will airlift you to Western Europe. AAA sells this.

Yes, you can drink the water.

PRESCRIPTIONS. Obviously, if you take regular prescription medication you bring it (in your carry-bag). But also bring a copy of the prescription and a letter from your doctor saying that you need whatever it is. You could be asked about prescription medicines at the border.

CLOTHING. Bring one outfit for church and concerts and the unlikely need to dress up (shirt and tie and slacks; skirt and blouse and one decorative something). In addition have two casual, easily washed and quickly dried outfits. Extra socks and underwear, a light sweater, and a light, nylon waterproof windbreaker are really all the extra clothing items necessary. Shorts are normal warm-weather wear for men and (younger) women. A light weight robe can come in handy for you may find yourself needing to wander about in an unfamiliar setting in the middle of the night (bathroom, glass of water, etc.) and getting dressed to do so is an inconvenience. Wrapping yourself in their bedding is usually not an option for you'll be given a thick comforter that doesn't wrap easily.

FOOTWEAR. What would Miss Marple wear? Sensible walking shoes! Tennis shoes for a change of pace. Those foldable light rubbers and maybe a plastic fold-up rain hat. Thongs are good to have for those bathrooms with cold, wet concrete floors. Make sure you bring what you're comfortable walking in. And it doesn't matter how they look. This is not a fashion statement you are making. It is a be kind to your blister-prone feet statement.

LITTLE EXTRAS. One roll of toilet paper (cardboard tube removed and squashed flat) makes sense. Contrary to rumor there is toilet paper available 'most everywhere. But occasionally you'll need your own.

A very small flashlight is a good idea for strange houses where you don't know where the switches are, for unlighted outhouses, for dark streets (cities have less public lighting than ours and villages next to none).

Pens and paper. Help with communication if you can draw what you are asking for or about.

A small plastic water bottle can be handy.

A small pocket knife, especially with a bottle opener, is handy.

If you bring cosmetics or toiletries pack them in a small waterproof closeable bag. And a ziplock bag is good if you wash your face in the morning. You can carry your wet, washcloth in your bag instead of holding it out the window of the van for an hour and a half.

Snack foods: Expect occasional hunger pangs while waiting for lunch or dinner, despite the generous portions served at mealtimes. Do pack snack food, with enough to share with your hosts--for example, while

you are out sightseeing (almond or peanut M&Ms are filling and easy to carry; dried fruit is another option. Many snack foods can be purchased once you arrive. Just remember to have some when you need them.

BATTERIES AND FILM. If you're going to need them, bring them. They might be available in a city, but there's no guarantee.

MONEY. The exchange rate is now pretty uniform all over the country, and the government rate is very close to the actual value of the dollar. So there are fewer black marketeers. But you still need to bring cash and to bring it in fairly small denominations.

50s are good for exchanging dollars into leis (pronounced layees). A fifty will provide you with a hefty handful of the local currency. More than you want to carry about. You will be issued a "proof of transaction" form when you change money. Keep it! If you have purchased a large number of items or a valuable item they may ask at the border to see proof that you exchanged the necessary dollars to account for the purchase. Rates differ at Private Exchanges from city to city and even within cities. Never exchange money until you have asked your driver or a local minister where to find the best rate.

20s are useful for hotel bills (must be paid in dollars) and purchases in the "dollar stores". Just remember your change will be given to you in Leis and usually with a few points shaved off the exchange rate in the clerk's favor.

10s and 5s you will be using to pay for home hospitality.

1s will be handy for tips.

Bring more cash than you expect to need (just a rule of thumb ... better too much than too little). If you have friends who have brought back leis (actually it's illegal to remove them from the country and do you little good because they're not exchanged anywhere), ask for them. If you're flying into Bucharest it helps to have leis to rent a luggage cart. If you pay in dollars you'll be overcharged

CREDIT CARDS are increasingly accepted in the cities but practically useless in the towns, and where they can be used the procedure is so slow and burdensome that you are better off leaving them at home.

Do not bring: expensive-looking watches, jewelry or accessories. A plain gold wedding band is preferable to your 43 ounce Zuni turquoise rain dance ring. Molls and mobsters like flashy jewelry in Romania, not the kind of people you will be meeting and with whom you will be staying. Granted, dressing fit-to-have-killed somebody will give folks something to talk about. But think about it.

MITTBINGS. Plan on bringing small, personal items as gifts for your host families. Especially good are photos of you and your family, postcards of the town in which you live, any kind of small handicraft you do. Balloons, chewing gum, comic books, stickers, and suchlike make nice presents for the kids. The women appreciate small gifts of cosmetics, partly because they come from North America, partly because they are much more expensive there than here. Cigarette lighters and Pilot-type rolling ball pens are appreciated. But most things American are available in Romania now if you have the money to buy them. Basically you want small, easily carried, personal-to-you items. Good chocolate and good quality coffee beans are still appreciated. And whether you approve or not, most people still smoke and appreciate a pack of real North American cigarettes. (Golden Kent). They are acceptable tips when money would be an insult.

Bring vitamins (with minerals) and pain-killers as gift - they will be much appreciated and needed.

SONG SHEETS: One of the most useful things you can do as a group to prepare for your trip is to put together some sheets of songs that you can stand and sing. Choose songs you like! It's easier if you can just bring the words to tunes you all know. Hungarians love to sing. Will sing for you. And are delighted when you can sing back. But don't assume you all know all the words to "Bridge Over Troubled Waters." You don't. You will need the words.

PHRASE BOOKS. They can be exceedingly frustrating. Most can be useful in shops and train stations but hopelessly inadequate for ordinary exchanges of information about each other's life. Usually a small Hungarian/English - English/Hungarian dictionary is far more useful. If you do bring phrase books, bring them for both Hungarian and Romanian. The lingua franca of the shops is Romanian.

SPEAKING OF HUNGARIAN: 99.90 percent of Unitarians in Transylvania are Hungarians. It is bad form to refer to them as Romanians (even though, in terms of citizenship, they are). Their ethnic identity is of far greater importance to most of them than their citizenship. You will be exposed to a good deal of anti-Romanian and anti-Gypsy prejudice. Please be yourself and say what you think. But it is ill-mannered and really doesn't accomplish anything to argue or be critical of your hosts. You will also notice profound differences in the treatment of women and the roles they fill. This is truer of older women than younger women. But it is noticeable. Again, be yourselves and say what you think. But explaining your own opinion is different than coming on like a missionary.

FOOD AND DRINK. Hungarian cuisine is not like American cuisine. This is especially noticeable at breakfast. You may be served what looks like slabs of raw bacon. Its smoked, but yes, basically it's raw bacon. Or blood sausage (which is actually very good). You'll be served bread (at every meal), perhaps fried eggs, sheep or goats cheese, and probably cucumbers. But cereal, or a "continental" breakfast is unknown. Please do not ask for special treatment (unless you are a vegetarian or have medical issues with the food you eat). You are there to experience their life, their culture, their way of doing things. Do not ask for granola, even if that's all you ever eat for breakfast. They will go out and try to buy it. At incredible cost because it's imported. Be a beautiful North American. Not an ugly North American.

Expect lunch and dinner to be served later than you are accustomed. Both will usually be full, hot meals. Do not expect homes to stock caffeine-free, sugar-free or alcohol-free beverages. If you ask for them they will go out and buy them. Better you bring your own little decaf coffee and tea bags (also salt-substitutes, non-dairy creamer, etc.). Bring enough to share with your host/ess. They will be curious and you will look less self-centered if you can offer them a taste of what is important to you. Fruit juices and soda you may be served, but remember they are expensive for your hosts and model your consumption on how much they drink of them. Plastic glasses that hold 2 gallons of diet Coke are not staples in the Transylvanian cupboard.

Pork is the meat of choice and you'll be served a good deal of it. Usually cooked in lard. Watch out for small red peppers. Some are sweet but some are very hot. The large red peppers in brine or oil are delicious! If you'll be there in the summer or late spring you'll get fresh vegetables and salad greens. Radishes will be served with every meal. And probably pickles. This is not an easy country for strict vegetarians. They will try to accommodate you but you'll be eating an awful lot of fried cheese and eggs!

Served at every meal in most homes (especially village homes) will be Palinka (a homemade, double or triple distilled fruit brandy). It's very potent. In the villages it's served even for breakfast. It is also a potent symbol of hospitality and it will be very hard to turn down, for they won't understand why you're refusing their friendliness. And they will insist: "Not take no for an answer". If there are medical reasons you can't drink palinka or wine (also ubiquitous) make sure this is explained, in Hungarian, to your hosts. As more and more North American teetotalers visit Transylvania they will get used to our peculiarities. And some have. But be

prepared.

Their mineral water is wonderful stuff and inexpensive. If you ask for “apa minerala” or “borviz” [in Hungarian] instead of wine they will be more understanding than a simple refusal of a drink. The beer is not so great.

Coffee is “natural”, which is espresso, or “ness” (or nescafe”) which is instant. For some reason “ness” is considered better, classier, more sophisticated than “nat-u-ral”. But “natural” is far better. The other option is “Turkish” [which I recommend as best of all but it does come already sweetened].

CAUTION. Be very careful of admiring things. They might insist on giving it to you. You like a picture, an embroidery, a woodcarving? They will take it off the wall, wrap it, and be hurt if you don’t accept it. Admire their house, their barn, their church. But don’t express appreciation of the pottery or the glass. Or it’s yours. And what do you have to give in return? Your camera?

And please, don’t try to buy anything except in the shops or from a craftsperson at their place of business. Unless it is clearly “for sale” your interest in buying it will result in its being pressed upon you.

“I love your dress. Where can I get one like it?” How embarrassing for everybody!

WHERE TO SHOP:

Pottery: Korond is best.

Woodcarving: Udvarhely is best.

Glass: Kolozsvár

Woodblock Print: wherever you can find them for sale.

Embroideries: individual villagers (ask the ministers who might have handwork for sale), and at the “shop” run by the Women’s Association near the First Church in Kolozsvár.

Postcards: local Post Office (“POSTA”)

Marosvasarhely: art, Easter eggs (at the Palace of Culture’s gift shop, which is worth visiting).

Everything is more expensive in Budapest and Bucharest, and, except for very select shops, of lesser quality. State Stores, labeled ‘TOUR-IST’, have to be carefully shopped. Ask for a guide/translator to go with you and advise you.

Open Air Markets are great places for foodstuffs. Wash fruits and vegetables. But you will find the best quality. Do bring home some real paprika (for pap-ri-kash), but taste it first because there are many grades

and both sweet and hot varieties (and look around before buying, there are also very different prices in the same market).

Body Language Both Romanians and Hungarians are more obviously affectionate than many North Americans and are used to actually touching each other. Women exchange greetings, farewells and thank-yous with quick kisses on both cheeks. Hungarian men are still likely to kiss a woman's hand when being introduced or saying farewell. Men also use the quick kiss on both cheeks to express a moment of joy or a thank-you. If you are contact-phobic it is okay to extend a hand for a handshake before the kiss gets launched. This is perfectly correct and cordial.

You will see women, girls and boys walking down the street holding hands. Men are often seen walking along with arms over each other's shoulders. These are not Gay or Lesbian couples. Romania remains one of the most homophobic countries in Europe, and only recently have some of the laws been officially relaxed to meet the requirements for admission to the European Community. You will hear and see a good deal of homophobia. Treat it as you do other kinds of prejudice. Explain your point of view. Simply stating your position will make a greater impact than arguing with them about theirs.

CALLING HOME. In the cities, because you don't want to put those you are staying with to the expense of an international call (which if you ask they will offer) you have to go to the Post Office, where there is a dept. with phone booths. Go with a translator if you must make a call. Some phones can get a direct line, some have to go through the departmental operator and can take time. Remember that there is a seven hour time difference (Eastern standard)! The best solution is to tell the folks you leave behind that you will not call unless there is an emergency... that if they don't hear from you it means everything is fine.

CALLS FROM HOME. If someone simply has to get in touch with you, the best way is to call the Bishop's office in Kolozsvár and ask them to get a message to you. They will have a copy of your itinerary. The telephone number is **011** (International code) **40** (country code) **64** (city code) **193236** (local number). Call during their normal business hours (8 AM-4 PM) and hope there is someone in the office who is speaking English.

The Unitarian Church Headquarters **FAX #: 011-40-64-195927**

TIPPING/BEGGING. Unless you eat in a restaurant where it's clearly stated that gratuities are included (very rare) do tip. Also tip porters, taxi drivers, bell hops, etc. It doesn't have to be 15-20 percent unless

in Leis. A single dollar bill is usually a decent tip for small services (and dollars are more appreciated than Leis).

Drivers and translators are contracted for on a per diem basis, but it's a good idea to add an extra bit of monetary appreciation at the end of the trip (just don't let it appear to be tip!).

Do not give to beggars. They are everywhere in the cities and do look gruesomely needy. But if you give to one you will immediately attract a swarm of others (this is especially true of the Gypsy children). Once surrounded by a mass of grabbing hands you are easily distracted and easily victimized ... and though that may be alright by you, it will be everyone you are with who is subjected to the treatment. So smile and walk on.

Dracula: Do not go, overboard with Dracula talk of humor. Bram Stoker was an outsider, but Dracula is based on a real Prince (no pun intended), Vlad Tepes. Except for people seeking tourist dollars, most Romanians speak well of Vlad and dislike Stoker's fabrication. The Hungarians are simply puzzled by North American interest in this fellow. In any event, appearing more interested in fiction than in their extraordinary realities appears, as is, bad form.

Promises. Promises. It's wonderful to be supportive and friendly. It is not good to make promises you do not know you will want or be able to keep. If you take someone's picture and promise to send them a copy, get their name and address so you can. Then do. Don't promise a most deserving village English teacher your not-so old set of the Encyclopedia Americana unless you can afford to ship it. You'll write. You'll organize pen pals. You'll sell 200 gross of embroidered hankies. Will you? Think it through before you say you'll do it. It's much worse to say you'll do it and not do it than not saying so in the first place. Elementary you think?

A very kind and well intentioned woman promised the Youth Conference Center in Homorodszentmarton Rubbermaid place settings. For eighty! Once back at home she realized she could not afford to do so. Therefore, if you can and wish to help (because they do need them and now have about a dozen sets) perhaps your group would be willing to purchase four place settings and take them over with you. They can be left with Denes Farkas in Kolozsvár and delivered to the Conference Center.

The 10 oz. Rubbermaid Dinnerware mug is #3813

The 10.2 in. Rubbermaid plate is #3840

The 1 US Pt./4.7 dl Rubbermaid bowl is #3836

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING:

Nothing works quite the way you think it will (or, from your spoiled El Norte point of view, should). Everything takes more time than you can imagine. "The best laid plans of ..." Etc., Etc. So take plenty of **Flexibility**. Leave uptightness at home. Be prepared to simply relax and enjoy yourself. For you will! It will be a wonderful experience. Different than what you think it will be, but far richer and more moving and meaningful than you can anticipate.



SPIRIT OF LIFE

words & music by

Isten Lelke - Ish-ten Lel-keh

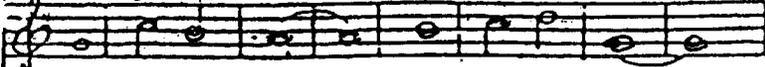
Carolyn McDade



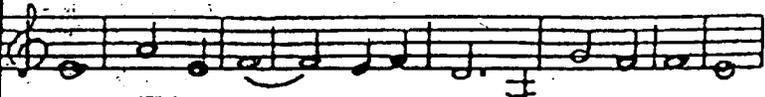
Spi-rit of Life, come un - to me.
 Is-ten lel-ke, jöjj el hoz-zánk.
 Ish-ten lel-keh, yöy el hoe-zahnk.



Sing in my heart all the stir-rings of com-pas-sion.
 Aldd meg szi-vünk min-den 8 - szint-te nagy ál-mat.
 Ahld meg see-vünk min-den oo - sin-teh nadj ahl-maht.



Blow in the wind rise in the sea
 jöjj a szél-lel a ten-ger-ben
 yöy ah sail-lel ah ten-gayr-ben



Move in the hand giv-ing life the shape of jus-tice.
 Ve-zesd lel-künk az 8 - rök i - gaz-ság ut-ján.
 Veh-zeshd lel-künk oz 8 - rök ee - goz-shahg ut-yahn.



Roots hold me close Wings set me free.
 Szár - nya-kat kapsz Sza - bad le-szel.
 Sar - nyah-kot kops Sa - bod le-sel.



Spi-rit of Life, come to me, come to me.
 Is-ten lel-ke, jöjj hoz-zánk, jöjj hoz-zánk.
 Ish-ten lel-keh, yöy hoh-zahnk, yöy hoh-zahnk.

PC TRIPS & TOURS

Places of Special Interest in Transylvania

by Richard Beal

This is a very inadequate (and arbitrary) list of places to see and visit. It deals only with sites of Unitarian association and by no means all of them. But nothing has been listed that has not been visited. If you note that a place of special interest is missing, or you think your Partner Church or its city/town/village should be included, please send us a note. We will credit you as a contributor! Send your recommendations to

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The name of each locality (Capital letter) is the ancient name in Hungarian, as local Unitarians call it. The bracketed name is in Romanian and it is the one you find on an official map.

HOMORODALMÁS (Meresti) *Alma* means “apple” in Hungarian, and this village, nestled in the hills above the Homorod valley, is surrounded by orchards. There is an especially scenic road that winds from Homorodszentmarton up to Almás and is well worth taking. The village itself has a large Unitarian church (walled). The famous Almás cave is a tourist attraction for those who like hiking.

ÁRKOS (Arcus) Not far from Brassó or the Homoród Valley, the village of Árkos contains a striking fortified Unitarian church. The walls and bastions are well preserved. It has a fine parsonage, and a separate school building still in use for religious education. In the village, and visitable, is one of the many country estates belonging to former members of the nobility and used as one of Ceaucescu’s multitudinous weekend retreats... complete with bearskins on the floor.

BARÓT (Baraolt) The new Unitarian church was dedicated in 1996. The congregation had previously met in a room in the parish house (the minister’s

house). Kiss Alpar, the minister, spent time at Meadville/Lombard and speaks excellent English. His time in the US is evident in the design of the new church. In an area of a great many other Unitarian churches and villages you are likely to pass close to Barot so do stop by to see a possible glimpse of the future while you are steeping yourself in the past.

BÖLÖN (Belin) Bölön is a large Unitarian village and has a massive and unusual church, designed by an architect who had spent time in Turkey. It is well worth a visit, and has an exceptionally fine pulpit carved with the frequently seen pelican stabbing its breast to feed its young with its own blood. The minister is a fiery Hungarian patriot and has created a small “memorial” park with a large Székely grave marker on the road in front of the church.

BRASSÓ (Brasov) Brassó is a large and interesting, originally Saxon city.

1) For many years Unitarians were not allowed to live within its walls. The churches (there are two congregations meeting in the same building and two ministers) therefore are located in a building put up in the fifties. It is not an architecturally striking building, but the ministers and congregants are friendly and welcoming. The Medieval Brasso and the surrounding area is worth seeing.

2) A walk around and through the Medieval central square will well repay any time or effort it takes.

3) The Black Church is the major historical attraction and everyone goes to see it.

4) If money is burning a hole in your pocket you might want to visit the Merchants Hall, once the location of the Saxon guilds but now a collection of craft shops (it's opposite the History Museum).

BERETHALOM (Biertan) Located eight to ten kilometres south of the road between Segesvar (Sighisoara) and Medgyes (Medias), Berethalom was once an extremely important Saxon village and the site of a Lutheran diocese. The medieval church is one of the most striking and interesting fortified churches in Transylvania, with its many towers and bastions perched high above the village. The inside of the church offers a wealth of well preserved detail, including an especially fine three paneled painted altar and a treasure room with one of the world's most intricate locks (which still works). Guided tours of the church are available and include a small house in which quarreling couples were locked. If the quarrel remained

unresolved, and if both halves of the couple survived the period of forced intimacy and still wished to do so, they were then allowed to divorce. The house includes fine examples of Saxon folk costumes, household implements, etc. Berethalom is well worth a visit if you are in the neighborhood.

DÉVA (Deva) Not really on the way to anywhere, Deva is not frequently visited except by those making pilgrimages to the cell in which Francis David died. This is located in the fortress high on the cone shaped hill dominating the town. Even if you drive halfway up (which you can do) its a steep climb to the fortress. On a good day its worth the climb.

Not far from Deva is one of the great tourist attractions of Transylvania, the castle at Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara). Not the blatant tourist-trap that Bran is, this is worth seeing. Its been well restored and is everything, and then some, you always imagined a romantic fairy-tale type castle to be.

GYULAFEHÉRVÁR (Alba Julia) One of the oldest inhabited sites in Transylvania, this was John Sigismund's (János Zsigmond - in Hungarian) capitol. Portions of the (RC) Bishop's palace date back to the time Janos Sigismund and his mother, Isabella, lived there.

1) The Cathedral, once Unitarian, contains Janos Sigismund's tomb in a sort of side chapel (no doubt the only portion of a cathedral devoted to a Unitarian anywhere in the world). Both Janos Sigismund's and Isabella's tombs have interesting stone carvings depicting some Unitarian history. The cathedral itself, currently undergoing restoration, is worth a visit. One spot on the floor covers a baptistry pool where pagan Magyar chieftains were forcibly "converted" to Christianity.

2) The old city was destroyed by the Austrians so they could build a fortress. The fortress remains and is still a military site. From the walls one can look down on the lower town and view the tiny cell in which the rebel Horea was imprisoned.

3) A huge Romanian Orthodox Cathedral stands next to the Catholic Cathedral. It was built especially for the coronation of the Romanian king after the awarding of Transylvania to Romania in the treaty of Trianon.

HOMORÓD VALLEY The site of 16 Unitarian villages, the Homorod Valley is an exceptionally beautiful spot. Wonderfully sylvan/agrarian scenery unfolds around every bend in the roads (and "back-roading" takes on a whole new dimension in the Homorod). All of the churches and villages

are worth visiting, but don't try to visit all of them unless you're a church freak. There is a certain sameness!

For some of you, the Youth Conference Center at Homorodszentmárton (Martinis) will be one of the places you'll be staying. This is a fine choice, for you are within daytrips of most of the Szekelyföld and much of Unitarian Transylvania. Try to schedule some time just walking about in one of the villages, with no agenda. Just ambling and observing.

If you are going to be staying at the Youth Conference Center, please consider taking over a few place settings of Rubbermaid plates (10.2" #ML33840), bowls (1 pint #3836) and mugs (10 oz. # ML5-3813) for them.

KÖHALOM (Rupea) Unitarians from the Homorod valley moved here to find work during the communist era when it was impossible to found or build churches. They created an "underground" church, hidden in a house on the hill. It was served by ministers who took great risks (as did the people who attended) to minister here. After eighty-nine the congregation put a small steeple on the house and proclaimed it a church. It's small but worth seeing and clearly reflects the current minister's interest in art. There is also a ruined "royal" fortress in Kohalom.

KOLOZSVÁR (Cluj Napoca)

1) The First Unitarian Church. Built in 1796 and once a source of considerable pride the building is in some desperate need of repair and renovation (though some has begun). In a side vestibule you can see the stone on which Francis David stood to address the population of the city when he returned victorious from the great debate at Gyulafehervar. Also of great interest is the church's Communion Table, carved by the two world-famous contemporary Transylvanian sculptors, Jenö and Tibor Szervátius - father and son - and representative of the best Transylvanian folk inspiration.

The minister is likely to show you the priceless chalices of the church - among them Francis David's communion chalice.

2) The headquarters of the Unitarian Church in Romania is located in the former Unitarian College (the building is named for and referred to by the name of the donor, Brassai Samuel). Ask to see the Chapel, rather austere, and the meeting room of the Consistory, which is a warm and pleasant room filled with portraits.

3) St. Michael's Cathedral. Located in the heart of the city and

taking up the most prominent portion of the central square (Piata Unirii), St. Michael's was the church to which the crowds carried Francis David, deposited him in the pulpit, and made it (and legend has it the entire city) Unitarian. It was confiscated from the Unitarians by the Austrians and given to the Catholics. Today there is no reference to its ever having been Unitarian in the material about the history of the church posted on the walls.

4) Bánffy Palace. As you emerge from St. Michael's' directly behind you, and facing the church across the street, is the former Bánffy Palace. One of the most powerful Hungarian noble families' city residence is now an Art Museum. Worth a visit if the renovations are completed (if not all you will see is the basement and changing exhibits).

5) If, on leaving St. Michael's you don't go to the Bánffy but turn right and then left when you get to the sidewalk, you will, in a couple of blocks, come to the Ethnographic Museum. This is a small museum but worth visiting. It has a good folk costume collection. It also has an open air section just a ways outside of town which is also worth seeing if you haven't visited the big village museum in Bucharest.

6) Strada Matei Corvin (off the Northwest corner of the central square) takes you to a 15th century building where Matthias Corvinus - King Matthias, the Renaissance patron of arts and literature - was born. The sculpture Dept. of the Art University is located here now and sometimes there is interesting work in progress.

In front of St. Michael church you can see the famous statue of King Matthias surrounded by Hungarian nobles. This statue is the symbol of Kolozsvár and a pride of all Hungarians. The ultra-nationalist Romanian mayor of the city, Gheorghe Funar wanted to demolished it, but he was stopped by serious opposition.

7) Close by is the Franciscan Church (at one time Unitarian), with an extraordinary Rococo interior well worth seeing.

8) History Museum of Transylvania. Mostly Romanian history.

9) Protestant Theological Institute. Where the Unitarian students take many of their classes. The Chapel is worth a visit. And if you want to weep, get invited to see one of the Calvinist student's rooms. Then compare it to the living quarters of the Unitarian students!

10) Kolozsvár is said to be the only city in Europe with two opera houses. The Romanian Opera House was formerly the Hungarian Opera House. The Hungarians have a newer (but not nicer) building. If you are there when there are plays, concerts or operas be sure and go to either one. It is a rich experience.

11) The market is the largest you will see, and well worth not only visiting but spending enough time in to wander about. See both the indoor and outdoor sections.

12) The “Cock Church” is a Reformat church designed by Kós Karoly, an architect with a passionate love of Transylvanian folk motifs. The church is named for the crowing cock worked into every available detail.

13) The Botanical Garden, the largest in Romania, is a little sad ... because it could be so very beautiful. And is in a way. The local people are very proud of it. But it shows the lack of funds for upkeep which no amount of making-do can quite overcome or hide.

14) The Unitarian Billiard Parlor. On a side street near the First Church. Ask to be shown to it. A very nice place down under the arches of the old buildings above it. It has a small bar as well as billiard tables and is a relaxing and civilized place to spend some time.

KOROND (Corund) Korond is a potters’ village, and something of a tourist trap. The main street is lined with shops and stalls selling “folk” items. It is approximately 1/3 Unitarian and 2/3s Roman Catholic. An interesting aspect of the town is that you can often identify the religion of the inhabitants of the houses you pass as you walk along the street because the posts of the carved Szekely gates - of which there are a great many in Korond - are topped with stars, suns and/or crescent moons or crosses. The crosses indicate Catholic homes, the stars, suns and moons Unitarian homes.

There is a fine Unitarian church in Korond, very well kept and cared for (with an especially fine Szekely gate). It is surrounded by a small wall, inside of which is a well kept garden and, behind the church, Szekely grave markers (kopjafa) commemorating each of the church’s ministers. If you stop at the parsonage next to the church you can be given directions or escorted to one of the Unitarian potters. There you can see the pots thrown, decorated, glazed or fired and shop at far better prices than you would find down on the main road.

MAROSVÁSÁRHELY (Tirgu Mures)

1) Unitarian Church. Built in the thirties this is not architecturally very interesting.

2) Near the church is the Teleki Library, a must see for those interested in books and manuscripts (and interesting for those who are not bibliophiles).

3) Palace of Culture. This is an extraordinary building, full of interest. A kind of Transylvanian art deco in style, you will not see its like elsewhere. Worth a guided tour. Its stained glass windows are world-famous.

4) The Jewish Synagogue is an imposing example of its kind. Only a very small congregation worships there now but it was once the center of a thriving community. It has been restored, is well maintained, and can be toured.

5) In the basement of the family home of the man who was mayor of Marosvasarhely when the Cultural Palace was built is a new and very good coffee shop/cafe. It is generally considered a “literary” cafe but they will welcome and serve tourists.

6) The “Maros” is no longer an Hungarian owned and operated restaurant but is still considered to have some of the best food and service in Marosvasarhely. It is located near the Hotel Transylvania, just down the corner from the street (Strada Bolyai) that leads from the main drag (Piata Trandafirilor) up the hill to the Unitarian Church

MÉSZKÖ (Cheia) A pilgrimage place to Balázs Ferenc’s church and grave. He was the minister-poet who, after two years in Oxford and two years of study with Wilbur in the Unitarian Theological School at Berkeley, traveled around the world in the 1920s, met liberal religious groups, befriended Rabindranath Tagore, met Gandhi, learned Japanese, etc. He rebuilt and redesigned the Unitarian church here in a “Transylvanian-style.” The interior is especially interesting. So is the parsonage, which has one of the most intriguing roof-lines in Transylvania (a country of interesting roof-lines).

NAGYAJTA (Aita Mare) This 15th century fortified church (re-fortified with “Italian style” bastions and walls in the 16th century) is one of the most important examples of the type to be found. In the late-Gothic style the interior is especially beautiful.

SEGESVÁR (Sighisoara) The citadel, basically the whole upper town, is a wonderfully preserved bit of medieval Europe. A Saxon city, Segesvar is increasingly inhabited by Gypsies and it would pay one to see it while it is still in decent shape. Currently the whole upper town is a photographic opportunity, and simply walking the streets is a thoroughly worthwhile

activity.

1) The Unitarian Church, located in the lower town, is an extremely modest building but has a wonderful old minister.

2) The Clock Tower, which can't be missed, should not be missed. It has a small local history museum and a wonderful view from its wooden galleries. The clock itself has great figures that emerge to strike the days.

3) The Lutheran Church, on the highest point of the hill and reached by an interesting covered wooden stairway, has been undergoing renovations. It's a climb, but a rewarding one.

4) If you must do something related to Dracula, you can eat in the restaurant in the old town in which he is said to have been born (and it may even be true). "I had lunch (or dinner) at Dracula's house," should impress your friends.

SEPSISZENTGYÖRGY (Sfintu-Gheorghe)

1) Still under construction is a new Unitarian church. It is not as ambitious an undertaking as the one at Szekelyudvarhely but the same troubles of money and inflation have affected it. If you visit, and it's worth seeing for the design is good, a small donation would be in order.

2) A block or two further along the street from the church is a must visit, the Kós Károly Museum. This contains, in an extraordinary building designed for the purpose by Kós Károly, a remarkable collection of Székely materials and a remarkably good series of exhibits on area history.

SZÉKELYDERZS (Dirjii) The road to Szekelyderzs is not the best (and there is only the one road to and from it) but the journey and the loosened fillings in your teeth are well worth it. It is a wonderfully preserved walled church in a beautiful area. This is one of the villages Ceausescu planned to have razed. Fortunately he didn't, and so you get to see some of the frescoes depicting St. Laszlo defeating the Cuman villain with the help of the maiden he has come to rescue. The frescoes were uncovered during a recent renovation and, while incomplete, are fascinating. As is the entire church.

SZÉKELYKERESZTÚR (Cristuru-Secuiesc) The location of the second of the two formerly Unitarian colleges. It now has five Unitarian classes in which the students prepare to serve as church musicians and lay religious educators. Both the college and the church are worth visiting. If you are interested in ceramics there is a good Ceramics Museum in the city.

SZÉKELYUDVARHELY (Odorheiu-Secuiesc) Udvarhely is the seat of one of the two majority Hungarian counties and has two Unitarian churches. The First Church is a substantial and well-kept building. The second remains under construction, as it has for several years. Udvarhely has a huge Unitarian population and the new church, very ambitious in its design, was planned to serve it. Work on it continues but the money for it comes slowly. Nevertheless it is well worth a visit for it is a good example of progressive (if perhaps somewhat inflated) thinking about the Unitarian mission in urban centers.

There is a good ethnographic museum in Udvarhely with fine examples of Szekely grave markers. Small examples of these “kopjafa” can be purchased at a trade school where they are carved by 7 and 8 year old apprentice carvers.

TORDA (Turda) Torda was once one of the wealthiest towns in Transylvania, and evidences of it can still be seen in the architecture. But it has been savagely industrialized and getting from the outskirts to the center of town can be dismaying. The Roman Catholic church at one end of the plaza shows the many styles and periods to which it has been subjected. It is worth a quick visit because it was the site of the promulgation of the Edict of Torda, but the interior looks nothing at all as it did when the diet met there in 1568.

Nor does the famous painting of the Diet, on exhibit in the local history museum (and worth a visit) give an accurate idea. It is a highly romanticized 19th century impression of the proceedings (with Franz Liszt the model for Francis David).

The Unitarian Church is hidden down by the riverside, for the Austrians gave permission to build it only if it could not be seen from the main road. It is well cared for and has very beautifully done carvings.

THE TORDA GORGE A spectacular cut in the mountains, the gorge is a protected “micro environment” with unique biological and botanical life. It is approached by foot over a bridge after parking in a cabana area. The walk is not difficult and the trail runs below 300 meter high cliffs. A good excursion for the walkers among you. Those who wish to wait at the cabana can listen to loud music and ignore the requests for cigarettes and to “borrow your camera to take a picture of my girlfriend.”

TOROCKÓ (Rimetea) and TOROCKÓSZENTGYÖRGY (Coltesti)

These Unitarian villages are as strikingly and beautifully located as any in Transylvania (or Europe for that matter). About a half hour's drive from Torda they are well worth visiting. One is tempted to say they are required visiting sites. Both have interesting walled churches. Torockó is the larger. Torockoszentgyörgy is the better cared for and has the more beautifully decorated interior.

In **Torockó** be sure and visit the local museum. It is small and devoted entirely to the history of the town. But it has a folk costume collection without peer. Perhaps you will be fortunate enough to stay in the Retreat Center in Torockó. It's an excellent facility with wonderful cooks. If you do stay there, plan on getting up early enough in the morning to watch the shepherds, goatherds, and cowherds collect their charges and lead them off to pasture. If you miss this, try to watch the return procession(s) in the evening. Lots of photo opportunities. And the sun rises twice in Torockó - check it out.

Torockoszentgyörgy has a ruined castle on the hill above it. It's something of a climb to get to but the view and the feeling you get up there are awesome.

VARGYAS (Virghis) The Unitarian church stands in the Y in the road. It has the simple, peaceful quality of other old Unitarian churches. However, besides the distinctive carved wooden chandelier and altar, and the typical embroidered cloths, it has a breath-taking organ. This village is home to a master wood carver, who carves two of everything: one to sell and one to keep.

VÁRFALVA (Moldovenesti) This Unitarian village (located below the unexcavated remains of a Roman fortress on the hill above), is nicely situated on a rise above the Aranyos River. The tall tower of the Unitarian church dominates the village. A good example of a "typical" Transylvanian Unitarian church, Varfalva has the distinction of being the first to use the word "Unitarian" to describe itself. An ancient marker stating this is affixed to the wall of the church (in a sort of recess to the right of the main doorway).

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Kolozsvár in the 16th century

Historic Unitarian Congregations in the Czech Republic

by Rev. Joseph Ben-David

The Congregation of Unitarians in the beautiful, historic city of Prague holds regular services - except during summer recess - and weekly lectures with lay leaders and guest speakers. Unfortunately, this congregation of about 300 members, many of whom are second and third generation Unitarians, has been the main target during a hostile take-over and is now struggling to regain its spiritual legacy and material property. Since being barred from their valuable building and sanctuary in the heart of Prague, they meet most often at the Jan Hus church.

The Prague Unitarian congregation held the distinction of being the largest congregation of Unitarians in the world during the 1930s, before their founding minister, Dr. Norbert Fabian Capek, creator of the now widely celebrated Flower Communion, was martyred in a concentration camp by the Nazis.

The congregation holds Flower Communion each spring, and a memorial service for Capek and his associate Dr. Karel Haspl, who led the congregation during the early years of communist rule.

Other Unitarian congregations meet in Brno and Pilsen and two smaller towns.

Contacts in Prague:

Ivanka and Dr. Milos Kocman. Ivanka is Chair of the Prague Central Committee, the equivalent of President of a congregation in the US.

Telephone: 64 40 362.

Dr. Vaclav Antropius, and attorney and one of the oldest members of the Prague Unitaria.

Telephone: 31 10 887

Contacts in Brno: **The Rev. Milos Mikota,** minister Emeritus, one of the most knowledgeable Czech Unitarians. Telephone: 422 11 222

Dr. Bohumil Houser, Chair of the Brno Central Committee. Participated during W.W.II. in daring anti-Nazi activity. Specializes in alternate healing. Telephone: 44 21 51 06

All the above persons speak English. If you want to visit the congregation in Pilsen, it's a charming city, ask the people in Prague to contact them.

As an excellent guidebook to Prague, we recommend: **PRAGUEWALKS** by Ivana Edwards, published by Henry H. Holt and Co, NY. Ivana Edwards is a Czech born American Journalist and Unitarian who really knows her way around Prague. The book describes five intimate walking tours of the most historical and enchanting quarters, providing maps, photos, and a select list of hotels, restaurants, shops and museums.

For further information contact **the Rev. Joseph Ben-David**, Coordinator, Friends of the Czech Unitarians, Partner Church Council

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The high fortress of Deva where Francis David died in the dungeon.

II. HISTORY

FRANCIS DAVID: INNOVATOR!

Sermon by the Reverend John Rex
The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Fredericksburg
November 10, 1996

Last week, after the final meeting of our Liberation Theology Group, I watched a rerun of the TV show “Mad About You”—is that familiar?—in which Paul, the husband, came into the bedroom and discovered that Jamie, his wife, had taken his side of the bed. Her attitude was: “What difference does it make?” His attitude was: “I can’t deal with this—at least, I can’t sleep!” So, after some awkward moments, they switched back.

How many here present are in a relationship that includes having a sense of ownership of your side of the bed? How many would be comfortable if your partner switched sides?

So, the message is, “change is difficult,” at least some kinds of change that involve where we place ourselves in the world. Inertia, imprinting, and the power of private and public ritual, effect enormous pressure on each of us not to change. I suspect this is one of the most powerful dynamics of any election, where the incumbents have the advantage of being known entities, which some people may prefer to keep, even if they don’t like them, because the known is preferable to the unknown. And surely, “change is difficult” has been a dynamic in the creation and evolution of religions, as we review the history of persecutions, inquisitions, and other abominations carried out in the name of religion. One of the hard lessons of life is that it is not safe to climb in the other side of the bed.

And yet, throughout history, our Unitarian Universalist forebears have stood bravely for the principles that revelation is not sealed, that the human mind is sacred, and that what we call religion must recognize and value growth: in other words, that “change is good.”

Most of the religions around us here in Fredericksburg acknowledge their origins in the genius or creativity of some historical person: the Lutherans point to Martin Luther, the Methodists to John Wesley, the Presbyterians to John Calvin, and so on. So it seems quite natural to them, if

they wish to know about our religion, to ask just who it was that started Unitarian Universalism. At that point, we may respond that no one person is responsible, or that we don't know how it is that we came into being as a religion. Since we do not have a creed and we do not expect members to accept the beliefs of historical persons in order to be in fellowship here, we tend to ignore or underplay the role historical beliefs and persons have played in making us who we are. I have even had people here tell me that they do not want to hear sermons about our religious forebears. I'm not sure why. But there it is.

We do have religious forebears, and I think it is important that we know about them. Our religious ancestors made possible a world in which we can be what we are today.

Because our religion was not started by one person, we always have the problem of where to begin. Where did it begin, this thing we call Unitarian Universalism, or perhaps, more generally, liberal religion? When in history did a person first proclaim ideas similar to ours? It seems clear that there have been people in every generation in every culture, who, for some reason that honestly cannot be explained, have bucked the system, thought for themselves, and, if you will, opted for the other side of the bed. And history is full of examples of the terrible retribution societies have dealt out to those who buck the system, whether it be Akhenaton in ancient Egypt, or Joan of Arc, or Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Unitarian part of our history points to Arius, the fourth century Alexandrian priest, who taught that Jesus was not coequal with God, and who was declared a heretic, and to Michael Servetus, a sixteenth century Spanish priest, who denied the trinity and was burned at the stake, first in effigy by the Catholic Inquisition, and then in person by the Calvinists of Geneva. We claim these two as forebears, not because their religions are like ours, because clearly they are not, but because they chose to take a stand on issues and to advocate changes in thinking towards more liberal views, and they both suffered the consequences of their actions.

What we identify as Unitarianism has sprung up in different places and at different times in history through the efforts of brave and gifted individuals, many of whom influenced others through their preaching, writing, and the example of their lives, so we have an interconnected web of liberal religious genealogy that binds us with groups around the world.

The second largest group of Unitarians today is in Transylvania, a part of Romania that was shifted from Hungary at the end of World War I. I think it is important that we know who our religious colleagues are, that

we know something of their history, and that we acknowledge that their history is a significant piece of our history, and that knowing it empowers us to know ourselves.

Like the most of the rest of Europe, Transylvania was a Catholic kingdom at the beginning of the sixteenth century, but unlike the rest of Europe, Transylvania existed between the Holy Roman and the Ottoman Empires as a kind of buffer state and was subject to pressures and influences from both Christian and Muslim powers. I cannot begin to unravel most of the complexities of that extraordinary century of religious change. Suffice it to say that the invention of the printing press and publication of the Bible had made available information that had been hidden for centuries, and an extraordinary number of persons, from Erasmus to Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and so on, led movements that changed Christianity forever. Among these scholars were a number of liberal Italians, who fled the Roman Catholic Inquisition and ended up in various places, including Poland and Transylvania.

And so it is that I finally arrive at the subject of this sermon, Francis David, the Anglicized version of a name that in its Hungarian form is Dávid Ferenc, who was born at Kolozsvár in Transylvania, in 1510, and who trained for the Catholic priesthood and then became Rector of a Catholic school. Shortly thereafter, he “accepted the Reformation” (Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism in Transylvania, England, and America*. p. 25), and became pastor of a Lutheran church and by 1555 he had become Rector of a Lutheran school. In 1556 he was “made Superintendent of the Hungarian Lutheran churches, and became champion of the Lutheran view against the encroaching Calvinism. (Ibid.) It was the custom in those days to decide theological differences through debates, known as “Diets,” which were often the major occasions for community gatherings and entertainment, rivaling our presidential conventions and Superbowl in their significance. David defeated his Calvinist rival in debate, but later was won over, from being chief opponent, to being a convert to Calvinism.

At that time, Transylvania was ruled by a young king, John Sigismund, who was born in 1540, whose father died in 1544, and whose country, Transylvania, had declared itself independent in 1543. Imagine being caught up in the intrigues and complexities of dealing with this minor kingdom in the midst of religious reformation starting at the age of 4! By 1560, at the age of 20, Sigismund had come to the throne and attempted to quell doctrinal wrangles in his kingdom by ordering that a formal debate be held. As part of this process, he brought in “from Poland his mother’s

old physician, Dr. Giorgio Biandrata, who seems at once by his medical skill, his courtly manners, his experience at court, his wide religious knowledge and his winning personality to have won the King's full confidence." (Ibid.. p. 26) The King turned over the management of the debate to Biandrata. As a result of the 1564 Diet, the division of the Calvinists and Lutherans was formalized, leading to the recognition of Francis David as Superintendent of the Reformed or Calvinist church, a position similar to that of a Bishop.

"Out of personal conviction, therefore, and practical political considerations, (King John Sigismund) fostered a policy of open discussion and broad toleration of all viewpoints which made Transylvania the freest country in Europe in religious matters."

"Transylvania's first decree of religious toleration came in 1557. It was renewed in 1563. Five years later, after the Diet had voted it unanimously with a request that King Sigismund 'declare and strengthen' the prior decrees, the young King issued this famous Act of Religious Tolerance and Freedom of Conscience:

"His majesty...reaffirms that in every place the preachers shall preach and explain the Gospel each according to his understanding of it, and if the congregation like it, well, if not, no one shall compel them for their souls would not be satisfied, but they shall be permitted to keep a preacher whose teaching they approve. Therefore none of the superintendents or others shall abuse the preachers, no one shall be reviled for his religion by anyone, according to the previous statutes, and it is not permitted that anyone should threaten anyone else by imprisonment or by removal from his post for his teaching, for faith is the gift of God, this comes from hearing, which hearing is by the word of God." (David B. Parke, *The Epic of Unitarianism*. pp. 19-20)

What I haven't mentioned is that Dr. Biandrata, now in such an influential position in court, having come from Italy via Geneva and Poland, was an "antitrinitarian," and that he was to play a major role in Transylvania. As the King's personal deputy, he found that King Sigismund relied on him for religious counsel. We will never know what went through his mind as he laid the groundwork for spreading his religious ideas in Transylvania, but that is what he did. He detected signs that Francis David was wavering from Calvinistic orthodoxy, perhaps through reading the circulated writings of Erasmus and Servetus. Even as a Lutheran, David had dared to question the doctrine of the Trinity, and it appears that Biandrata nourished those doubts. By 1565, David was using his Calvinist pulpit to

proclaim his doubts, which as of yet did not conflict directly with his Reformed churches. Eventually, another Diet was summoned, this time at a place called Torda, in 1566, “to discuss the Trinity and related doctrines. This was the first public discussion of the question in Transylvania, and the beginning of the bitter Unitarian controversy.” (Ibid. p. 32)

Although Biandrata and David were major participants, other leading scholars of the time participated, and whatever account I may give of events of that time are by necessity grossly oversimplified. All this led to what our esteemed Unitarian historian, Earl Morse Wilbur, labels “the greatest debate in the entire history of Unitarianism, (Ibid., p. 36) held in March, 1568, at which Biandrata and colleague David, along with their followers, disputed Trinitarian ministers for ten days, beginning at five o’clock in the morning, in the great hall of the palace in the presence of the king and all his court. The main points debated were the doctrines of the Trinity and the eternal deity of Christ, with the Scriptures being the final authority, and after ten days, it was not clear who had won. Nevertheless, tradition tells us that the news that reached David’s hometown city of Kolozsvár was that David and his followers had won, and on returning to the city, and here I quote Wilbur, “a great throng of his people were awaiting him where the Torda road enters the town, and hailed the victor with loud acclamations. The tradition is that he thereupon mounted a large boulder at the street corner and proclaimed the simple unity of God to them with such persuasive eloquence that they took him on their shoulders and bore him to the great church in the square to continue the theme, and the whole city accepted the Unitarian faith then and there.” (p. 38) Imagine the eloquence that would inspire such a story!

The next three years would be the glory years for Unitarianism in Transylvania. John Sigismund was the first and only king in history professing this faith, and he was supported by the team of Biandrata, court physician, and David, acknowledged leader of a growing number of congregations, as of yet only loosely organized, that had adopted antitrinitarian ideas. What was lacking was formal recognition, and that was achieved in January, 1571, when the churches following David joined the Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists as one of the four “received” religions. Religious freedom at that time, as I understand it, meant that a person had the right to practice one of these four, officially acknowledged religions—and though that may seem oppressive to us, it is certainly better than the bloody intolerance that was being practiced at that time elsewhere. This development proved to be extremely important, because immediately following the Diet,

King John was injured in an accident from which he never recovered. He died in March, 1571, in his thirty-first year. His successor, Stephen Bathory, though broad minded, was a Catholic and vassal of the Catholic Emperor. David lost his position as court preacher, and printed works were strictly censored. To deal with the religious confusion of his kingdom, King Stephen “confirmed King John’s decree of religious freedom; but in the same breath he gave warning that if anyone introduced any innovation in religion he should be investigated, and if found guilty of preaching a different faith from that of the late King, he should be excommunicated or otherwise punished according to his deserts.” (Ibid. p. 59)

I think you can guess how this story turns out, at least as it relates to Francis David. Imagine what happens when a person who has spent his whole life growing religiously, who has a powerful voice in the community, who has been fearless in accepting challenges through one crisis after another; imagine what happens when such a person is told he can grow no more.

King Bathory continued to rely upon his court physician, Biandrata, who aided him in securing the throne of Poland that had become vacant, and who was well rewarded for these services. Stephan Bathory chose his brother, Christopher, to govern Transylvania as his subordinate. Christopher suffered ill health, and Biandrata remained as his court physician. Finally, in 1576, the king authorized the recognition of Francis David as Superintendent of that denomination, then called Davidists, this formal recognition reiterating the ban on innovation.

It appears that Francis David was “less interested in the organization and administration of his churches than in the further reform of their doctrine.” (Ibid.. p. 63) It seems inevitable that conflict would erupt, though it seems doubly tragic that it should have been between the Superintendent, David, and the chief lay Elder, Biandrata. As synods of ministers debated the hot issues of the day, it became clear to Biandrata that they were innovating, and thus endangering the whole movement. Among the issues raised by David was that of whether Christ could be invoked in prayers. Those who thought he shouldn’t, the followers of David, came to be called “Nonadorantes”.

David and Biandrata debated the issue openly and in print, and Biandrata even attempted to bring outside pressures to bear, but David was not one to be intimidated and he stood firm. Eventually, sensing danger, Biandrata declared himself to be David’s enemy, and David was ordered to appear before a Diet and state his position. At issue was not the truth of

what he said—only whether he was guilty of innovation. David suffered severe medical problems, from which he could barely speak. Christopher Bathory presided, and Biandrata accused David of returning to Judaism, and he and twenty-five of his party solemnly swore that they had never held David's view and that it was new and blasphemous." (Ibid. p. 77)

David was convicted of innovation and blasphemy and the prince decided his punishment: perpetual imprisonment in a castle dungeon on the summit of a high hill. Only legends survive of David's last days. We know that he was very ill, that he lasted only five months, and that he died, probably, on November 15, 1579, "a religious martyr and a national hero." (Parke, p. 22.) We are told that, "His conviction that 'God is One!' has continued to burn in the hearts of Transylvanian and Hungarian Unitarians down to the present day." (Ibid., p.22)

The very name, "Unitarian," did not come into use until twenty years after the death of Francis David; before that time, his religion had been known as "Davidism" and later his supporters came to be called "Old Unitarians," not to be confused with the "New Unitarians," who followed Biandrata.

Clearly the story does not end with David's death. We now have over four hundred years of Unitarian history in that part of the world, and there are today more than 80,000 Unitarians in Romania, as well as up to 25,000 in Hungary, all of whom trace their history to their founder, Francis David. For these people, November 15 is an important day of remembrance, a time to call to mind the life of an amazing man.

Although British and American Unitarianism, evolving into what we now claim as our Unitarian Universalism grew up independent of Transylvania, without direct missionary activity, there have been significant exchanges of scholarly writings among countries throughout history, so that each dissenting, liberal, antitrinitarian group that has popped up has had some connections with others. The printing press, which seems to have started all this, also sustained it. As long as we have printing presses, and computers, and whatever else may come along, we will have innovations.

Considering what we know of the Christian Coalition and their allies in the Religious Right, it seems ironic to me that they too are attempting to stop innovations in a world awash with innovative possibilities. For some, not terribly much has changed in four hundred years, at least in religious thinking, human nature being what it is. And I think we need people like Francis David today, just as much as he was needed then. We need his eloquence, his persistence, his endurance, his capacity to change and grow,

his commitment.

Does it make a difference that we know we come in a long line of innovators? Does it help us to define ourselves, when we can relate to our forebears? I think it does. I think it enhances my identity as a Unitarian Universalist. It gives me strength to know that I am not alone. It gives me pride to know how hard others have worked and how much they have sacrificed, even their lives, for those values I hold most dear.

The next time someone asks you who founded our religion, you might want to call to mind Francis David. At least as much as any other, his name deserves to be at the top of the list of those who, for whatever reason, just had to sleep on the other side of the bed.



Contemporary portrait of King John Sigismund (1540-1571)

Starr King School - San Francisco First Unitarian Society's Joint Project

Rev. Sándor Kovács and his wife, Magdolna Maksay spent the 1995-96 academic year at Starr King School for the Ministry as visiting scholar/students. The school generously waved the tuition for Sándor. Magdolna also attended certain courses and they both were active participant of the school's life.

Sándor is the minister of the Third Unitarian Church of Kolozsvár, partnered with San Francisco First Unitarian Society. The San Francisco church generously took financial responsibility for the Transylvanian couple's one-year stay in the United States, a church member offered a home for them.

The following speech was presented at the UU General Assembly in Indianapolis, IN in 1996 by Rev. Sandor Kovács.

Following their return, Sándor was appointed is a teacher at the Unitarian Seminary at Kolozsvár, besides continuing ministry. Their son, conceived in America, was born after their return.

Partner Church Program as seen by Transylvanians

By Rev. Sándor Kovács

Our meeting this Sunday holds a special significance for me. Magda and I have spent the last few days in the company of Boti, Noémi, Levente, and Ernő, friends from my student years at Seminary. Being with them again, I have realized how strong our friendship is, and how important it is to our future work as ministers. I would Like to thank you for your kind invitation, that enabled us I take part in this event. For me, this is a unique opportunity for sharing, for exchanging experiences and ideas, a day on which we are surrounded by love, and on which dreams may come true.

When the Rev. Richard Beal invited me to attend G.A., my first thought was to speak of the challenges that Unitarians of Transylvania face, particularly of their struggle with the new Education Law. This will make life much more difficult for the Hungarian community in Romania.

All of us here understand that Hungarians in Transylvania today live under great economic and political pressure that threaten their identity and their very existence.

For me the question is: how we, as a people, can best respond to the various pressure and threats, that threaten us. Many among us respond by organizing or joining protests, by writing or signing petitions. Some have even resorted to hunger-strike. But what can we do when the majority community pays no attention to our protest?

What can I, as a Unitarian minister in Transylvania, do to help ensure a better future for my congregation, and for my people? Can I offer any support to the younger generation when most of my own schoolmates had left the Transylvania and moved to Hungary, Germany, Canada, USA. Can I offer any hope for their and the Church's future?

In spite of all the challenges we face, my answer is yes! Certainly, yes.

Transylvanian Unitarianism has a long history of preaching the gospel of love and of tolerance, and we will continue this tradition. Ours is a progressive faith. Through the 400 years we have learned to keep our faith and pass on from generation to generation. In the last 50 years, however it often seemed that our progress has been halted entirely. Communism, corrupt leadership, injustice, loneliness, fear, seemed to govern the life of our Church.

Since the Peace Treaty at Trianon, generations of Unitarians have grown up with no religious education other than confirmation classes. In many instances, the minister could not trust the members of his congregation or the congregations had no trust for their ministers. Secret Police informers were living among us, and one never knew who that person was.

The majority of our current adult members, especially in the cities, lived their entire lives in such circumstances. However, these people and their children are our future. Our task, as ministers, is to keep them in the Church, to give them something more than flowery sermons and consolation. We must help them find their roots in the soil of our common heritage.

I am a minister in Kolozsvár, one of Transylvania's largest cities. I do not know what it is like to serve a village congregation. But I see the lives of my colleagues which is becoming harder than ever before. Among others, alcoholism is one of our greatest problems.

If we are to serve such communities, we must rethink our strategies, our Church structure, and its governance. Changes must be made in

the way we educate our ministers, with a greater emphasis being placed upon practical theology and social action. Such changes will require time, patience and effort.

We must commit ourselves to working in many different areas: the economic infrastructure of our villages must be rebuilt. Sunday school curricula must be revised. Our youth association must be allowed greater autonomy, our laity must be encouraged to take on greater responsibility, new ways of communication, new technologies must be introduced. The prospect of having to deal with so many things at once, can be quite intimidating. Yet I often feel that ours is the last opportunity, that if we do not take on these challenges today, will have no chance of doing so tomorrow.

And yet such pervasive reforms can only succeed if they reflect the collective aspirations of our Church and its members. We must embrace these tasks willingly. Our hopes for more effective organization, for a richer Church life can only be realized when they are shared by a majority of both our clergy and our laity. Any attempt at forcing such measures would threaten both our community and its values. Changes must be consensual, our work must be voluntary, growing from a greater sense of concern and of personal responsibility.

The obvious question today is: how the Partner Church program can be of help in our internal process?

Over the past six years I have repeatedly seen that the contact with North American ministers, lay people and congregations have offered us not only moral and material support, but have given a chance to study first hand other models of religious education, pastoral counseling, social mission, and church polity. Models and examples we find in your church life will not always be appropriate for our own situation, but they do offer us food for thought, stimulate our own creativity, and help us find paths that will be best for us.

In my opinion, no single formula can be offered for all partner church relationships. Each relationship will be unique, focusing upon the objectives appropriate to those two churches involved with each other. Each envisions and develops their own projects. I know that this works; I have seen it work, and the results have been excellent.

As in all relationships, ours needs to be built upon equality and mutual respect. As we do not try to impose our vision or our will upon the life of your Church, the same way, you would not consider doing so with us. The best resources of each are to be found, and to be developed within.

Nor can the hundreds of living relationships that have grown into a

movement be institutionalized and directed from two central “head-quarters”. These relationships exist between individual congregations. We can support them, act as facilitators, but we have to respect their unique characteristics. A project that succeeds for one pair of partners, may not work the same way for another.

I think those partnerships have the greatest perspective which are between two congregations and not just between to ministers. In Transylvania too often only our ministers enjoy the benefits of such relationships. Let me stress that when I speak of benefits, I am not referring solely, or even primarily, to material benefits, as important as these are, but to the sharing of moral support, of affection, and of spiritual and intellectual stimulation that such relationship can offer.

The relationship that have grown between ministers and leaders in our churches are blessings for all Unitarians of Transylvania. My hope is that just as the Partner Church Program succeeded in planting 200 relationships between individual congregations, rather than stopping with a relationship between the American UUA and the Transylvanian Church Headquarters, so these church to church partnerships may serve as seeds for new type of relationships: among our lay-leaders, women’s groups, our youth groups, our religious education teachers, our music directors, and those of our laity. Especially laity has a great potential to find common ground in issues like environment, poverty and economic development, ethnic relations, or the pastoral mission of the Church.



The Historic and the Personal in Starr King School's Connection with Transylvania

by Rev. Dr. Alicia McNary Forsey

From the inception of Starr King School in 1904, it was the intent of the seminary to include students from other countries, especially countries in Eastern Europe and Japan. Looking over lists of students prior to the 1940's, I was surprised to find a distinctively international presence. My sense is that, generally speaking, this presence diminished significantly during the four decades following World War II.

During the early 1990's I received word that a minister from Transylvania, Joseph Kaszoni, was going to come to Starr King School in order to visit the Earl Morse Wilbur Rare Book Collection. I had just started a project for the purpose of conserving, evaluating and assessing each of the approximately 1,300 volumes in the collection. This endeavor included the creation of a safer and more secure environment for the collection, as well as working toward making it (in eight languages) educationally accessible to students who do not have the benefit of a broad general education.

When Joseph arrived I took him to the small, vault-like room where the collection is stored. I had set aside a few of the books he said he was interested in seeing. He sat down on the one lone chair in the room, and I handed him a book bound in velum that was printed in the 16th Century. He looked down at the book as though it was a sacred object, and he was visibly shaken. It was at that moment that I understood the enormity of my responsibility and the depth of my own commitment to the Earl Morse Wilbur Collection. The emotional response of our visitor was catching—transmitted to me in a way that changed me and has helped me to continue with the project through periods of extreme discouragement.

During Joseph's stay my friend Gretchen Thomas, active in the Partner Church Program, brought him to my home for a visit. He spoke of his life in Transylvania. Hearing a person speak about his life was completely different from reading about what had happened in Romania over the previous 40 years. That direct communication gave me a sense of being connected to him and to the people he spoke of. I, like many of the students

at the seminary who had the opportunity to spend time with Joseph or to hear his lecture at Starr King or at one of our local churches, became engaged.

Because of the efforts of The Partner Church Council, The Center for Free Religion, Unitarian Universalist ministers and lay people who understand the value of being engaged with Unitarians in Transylvania, Starr King School had the opportunity to welcome a minister from Transylvania, Sandor Léta (Shan'-dor), for a full academic year. Initially, I admit to thinking how fortunate Sandor was to be with us for a year. I thought in terms of what we had to offer—not in terms of what a fine gift we were receiving.

Sandor told me that he wanted to take a tutorial with me because he needed a long-range plan for his church. He wanted to take something back to his congregation that would reflect the value of his time away from them. I assumed that this was a simple request. Something I do so often I don't have to give it much thought. As it happened, I could write a book about my own education, not Sandor's.

I learned that many of my assumptions about money and giving were completely foreign to Sandor. And, if they were foreign to Sandor, they would certainly be foreign to a majority of people throughout the world. I cringe when I think of some of the glib statements I had so cheerfully and confidently made in workshops and classes. For example: A rising tide raises all ships. Meaning, there is enough money all-around, and the feelings of generosity engendered by open-handed giving only creates more of the same. This is false and inappropriate outside the narrow understanding I had prior to meeting Sandor Léta. Sándor's church is in a coal-mining town. While there may be a handful of individuals in the church who have more money than most, generally speaking there is no such thing as "discretionary income" which would allow for an Annual Canvass as we know it in our churches and fellowships here.

I observed Sandor's puzzled expression more than once as he realized how naive I must be about the situation he was trying to address. Though he was always too much of a gentleman to point out my parochial perspectives, I came to know him well enough to tell by his expression when I had made some sort of blunder. We struggled through a three-year plan for improvements of Sandor's church. I am certain that I learned more than he, but he was glad to have the plan ready by the time we set off for General Assembly, as it was something tangible and useful for him to take back to his congregation. He spoke of it as offering hope. I received a letter

from him last week. All but one item in the plan we developed has been completed.

Sandor was a blessing to us. In fact, he offered the blessings for many occasions at Starr King. He was also an inspiration to Scott Prinster, a student at the seminary while Sandor was with us. Scott studied the equivalent of five semesters of Hungarian, and is now teaching English to seminary students in Transylvania. Many students, trustees, graduates and staff of Starr King School feel a strong bond with Unitarians in Transylvania and other countries in Eastern Europe because of Sandor Leta and our second visiting Transylvanian minister, Sandor Kovacs.

Sandor Kovacs arrived with his wife, Magdolna in September of 1996. The seminary had learned from Sándor Léta's visit that it was not acceptable to leave a partner at home. Aside from the loneliness that comes when we are separated from a partner, there are other considerations that relate to one leading a completely different life from the other for as long as 11 months. The seminary offers free tuition to our visiting ministers from Transylvania, and local churches tend to the housing and other support required.

Decisions about who will come are made by the seminary officials in Transylvania. Concern for the partner that gets left behind somehow fell through the cracks with our first student, but was set aright when the oversight was understood. Erika, Sandor Leta's wife, joined him during the last three months of his stay. Magdolna stayed throughout the year, and participated in classes she found of interest.

During my class on The Radical Reformation, Sandor Kovacs articulated his views about how he perceives our movement here in the United States, without distancing himself due to our differences. He undertook research in order to write a paper (*Historical Crumbs*) that documents the migration of Unitarians from Transylvania into other countries, including England. He is the minister of one of the three churches in Kolozsvár, Cluj, and is affiliated with the seminary there. He and Scott Prinster are friends living near each other and looking forward to a visit this Summer from a group of friends from Starr King.

Now we are looking forward to meeting a new student in the Fall. We know how important the presence of a student from Transylvania is for the seminary. We are changed by them, just as they are changed by us—and thus a dynamic ripple effect is fanning out in ways seen and unseen. Change within the self, and consequently in what we say and do, is part of what theological education is all about.

III. SERMONS

Benefits of the Partner Church Program

by Rev. David E. Bumbaugh, Summit, NJ

It is not always easy to measure the benefits which flow to a North American congregation as a result of its relationship with a Transylvanian partner. Often the benefits are intangible and immeasurable. However, as I have reflected on the impact of our partnership with the Unitarian Church of Barot [Baraolt], it occurs to me that our Transylvanian connection has dramatically changed the way we think and behave as a religious community.

The church I currently serve is in an affluent New Jersey suburb of New York City. When I came to the church, almost nine years ago, it had a modest budget which was never quite adequate to its needs--a budget supported by an annual pledge drive which always a little more successful than the previous year, but never quite reached the goal. For years we struggled to finance a modest but not very imaginative program and we might have continued in that way for years longer had it not been for one very determined woman.

A member of the church decided that we should enter into a partnership with a congregation in Transylvania. The immediate response to her suggestion was politely negative. After all, we said, we have so much we need to do here and cannot afford; and, we said, it would be unkind to make promises to Transylvanians and then not be able to keep them; besides, we said, why worry about Transylvania when there is so much to be done in Newark.

But this was a determined woman who was possessed of a dream. She planted that dream wherever she found a thimble-full of fertile soil, and she nurtured it and she tended it. More than this, she took on her critics. She pointed out politely but firmly that our congregation was wealthy enough to do whatever it really wanted to do; that of course we would not make promises to our friends in Transylvania and fail to keep them--we are not that kind of people: and yes, there is much to be done in Newark, but

the needs of Transylvania are not invalidated by the needs of Newark, and besides, in case no one had noticed, we weren't doing anything for Newark anyway.

Over the course of the year, her dream took root. The partnership was established. Our partners happened to be constructing a new building--the first new Unitarian Church to be built in Transylvania in many years. Over the next few years, we raised enough money to pay for the heating plant; to purchase some chairs; to obtain a car for the minister; to subsidize the needy in the parish, to buy a bell for the tower, and to bring the minister and his wife to the United States to visit with us.

As an unexpected consequence, we gradually developed a new vision of ourselves and what possible for us. Our pledge began to increase significantly. The social action budget went from \$300 to \$13,000 in one year, allowing us to begin to respond to needs in Newark and other communities around us. The Transylvania partner church became a regular part of our budget. Our sanctuary, which had not been painted in twenty years, was painted. Funds were raised to restore our marvelous tracker organ. Funds were donated to purchase two baroque violins. A handicapped access ramp we had postponed building for years was constructed. We added a full time minister of religious education to the staff. And we entered into a covenant with two other congregations to establish a new Unitarian Universalist Church in our area. As a congregation we began to realize what we were capable of. We stopped worrying about meeting the budget and began to focus our concern on realizing our dreams. And the effect was to transform us as a people, encouraging us to act out of a culture of abundance, which was a more accurate description of reality, than the culture of artificial scarcity we had created for ourselves and which had dominated our existence for so many years. The result of our partnership with a Transylvanian congregation was that we were empowered to embrace our possibilities as a religious community and to become the people we dreamed of being.

This is the unexpected lesson we have learned through the years of our partnership: People give because they need to give for their own spiritual welfare; people give to a vision, to a dream, and they give not out of guilt but out of an expanded sense of what is possible and out of their own sense of abundance and blessing and gratitude. And the more they give, the greater is the blessing they receive.

There is never enough money nor will there ever be enough money for those who are focused on mere survival. There is always enough money

to fund a commanding dream. Never in my forty years in the trade have I seen a Unitarian Universalist Congregation whose dreams out-ran its resources. But I have seen too many Unitarian Universalist Congregations which have starved themselves precisely because they did not know how, did not dare to dream boldly. Often I have seen Unitarian Universalist Congregations fail themselves and the world because they are embedded in a rigid culture of scarcity, always asking “can we afford it?” rather than asking what are we called to be and to do, and, then, how can we made that dream come true.

Our people who have visited Transylvania have returned impressed by the refusal of our co-religionists to surrender to harsh realities. Our Transylvanian brothers and sisters serve a commanding dream and with great heart and faith, and limited resources they have kept it alive in spite of the odds. It is an irony that we who have been so abundantly blessed should continue to think of ourselves as poor and few and lacking resources. Our partnership with the Unitarians in Transylvania has taught us that if we have any real lack it is to be found in our failure to dream boldly and that only as we dream boldly can we realize our own full potential.



IMAGES FROM A TRANSYLVANIAN ODYSSEY

A Sermon at Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship 23 March 1997

by Richard Geer

Five years ago, I attended my first Annual General Meeting of the Pacific Northwest District, held at Ashland, Oregon. The workshop on Unitarianism in Transylvania sounded interesting. I had recently read Earl Morse Wilbur's classic two volume history of Unitarianism, and I wanted to know how things were now for those who had been keeping the faith for over 400 years. Four centuries of persecution. I went to the workshop and found myself listening to haunting Hungarian music played by a petit, dark-haired violinist, Dr. Judit Gellerd, a woman who had given up her medical career to make sure her father, a prominent Unitarian minister imprisoned by the Communists until his death, did not die in vain. Her music and her message launched my Transylvanian odyssey.

It has been a quest of redemption -- as a retired officer in the U.S. Air Force, I have been a warrior of sorts in a cold war now won, a war that has kept Eastern Europe in misery. What is my duty to the vanquished? It has been a quest for spiritual knowledge -- what can people who have been willing to die for our common faith teach us about living for that faith? And it has been a journey from Serendip -- that which I found greatly exceeded and was not the same as that which I sought.

I have the great good fortune to be married to Reverend Nan Geer, the minister at Free Church Unitarian in Blaine. I communicated my enthusiasm to her and she communicated it to her congregations in Blaine and Wenatchee, which she was then serving half-time. They agreed to partner with a church in Transylvania, and soon Dr. Gellerd found a match for us with the Unitarian village of Firtosvaralja, high in the hills of Harghita, Romania, an ethnically Hungarian county of Transylvania.

As Judit describes it (and as we found to be true), Firtosvaralja is "behind the shoulder of God". It is not served by a road, but by cart tracks leading up the hills across the fields. The village has no telephone, no plumbing, no camera, and one typewriter badly in need of adjustment. Between

World War I, when Transylvania was taken from Hungary and given to Romania, and World War II, Firtosvaralja was supposedly partnered with the Unitarian Church in Medford, Massachusetts, but nothing ever seemed to come of it, and today neither party seems to remember that connection.

We started a correspondence with Firtosvaralja's minister, and also attempted to establish communication between the lay leaders on each continent. The minister sent us glowing accounts of how the funds we sent were being used to refurbish the church and parsonage. We promised to visit as soon as possible, and a member of the Wenatchee congregation did in fact visit Firtosvaralja in 1994, the first visit intentionally made by an outsider in 400 years. Our representative was greatly taken with the warmth of the people, but reported a troubling point: their minister appeared to be an excessively heavy drinker.

In late 1995 correspondence came to a virtual halt. My inquiries to contacts at Unitarian headquarters in Kolozsvár uncovered a sad story: the minister of Firtosvaralja had been exiled by the village for drunkenness and neglect of duty. We wrote to the lay president of the congregation and found they had not been told of the partner church connection and the funds received from America. The former minister had spent all the money on himself.

When I told Free Church Unitarian what had happened, their response was, "Having been betrayed, now they need us more than ever!" (The lay leaders of Firtosvaralja have learned a great lesson from this, and have established collective responsibility for church affairs. Letters to us are now signed by the entire board.)

While all this was going on, we co-sponsored a summer visit to the Pacific Northwest by Cziro Szabolcs, better known as "Sabi", then a seminarian at Kolozsvár, and now a settled minister and dear friend, and I became editor and publisher of the PNWD Partner Church Network News.

By September 1996, it was time and past time to make a physical odyssey to Transylvania. I published my intention of meeting with the lay leaders of Firtosvaralja to make sure the funds we had been sending (and were taking with us) were in good hands.

Now some images from our odyssey:

The first step is assembling the baggage train. We pare down our luggage to two carry-on bags, but our train grows as gifts for partner churches, seminarians, and individuals accumulate from around the state. Surely we can check the duffel bag through, but I must hand-carry the large case of video recording equipment. Bev Smith brings me \$2000 in

twenties for Magyarszovat's organ. I have it changed to new anti-counterfeit \$100 bills. I try out various types of security devices designed to conceal currency. The armpit holster keeps slipping down into my sleeve.

Wednesday night in Renton. Nan is to deliver a sermon Sunday in Firtosvaralja. She decides to write it in advance, in case she doesn't have time when we arrive. We are full of anticipation and get little sleep that night.

Thursday in Seattle. United Airlines: "I'm sorry, the airplane seems to be broken, and we can't fix it today, try again tomorrow." I'm sorry, we didn't know the TWA flight we booked you on was full." "I'm sorry, the airplane we booked you on is still broken, but we can put you on the red-eye to Dulles, and you can connect via United Express with Malev at JFK only a day late." I'm sorry, we can't check your baggage through; you will have to pick it up and recheck it at each airport."

Friday at Dulles. United Express: "I'm sorry, we seem to have miscounted, we have five more people on the steps to the airplane than we have seats; you will have to walk back to the terminal. We are sorry about all this wind and rain."

Watching our luggage on the tarmac, soaking up the rain from Hurricane Fran.

Aboard Malev flight 91 at JFK, watching the hours go by on the in-flight clock while the ground crew repairs the nose landing wheel, damaged when the tow bar broke. It becomes obvious we cannot make our train connection to Transylvania.

Saturday afternoon in Budapest. Getting Judit out of bed in Chico, California with a frantic call from a phone booth, because we can't reach anyone in Kolozsvár to tell them we've missed our train. Judit calmly taking charge. She will take care of everything.

On the night train to Brassó, outside Nagyvarad. The Romanian border guard with all the gold braid on his cap, offering to have his "friend from the bank", who carries a greasy paper sack, change our money. How much do you have? I do not tell him of the \$2000 in my calf sock I am carrying in from Bellingham for Magyarszovat, but it feels like it is slipping down to my ankle.

Transylvania is dark. I recall the images taken by meteorological satellites over Europe at night. You can see all the cities and towns and villages, so that even coast lines are perfectly clear, but east of the Hungarian plain there is a dark hole. It is Transylvania. I fear we will not recognize Kolozsvár when the train pulls in to the station. Will Sabi be there to pick

us up?

Sunday morning, 1:30 am, Kolozsvár. Sabi and his fiancée, Enikő, coming down the station platform to embrace us. We have never seen such a welcome sight.

Their small rattletrap car is stuffed with the goods we were to have left in Kolozsvár. We carry packages on our laps. We leave Kolozsvár in the rain and cold for Szekelykeresztúr. The car stalls on a hill. The engine and transmission each sound bad. Sabi gets it going again. We careen through Torda. Sabi points out the church of Francis David. It is dark and swept with rain.

Everywhere, groups of people, men and women walking along the road in the darkness. They have no protection from the rain. Groups of three here, twelve there, seven here. Where are they going? Who are they? Sabi doesn't seem to know. "Stealing things, perhaps."

The car starts to come apart. We stop to locate bailing wire for repairs. We pass many broken-down cars, and several recent accidents.

We arrive at 5:30 in the morning at Sabi's family home in Szekelykeresztúr. Sabi's parents and an amazing meal are waiting for us. We add our Budapest-bought provisions to it. "You have one hour to sleep before we must go to church." Our first shower in days.

Sabi's mother dressed for church. She is tall, handsome, elegant in a well-tailored suit. She speaks no English, so she and Nan communicate in French.

Driving at about 10 kilometers per hour behind the Romanian police car (all the police in Transylvania are Romanian) to the station where Sabi will have to negotiate a fine for honking at them at the scene of an accident. We are late for church.

Bumping along in the rattletrap in the rain, following the dirt tracks over the hills, climbing up to Firtosvaralja. The way is too difficult, and the car gives up, but along comes a Unitarian couple from Szekelyudvarhely, and they give us a lift to the village.

We arrive an hour late, but no one seems to mind. Introductions all around, standing in the mud in the village street. The village consists of houses, the church, and the parsonage. There are no stores. There is no money. The minister from the next village is there with his wife. He is serving Firtosvaralja part-time, until a permanent minister can be assigned. His wife speaks a little English. The five members of the board of directors seem to have seven teeth among them. Scrawny turkeys are underfoot everywhere. The parsonage hall is cold in temperature, but the people are

warm. Trays of palinka, a homemade plum brandy, arrive to thaw us out.

Nan leads the procession to the church. The walls are two feet thick. The bell tolls deeply to signal the start of Sunday service. It is one of two Unitarian church bells to have survived. At each war, the villagers buried it, so that it could not be found and melted for bullets.

The church has hard benches. No knee room. No heat. Flowers everywhere. Every visitor gets a bouquet wrapped in cellophane. The flowers are from their gardens. On the wall there is a marble tablet listing the war dead from the village. In which war? Who were they fighting? Why? Hymns are sung with great spirit, lead by a cantor playing a keyboard powered by electricity from a single wire coming into the church. There is a single light bulb. The minister's sermon goes on and on. The prayer goes on and on. The catechism goes on and on. Four children are being confirmed. They do well, but one boy occasionally smiles slyly when he makes a teeny mistake.

The girls are in white shirts with puffy sleeves, black vests with red embroidery, full red skirts, white aprons with red embroidery, and black stockings. The boys are in starched white shirts, open black vests, fawn trousers with black embroidery, and over-the-calf black riding boots. The women of the congregation are mostly dressed in black. The men are mostly dressed in old suits and white shirts, buttoned to the neck but without ties. The minister and seminarians wear long black robes, with exaggerated pointy shoulders. We smile, because they remind us of old Dracula movies.

Sabi speaks. Enikö prays. Nan speaks, and Sabi translates. The cantor cries at her words. She has brought stones from the Pacific Ocean, stones she has polished, as remembrances for the congregation. They have never seen an ocean. She lays the stones on the communion table.

I am told I must take communion with the men. The ministers and men take communion first, then the women. They sit apart. There are twice as many men as women, probably because women are preparing our dinner. There are a few young men in the back row, a hopeful sign. The women examine the stones. They make careful selection. It is a test of character. Some take more than one stone, probably for their friends in the kitchen, but only if they confirm that there are enough for all.

After the service, Nan is given gifts and dinner is served in the parsonage for the elders, the ministers and their families. The cantor is invited. He embraces me, kisses me, and speaks to me passionately and at length in Hungarian. No one translates, but I think I get the idea. The dinner consists of many courses and we feel we may be eating their winter

supplies. We are beginning to have a serious problem staying awake at the table. I abandon my goal of meeting with the Board.

The lay-president offers to show us the roof tiles they have bought with the funds we have sent. They have them safely stored until their harvests are in and they can repair the leaky church roof. We learn that the villagers live on subsistence farming. Their fields and orchards are limited to the amount they can cultivate with their horses and their own hands. There is a tractor in the village, but it belongs to the State, which charges exorbitant rent for its use. It sits rusty, despised, and idle. We understand why rural Transylvania is so lovely. Its people do not have adequate means to farm it.

On the way back to Szekelykeresztur, prospects of beautiful countryside alternate outside the steamed-up car windows with visual hallucinations. I have never hallucinated before, but we have had very little sleep in the past three days.

Monday afternoon, after 14 hours sleep, a car is borrowed to take us on a tour as far as Marosvasarhely. The sun is shining and the countryside is idyllic. We top a rise and count eight church towers in eight villages below. We crest another hill and again the villages and churches spread themselves below. The clock faces are painted on the towers. The painted-on hands indicate the hour of Sunday services.

The opera house at Marosvasarhely. We hear the most gorgeous trumpet playing we have ever heard in our lives. The player is somewhere off-stage practicing, first Mozart, then Gershwin, all not only perfect, but inspired. The internal motifs of the Opera House -- the painted walls, the canvasses, the sculpture -- are totally Hungarian, and totally charming. Across the street, an armed soldier in camouflage fatigues guards the city hall from the people.

Throng of people in the streets, striding, looking in shop windows, looking curiously at us. We ask Sabi, "How can you tell who is Hungarian and who is Romanian?" He replies, "We can't. Sometimes I see a girl who is very beautiful. Then I hear her speak Romanian. It is too bad.

The railway station. We have not been able to cash travellers checks at the bank or even change money to purchase tickets to Budapest. The uniformed railway officials agree to take U.S. currency for the tickets. It is an illegal transaction.

Monday evening at Szekelykeresztur. We are back from Korond. We stand in the street outside Sabi's family home at dusk. A white van comes to a stop behind us, honking. It is Rev. Farkas Denes, bringing two

Americans to visit their partner church in Szekelykeresztur. He agrees to take the gifts we were forced to carry with us on our laps from Kolozsvar to Szekelykeresztur back to Kolozsvar for distribution. It is a great relief to see the duffel bag, the video camera, and Bellingham's \$2000 on their way to their proper destinations.

We pass monuments to 50 years of communism: Abandoned collective farms with guard towers. Abandoned factories with guard towers. Concrete block apartments housing gypsy families in filth.

Impressions crowd in on us: The splendor of the carved wooden Szekely gates separating the houses from the road. The attention paid to the construction and maintenance of red tile roofs. The colors of houses -- plum, mustard, mauve, green, blue. Waking to the clip-crop, clip-crop of horse hoofs. Palinka and cabbage for breakfast. Toilet paper with a foil wrapper impressed into it. Kissing whiskery men on both cheeks. Making jokes with hand signals. Superb tomatoes. The softly rounded hills dotted with live oak, each tree with leaves and branches sheared off flat at the height of a browsing deer. Hills covered with the lavender blossoms and white stems of the "pasque flowers of the fall" (fall crocus).

No, I did not realize my stated objective. I did not get to offer my North American know-how to the poor, ignorant villagers. I had the wrong idea. I think now I am beginning to understand the true answers to what was really my quest. These are people who absolutely know who they are and where they stand. People who feel they cannot be generous enough, who share with you everything they have. People who celebrate the spirit of life, not the life of possessions. They are Unitarians forged by 426 years of hardship, Unitarians whose roots hold them close.

We will return.

Amen.

Pilgrimage and Partnership

by Rev. Dr. Leon Hopper

Transylvania has long held a great fascination for me. My fascination had its beginnings when my minister told the story of the Francis David print of the Diet of Torda hanging on his study wall. Imagine, Unitarian roots in a far-off land beyond the forests. Could I ever go there? Would I ever see such a mysterious and holy place? Unitarian churches 400 years old? The war (my longings took root in the early 1940's) and then the iron curtain rendered the land and its people so distant, so difficult to reach, so remote.

Through the years I talked with the few who did visit. They returned with tales and pictures and bright red embroidery. Longing persisted, but never fruition.

The 1990 IARF Congress and advertised trips to Hungary and Romania loomed as possibilities. We registered, hoping, longing for fulfillment of a dream. In the midst of our plans came the fall of Communism and the opening for freedom and travel. And also the initiation of the Partner Church Program which would blossom into personal connections.

Yes, in the summer of 1990 I traveled to Transylvania a pilgrim. I marveled at the churches, drank the wine, received the hospitality, was captured by the warmth of the people, encouraged by a promise of future engagements and I knew that I would return again.

Return I did in 1993 to attend the 425th ecumenical commemoration of the Diet of Torda. Phillip Hewett and I sat together in the church where Francis David debated. We listened to stirring songs and poems of freedom and hope, felt the power of heritage deep with our souls. My high school dreams fulfilled? Yes. But there was more.

In the intervening years through correspondence and more visits I have come to a new understanding of my Unitarian Universalist faith. I am more aware of the roots of my faith. I have learned from our Transylvanian sisters and brothers. I have, from travel and conversation shifted pilgrimage to partnership. I know now, as never before, the sources of the deep roots of our free faith.

I WOULDN'T GET WET!

a Sermon Preached by Rev. John Robinson
at Eliot Chapel, February 2, 1997

The road from Nadas to Pipe is about 3.5 kilometers. Nadas is the small town in the Transylvanian region of Romania where our former intern minister, Szilard Sandor lives with his wife, Eva. By now they should be parents of a baby. We await word. Szilard ministers to two small churches, one in Nadas and one in Pipe. He makes the walk each Sunday. The road is dust in summer, mud in spring. Nadas means "reed" in Hungarian. The village was built in a boggy area where there were many reeds. There several valleys come together to form meadows suitable for farming. Pipe means "gosling" in Hungarian. Pipe is the "peeping" sound that baby geese make. Pipe is at the head of a valley where it gets narrow and steep. It is literally the end of the road.

One day last October, Szilard walked with me from Nadas to Pipe so that I could see his second church. It was a cloudy day. The hills looked much like our Missouri Ozarks. The sky was gray and heavy. It was a pleasant walk going, but as we headed back to Nadas, the low clouds grew darker and we could see a cold rain moving across the valley toward us.

On our right as we walked were fields of corn. One of these fields belonged to the church. There were people in the field cutting the dried ears of corn from the stalks. They used a tool with an eighteen inch wood handle and a sharp steel blade, two inches long, that stuck out at right angles. Each ear was hand-harvested and then loaded into a horse-drawn cart which would take it to a barn where it would be shucked and put in a corn crib for winter storage.

It was about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Earlier we had managed to inveigle a passing farmer into giving us a lift in his horse-drawn wagon for part of the way. Still the rain was gaining on us as we hurried along.

One of the workers in the field, a woman, had stopped and was getting ready to begin her walk home. She was dressed in a heavy wool, black sweater over a blouse, a kerchief on her head. She wore a skirt with an apron, and had on black rubber farmer boots that came up to just below

her knees. Her clothes were old and worn, as was she. I say old, but perhaps she was not much over fifty. Age comes early and hard in those Transylvanian hills.

When she smiled at us, we could see that she was missing several teeth. Her face wore the ruddiness of someone who spends much of her life out of doors working in the weather. It had not, one guessed, been pampered with Oil of Olay. We stopped and shook hands. Hers were not large, but they were full and heavy, the hard fingers round and stuffed like sausages, rough and callused, not from the use of labor-saving devices, but from rough work with hand tools. Her hands had not known Vaseline Intensive Care.

Szilard spoke to the woman in Hungarian. I could not understand what they said, but he reported the conversation this way, with a laugh.

Szilard to the woman: "You had better hurry home; it is going to rain and you will get wet."

The woman to Szilard, "If I weren't here, I wouldn't get wet!" And she smiled.

"If I weren't here, I wouldn't get wet!"

In that short sentence was a whole philosophy. She was not resigned, not stoic. She just knew the truth, the exquisite, glorious truth.

There is no great tractor to till the fields in which she works, and no combine to harvest the corn. It is hard, manual labor done with hoe and wooden pitchfork and wooden rake. She had no need of Vic Tanney or Nordic Track. There is no baled hay, there are no pesticides to attack such plagues as the Colorado potato beetle, nor herbicides to fight invasions of weeds. It is hand-to-hand combat and there is no supermarket to back her and her fellow laborers up if they fail. It is a high stakes struggle. Hunger is always a possibility and a reality. "If I weren't here, I wouldn't get wet!"

This woman had lived almost all her life under the repression of the Communist dictator Ceaucescu. She has not known the joy of the automatic garage door opener, or the automatic dishwasher, or an electric can opener, or a garbage disposal. (She did have a pig though, in the back yard.) She did not know central heat, nor running water, nor running hot water. Her toilet was an outhouse located in the barn. "If I weren't here, I wouldn't get wet!"

She would not go home that evening to frozen vegetables and a microwave oven. Regardless of what she prepared for dinner, after she cleaned up the dishes in a bucket, she would not sit down to channel surf. She would gather with others in someone's barn and, late into the night

shuck the corn that she had picked that day. There would be more corn the next day.

“If I weren’t here, I wouldn’t get wet!”

There would be no vacation for her in Paris or Cancun, or at Lake of the Ozarks, or even at home. She might get to go to Segesvar on market day once or twice a year. There will be no retirement day for her; retirement is a luxury in Romania. She would, in a few weeks, vote in the first democratic election and orderly transition of government in Romanian history. “If I weren’t here, I wouldn’t get wet!”

Sunday morning she is going to hear Szilard preach - “If I weren’t here, I wouldn’t get wet!” - in a church building which dates from 1786, an unheated church. It has been cold in Transylvania this winter, with heavy snows and temperatures falling to 35 degrees below zero C, and no heat in the church. They do not neglect church. “If I weren’t here, I wouldn’t get wet!”

Those Transylvanian Unitarians would be very familiar with this morning’s reading from the Bible: “The kingdom of God comes not with looking for it: They shall not say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”

Its meaning is perhaps more apparent to them than it is to us. That ancient, itinerant holy man who uttered those words, lived in times that were closer to those of that woman in Transylvania than to ours. He did not know the wonders of poparts, faxes, e-mail, triple bypass surgery, and MTV. He lived in a time, too, when most people scratched a living from a hard and unforgiving earth.

How could he propound the immediate presence of the holy? In this moment? Here? Why? They did not have the Galleria, or Big Macs, or electric toothbrushes, or 401 k’s, or Lexuses (or is the plural Lexi?), or Arid Extra Dry, or Jacuzzi, or Evita, or Superbowls, or hair color, or cigars, or toaster ovens, or cruises, or Pez dispensers, or most of the things we think that it takes to make life worth living. “If I weren’t here, I wouldn’t get wet!”

Some years ago, changing the subject, the old stone work of this building began to leak. We raised a considerable sum of money to have it tuckpointed. A few years later it began to leak again. Water would enter through fissures in the rock or tuckpointing and **then find paths through these** thick stone walls until it came out through the plaster. It made ugly stains and bubbled places. The worst place was right above the flowers, up on the arch. Some began to see it as a sign. They called it “The Weeping

Emerson.” Others, hoping, tried to see Elvis in the stain, thinking we could sell admission and pay for the repair that way. Alas it was not so. We consulted experts and had the building resealed, again at no small cost.

The first Sunday that I was back in church after sabbatical, the first Sunday in January, I sat right there in the front row under the pulpit, against the wall. Settling into that comfortable corner while Janet preached her excellent sermon, I looked up at the windows in the south transept. It is not a place I look often. There it was, is happening again; no face of Emerson, or Elvis, but leaking again. It depressed me. I did not, do not have the spiritual maturity of the woman in Transylvania. What I demand to know is, why should I, we, have to deal with that antique stone leaking again?

Life happens, rain happens, roofs leak, walls leak. There is a rather unseemly bumper sticker which refers to this state in life, to the irritations, small tragedies, inconveniences, and annoyances. The bumper sticker says that this stuff happens - and it does. What the peasant woman on that road knew is that life comes at no other price, and she would choose life.

Moses, 3000 to 4000 years ago, speaking to that hapless band of vagabonds who had been wandering in the Sinai desert where there were many inconveniences, commanded his people (you’ll find it in the 31st chapter of Deuteronomy) to “choose life.”

They were survivors, but not just survivors. They (this is an ambiguous “they” referring to Moses and Jesus and the woman) knew something that we who live in the society of consumers do not know. They knew that living, the mere facts of breathing air, walking, eating, feeling the breeze, of knowing and of longing, is, against the dark void of empty space, an extraordinary thing. Words fail to say what it truly is.

I was glad to hear Janet preach on death in January. You are going to die. She was not speaking hypothetically. Nor do I. It is not good for attendance, but it is true. At his 72nd birthday, Maurice Chevalier was asked how he felt about the advance of years. He replied, “Considering the alternative, it is not too bad at all.” It is that alternative that is very real, but we think we can buy it off or at least hold it at bay. But come it does.

We live in a time when the central myth is not any of those propounded by any organized religion. It is the organizing myth of our time. The myth is that owning one more thing will make us happy, one more experience will fill our needs, one more dollar in investment return or just a little more insurance will make us secure.

I have been much interested watching the big money men of this town sell away their corporations and rake in huge fortunes in the process.

They who have so much think just a little more will be enough. They are just like you and me; we believe that too. We are different from them only in magnitude, but it is the same myth.

The traditional churches have abated this process. They claim that if we just believe in Jesus we will get more; what we have now is not enough. What we have of one another is not enough.

Though it has been lost in the quagmire of theology and doctrine, this is not what the carpenter's son was offering. He saw in this present moment the holy, here, now - God in the moment. The future good that we always think is somewhere else to be gotten, or bought, or seized, is here. God is now in the faces of those around us, especially in those whom we forget: the rejected, the lost, the ones who make us uncomfortable, even most in those whom we would see as enemy.

The church traded the immediacy of the gospel of that itinerant carpenter for the promises of a someday, the keys of which were held by men who would chain the human spirit to their wheel. The church traded the reality of God's presence in this present in order to sell the possibility that God would be some time in the future. "If I weren't here, I wouldn't get wet!"

Church shopping has become common place in our culture. People go from church to church trying to find one that fits their needs. Like soap on the store shelves, we seek one that smells good and will stop our own smell. We shop for a religion that suits us.

This church stands as heresy to religion that sets itself up to fill our needs. It stands as heresy to the notion that anything that we buy, or acquire, or get, is going to fill us up. This chapel stands as a warning that we will never be filled, no matter how much we get. We are only filled as we learn to empty. This church is not here to fill up the empty pit of our wanting, the vacuum of our needs. Most of us have little idea what we really need. That woman on the road from Pipe could tell us more about our real needs than we will ever know.

This chapel is here for us to empty ourselves, to surrender the incessant demand for more convenience. This chapel stands as a place for us to begin the process of serving something beyond our own self-centered lives, a place to see that what are to us inconveniences, only hide something deeper and truer. This chapel is a place that tells not what we need, but what we are called to serve, that stills the loud cacophony of a world that wants us to believe that there is never enough. It is a place to hear the silence of what is more than enough, more than any promise that the place

where we live is holy ground.

This chapel is not here to fill our needs. It is here that we may begin to serve that which is greater than we are, the deep and brooding heart of existence that has with gold, and filled with harp-strumming singers, because it is real, because it is now, because we are here for it.

May we know, oh God, the wonder of our days, and know in our darkest moments “If we weren’t here, we wouldn’t get wet!” nor would we know the rainbow and the sunshine.

Amen and Amen

I guess this means that I am really back. “If I weren’t here, I wouldn’t get wet!”



A GIFT OF FAITH

A Sermon, with thanks to Zsuzsanna Szombatfalvi

First Parish in Concord

by Rev. Dr. Gary E. Smith

September 8, 1996

If you would like to know where this sermon began, I will tell you that it began at our Unitarian Universalist General Assembly meetings in Indianapolis last June, in a workshop one afternoon about our Partner Church relationships with our Unitarian brothers and sisters in Transylvania, of all places. The Partner Church Council had as its guests four seminarians from the theological school in Kolozsvár, three young men and one young woman, all studying for the ministry, and here in the United States for the summer.

Each seminarian was invited to speak briefly, say something to the group, who they were, what their hopes were, where they came from. It is the young woman's remarks I remember. "You have brought us here to the United States," she said. "You are paying for us to be here at this General Assembly. Then you will take us to the Meadville/Lombard Theological School in Chicago to teach us about ministry, and then you are sending each of us out to four different churches across the continent where we will be guests in your homes. You are doing so much for us," she said. "You are giving us so much. What can we give you?"

And then, without hesitation, she smiled and said to us, "We can give you our faith." And I was thinking then, and I am thinking now with Zsuzsanna Szombatfalvi sitting behind me, that this is exactly right. This is not a one-sided relationship at all. We draw strength from each other.

If you are new to First Parish or new to Unitarian Universalism, you are perhaps wondering what this talk of Transylvania might mean, here on an Opening Sunday of a new cycle of a church year, here in Concord, Massachusetts, in the United States of America. In a real sense, at least in the western world, the concept and practice of religious freedom had its birth in the beautiful mountains and valleys of eastern Europe. There in the Carpathian Mountains, a place of refuge during the swirl of Reformation and Counterreformation, Unitarianism took form, "Egy az Isten," "God is One," and in the sovereign Kingdom of Transylvania, at the mid

point of the sixteenth century, John Sigismund proclaimed an Edict of Toleration, religious freedom, worship as your conscience, your spirit, your heart, and your mind, might lead you.

These gentle people have kept their faith, even as Transylvania has been a raging battleground of territorial dispute, first part of Hungary and then Romania, caught between, back and forth, until following the Second World War, Hungary was partitioned and the area of Transylvania was made part of Romania, catching these Hungarian villagers within strange boundaries. And then came the reign of Nicolae Ceausescu, America's ally because he stood up to the Russians, but no ally to his own people, a brutal reign of terrorism, a country with no freedoms, particularly for those in the northern province of Transylvania, an ethnic minority of Hungarian-speaking people proclaiming a faith of freedom.

No typewriters. No computers. No copiers. No printing presses. No publishing. No hymnbooks. No Bibles. Mail was opened and censored. No foreign visitors in your home. Unitarian churches were appropriated. Unitarian schools were turned into state schools. Ministers were tortured and imprisoned. Each and every week we light our chalice I think of these strong and courageous people. The flame of their faith was not extinguished. It might have flickered, but it burned on and on. Look into Zsuzsanna's eyes this morning, and you will see there the determination of her forebears and the hope that led her father and her mother, Joseph and Anna, to give birth to her and to her brother; her father a Unitarian minister for twenty-one years, her brother taking the examinations for ministry this very weekend in the theological school in Kolozsvár.

Zsuzsanna carries with her some photographs, of her family, of her school, her friends, her church, her home. She carries with her, too, a picture of the most beautiful green valley you will ever see, the valley of her father's home, a village of farmers and of faithful people. You can see the white steeple of her grandfather's church, rising out of the lush green of trees and fields. And then more pictures which are the visual equivalent of a slap in the face. It was Ceausescu's last desperate plan to destroy these villages, to bulldoze them, to flood them, to relocate these stubborn people who would not bow down to him. Zsuzsanna has pictures of the destruction, the horrible shell of the church, the homes laying as piles of stone, the people sent off to cities to live in cinderblock apartments, piles of stones themselves, the destruction of individuality and freedom.

Zsuzsanna has photographs, too, of a monument to this valley, one wall left standing and now decorated with a memorial marker and to the

four faiths once there: Catholic, Reformed, Orthodox and Jew, a place where the villagers return once each year to remember. These are powerful pictures. They are not for the faint of heart. Zsuzsanna and her family and her Unitarian brothers and sisters, they do not have faint hearts. Look into Zsuzsanna's eyes. Look at the set of her chin. Look at the way she walks. She has come here to America, her first trip on an airplane, her first time through a car wash, her first time to see the Atlantic Ocean, she has come here to bring us her faith.

Serendipity took me to Transylvania ten days after Ceausescu was overthrown, in the early days of 1990. We visited these villages in the new and uncertain days just after the revolution. I will never forget it. Hope was peeking out, just as a flower will grow right through the cracks in a concrete walkway. We sang. We worshipped. We ate and we drank. We hugged and we kissed. We said we will not forget you. We will return. And some of you did return with me, just two years ago this month, back to many of these same villages I had visited four and a half years before. We spent the greater part of our time in our partner church town of Szekelykeresztur where they showed us the furnace First Parish had bought for them, showed us the pictures of First Parish in Concord on the wall, told us what we meant to them.

On the day we left Szekelykeresztur, the minister, Jozsef Baro, motioned for me to follow him into a side room where we could be alone. He pulled up one pant leg and showed me a terrible wound on his lower leg, an enormous indentation where bone and flesh had been compressed and this cavity had infected and not quite healed. Jozsef had been tortured by the Securitate, the secret police, and Jozsef did not break. What does Zsuzsanna bring to us today? She brings us her faith.

Zsuzsanna is a part of the school in Szekelykeresztur; the Unitarians can be educated there again, and young men and women from very small villages, who could not necessarily have this education in their own village, come to Szekelykeresztur to live and to learn.

We met Zsuzsanna two years ago. She and her classmates welcomed us and sang to us.

"Country Roads, Take Me Home, West Virginia," they sang, can you imagine, and last Thursday evening, I showed Zsuzsanna the video of her singing, proof we had met before.

Many of you responded last spring to the appeal for money to send to support this school. You responded generously, and I thank you. I hope those of you who gave will attend a reception here Wednesday evening

and meet Zsuzsanna. Your generosity has provided scholarship help to families. It helped a summer scout program. It has bought books. But I wanted to make these people real, and Zsuzsanna is very real. We are told that their school library could use books, books in English, books of history, novels, good books, classics. We can mail them books. I am wondering if we can send Zsuzsanna home with an extra suitcase, filled with coats and sweaters, for Zsuzsanna to share with her classmates. And, if there are those who wish to support her school financially, please let me know and we can make this possible.

Please understand that I know this sermon could have evoked from me today many different and equally compelling passions, could have had someone else sitting in Zsuzsanna's chair, here behind me. A child of America could be sitting there, one of the many living in a home so far below the poverty line that precious little food is on the table and gunfire ricochets across the front door steps and there are no inoculations against disease. A single mother, struggling to make ends meet, could be sitting there, while this pitiful election season rattles on and our national leaders have given us something that is passing for welfare reform, either a joke or a hoax. An African-American IS sitting behind me, and we could be talking today about racism in this country and how much it hurts and diminishes all of us.

I know there are passions of social justice all through this room. It is not either/or. I know that many of these issues will be addressed from this pulpit in the weeks to come, and I know, too, that there are many places where people gather to effect these changes, thank God; hope is still alive. But I am mindful, here on our first Sunday in a new cycle of Sundays, that we are a religious community, a spiritual community, and Zsuzsanna is one of our spiritual sisters, one of eighty thousand there in Transylvania, a people who share our faith, who are a part of our religious community, a people with few champions. They do need us.

But my sermon is about how much we need them, too, and did you think I would find my way back to where I started? If you are at all like me, this "freedom of religion" business is not always very real to my life. I absolutely take it for granted. We who live here in Concord and Acton and these towns of the western suburbs take a lot for granted. Someone else bought these freedoms for us, are buying them still.

We have a good thing going here. Zsuzsanna and I agree that First Parish is pretty lucky. The flip side of freedom, which we have a lot of, is responsibility, which we could do better. When you file your income tax,

you get to check off your pledge here as a charitable donation. We are no charity, so don't fall for that. We have a great time together. Zsuzsanna can't believe how much we laugh during worship. It's been a more serious thing for her, and we can understand that. We have a great time, but we're lonely people, and we come here to make friends. But we're more than a social club, more than an extended family, though God knows we need this. Jeanne Moreau says "every human has something to cry about," Szekelykeresztur and Concord, Kolozsvar and Acton, "The winds of solitude roaring at the edges of infinity," Jeanne Moreau calls it.

We need each other, and now I mean something more than emotionally, more than psychologically, more than socially. We need each other spiritually, which has something to do with the flame of this chalice, something to do with the divine flame within each of us, has everything to do with our spiritual mentors in Transylvania who have had to fight for our faith, not at the time of the Council of Nicaea, not in the Middle Ages, not at the time of the Reformation, not in King Charles' England, but these are real people who have fought for our faith in our own time, in our own generation. Zsuzsanna's father remembers the valley of his childhood, remembers the church there, and he has lost all that but he has kept his faith. He has not only kept his faith, he has given it away, passed it on.

Zsuzsanna and her classmates, her mother and father, her brother, we need what they have: the courage to stand up for something, to live a life far simpler than ours materially but richer in the spirit, a shared faith. We have spiritual cousins to die for. We must not neglect nor forget them. We are the better for them. Isten áldjon, Zsuzsanna, God bless you.

Let us pray, a prayer of Paul Carnes, a prayer for a Sunday of a new year:

Holy Spirit of Life, help us to stand with those who
see religion as promise rather than condemnation,
hope rather than judgment, as that which heals
rather than that which divides.

Help us to stand with those who long to see the
triumph of the mind, and who accept such longing
as authentically human.

Let us always be willing to pose to ourselves the
question: "Do we still love life?" for nothing

could be more fatal to our existence than the loss
of this love.

Let us always be willing to pose to ourselves the
question: “Do we still love truth? for nothing
could be more fatal to our existence than the loss
of this love.

Let us always be willing to pose to ourselves the
question: “Do we still love love? Do we still
believe in it as a power operative throughout live—
our lives—human history—overcoming hatred,
creating constantly in the face of inevitable decay
and destruction? “Do we still love love? for
nothing could be more fatal to our existence than the loss
of this love.

O God of all people everywhere, fill us with the
great and irresistible longing to say “Yes”

Amen.



V. CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Role of Children in a Partner Church Relationship

Unitarian Society of Northampton, Massachusetts

by Jeanne Kocsis

The participation of children in the Religious Education Program is an important element in Northampton's connection with Homorodkaracsonyfalva. It has become so through the leadership of DRE Margaret MacDonald and the interest of the students themselves. The RE Program helps us maintain our relationship with our friends, and the Partner Church Program, in turn, provides a focus for learning about our human interrelatedness. Transylvanian Unitarianism is covered in the RE curriculum as part of learning about UU history and our religious roots. Children can be an important link between cultures. We can learn much about a people by the way they raise their children. And young people see the world with a simplicity and directness not available to adults concerned with balancing life's complexities.

Transylvanians love kids, The Karacsonyfalva Unitarians love Northampton's kids, whom they have come to know through photographs and notes from the kids themselves. Every November, Northampton's children make holiday greeting cards which are mailed en masse to Transylvania. Our young artists are ingeniously creative, using bright-colored crayons plus glue-on glitter and sometimes photographs of themselves. They add short messages in English or Hungarian. Their Hungarian greetings are composed from a mix-and-match, fill-in-the-blanks list of Hungarian words and phrases devised by a Hungarian speaking member of the congregation.

Karacsonyfalva's young people have reciprocated with beautiful creations of their own, telling us something of their lives in the process. They often draw Christmas trees with gifts beneath them. One year, a child placed under the tree carefully-drawn oranges and bananas—seldom gift

material in the U.S. but rare luxuries in their village.

When I made my first trip to Karacsonyfalva, I was impressed by the children's level of socialization. I saw kids of 6-8 sit through a two-hour worship service as quietly and solemnly as their parents. Within families' a single firm word or raised eyebrow was enough to remind a child that some behavior was inappropriate. And the children functioned as messengers: The village has no telephones. When Maria Lakatos, the minister's wife, wanted to get a message to a friend, she stepped out the door and flagged down the first kid she saw. "Go tell Erzsi I need to talk with her, and ask her to come and see me this evening." The kid took off at a run, and Erzsi showed up at dusk.

In August, 1996, we learned how important our children's communications are to our partner congregation. Four of us traveled to Transylvania and spent four days in Karacsonyfalva, as the Unitarian church prepared to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the completion of the first phase of their building, and the 500th anniversary of the addition of the steeple. We carried with us at least a hundred messages of congratulations from the children. On the evening we presented them to the Rev. Gyula Lakatos and Maria Lakatos, Maria could not bear to put them away. She sat at the kitchen table until 2:30 a.m., going through them over and over. The following week she posted them in the church as part of the anniversary celebration, so that everyone could enjoy them.

Another area in which Northampton's children have been prominent is fundraising, which they have pursued with exemplary enthusiasm. In three years they raised a total of \$1,100 for Transylvanian projects! In 1994 they spent Sunday morning coffee hours asking adults for pennies, and eventually collected \$300 for the Francis David Youth Center. They collected another \$300 the following year, and donated it to Karacsonyfalva to repair the steeple. Their aim for 1996 was \$500, a symbolic gift for the steeple's 500th anniversary. They reached their goal well before our August trip, and we were able to deliver it in person.

In 1992/93 the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence conducted a fundraising campaign for a grand piano. At the same time, we were struggling with the question of whether, and how, to buy a tractor for our partner church. The situation was put into perspective by an eighth-grader, who asked the minister, "If we can spend \$25,000 for a piano, why can't we spend \$5,000 for a tractor?" Our youth have much to teach us about religious values

Peter, the Shepherd (Children's Story)

by Pat Rodgers

I was in the village of Homorod St. Martin (Homoródszentmárton) for only three days, but I saw or met two children who very much impressed me.

One was Janos - John in English - who had learned English very well, even though he had been studying only one year. He had a knack for learning languages, I think, but he also worked hard. His English was so good that he got to stand up in the Sunday service I attended and read a speech to us American visitors. And we could understand every word!

The other child in this village who impressed me was the village shepherd. I didn't meet him, because he was too busy. But I can imagine that his name is Peter.

Peter is about 12 years old, and during the summer, his job is to watch all the cows, goats, and horses in the village while they graze in the hills above the village. Every morning he announces his arrival by blowing on a horn. Not a trumpet, but an animal horn. (Show sheep's or cow's horn)

(Blow in the horn) I can make a sound, but he's much better than I am.

Early in the morning when Peter sounds the sound, each villager opens the barn gate and lets out the animals need to go to the hills that day to graze.

The animals go reluctantly this late summer day. Peter must use a stick to prod them to move faster on the unpaved road. Eventually, all the cows, goats, and horses cross the stream and disappear from my sight.

At the end of the day, when the sun is going down, the word spreads: the animals are coming! I'm a tourist, so I take my camera out to the dirt road. In a few minutes, I see the first cow, then a second. But I don't see Peter in the evening because each animal can find its way home. Yes, they really know how to find their own way home! They have been grazing all day in the hills and are anxious to return home to be milked. Then the goats come, and the horses. If it's been rainy, they walk on the narrow sidewalk; they don't like walking in the mud any more than you do!

And the villagers are ready. I see gates opened, a man here, a woman there, standing across the street from the gate, waiting for their animal to walk down the street, turn, and go through the gateway.

Now I realize that Peter has a very important job in that village. Every villager who has animals depends on Peter to take them to the hills each day, keep them together while they graze, protect them from being eaten by wild animals,

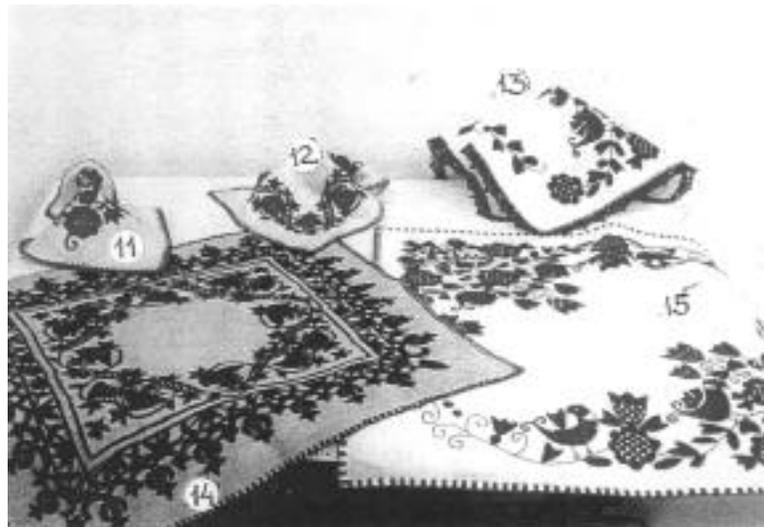
and return them to the edge of the village.

Would you like to have a summer job like that? You could learn to blow the horn like this (try again, perhaps with more success).

If you want to see the pictures I took of the cows coming home, come look at my photo album during coffee hour.



Transylvanian women's needlework



A Model for Involving Youth and Building a Memorial Clinic Fairfax Unitarian Church, Virginia -- Szentgerice

The Partner Church Booklet

WHAT IS THE PARTNER CHURCH PROJECT?

It is the ongoing relationship between FUC and the Unitarian Church of Szentgerice, Transylvania, Romania. It is also a relationship between FUC and the village of Szentgerice itself, and other places in Transylvania. Thus the Partner Church Project (PCP) is both an international Unitarian Church relationship and an international community relationship between people in Transylvania and FUC members.

FUC's PCP is part of a national Partner Church program involving Unitarian Universalist Churches all over the U.S. and Canada. There is a Continental Partner Church Council and a Greater Washington Area Partner Church Council.

The PCP has several aims:

- to strengthen the ties between Fairfax Unitarians and Szentgerice Unitarians
- to get in touch with the roots of our religious movement;
- to help Unitarians and others in the village recoup and rebuild after decades of living under totalitarian regimes
- to economically help the village and, generally, that part of Transylvania
- to foster an exchange of people and ideas between Szentgerice and here, for the joy and enrichment of all our lives
- to foster mutual tolerance and respect among ethnic groups in Transylvania.

A Committee of FUC members (The Partner Church Coordinating Committee) meets regularly to work on implementing the purposes of the

PCP. Specifically, the committee has sought

- to develop long-term ways of assisting the people of Szentgerice and the surrounding region

- to involve additional members of the FUC community in the PCP
- to raise money for the Partner Church effort

Where is Szentgerice [Galateni]? What is it like?

Szentgerice is a village of 900 people, located in the foothills of the Carpathian mountains and inhabited by most loving, hospitable people one can imagine.

About half of the villagers are Unitarians; the other half are members of the Reformed Church. However, there is no strict division between the two groups. They do not see themselves as separate and distinct. Indeed, in some household one spouse is a Unitarian and the other is Reformed. Moreover, just as Fairfax Unitarian Church has developed a close relationship with Unitarians in Szentgerice, so the Reformed Church of the Netherlands has had the same with its brethren in Szentgerice - both groups helping everyone there.

Village life is simple. It is organized in small mini units of self-sustaining agricultural production. Life for villagers is hard and attuned to the earth's cycles. There is little mechanization - example, the cutting of grain is mostly done by hand scythes. Transportation is mostly by horses and wagons, and the roads are unpaved.

Some homes have running water. All have electricity. Many if not most have television --and, as a result of three Satellite dishes on the roofs of two buildings, people now can get programs from Budapest and Germany, not just from Bucharest which was the case before the dishes were installed in 1993. In general, rooms are organized for multiple use, a bed often being in every room including the kitchen. There is no sewer system, everyone uses outhouses. Most people do not have a telephone--there are only two in the village, and much of the time they do not work.

Yet the people in Szentgerice are not poverty-stricken, as we usually think of that term. Just about every family grows its own vegetables; many have orchards of apples, pears, nuts, and other fruit. Most also raise their own pigs and/or chickens. There are fields of grain all around the village. (The homemade bread is delicious!) And, in the foothills around the village there are acres of grapes. Most families make their own wine from grapes picked during the October harvest.

So, folks have plenty to eat and are housed comfortably. What they do not have much of is cash-and quite a few modern amenities (i.e., inside

running water for many, indoor toilets, tractors, cars, telephones). There has begun, slowly, a kind of market-economy in which farmers sell their produce at nearby markets, or jobbers come to the village to buy produce.

Although there is a village nurse, Zsuzsa, the widow of the late Rev. Attila Csongvay, the nearest doctor is about 25 km away. Medical equipment is scanty. Even over-the-counter medicines we take for granted (Aspirin for example) are not available in the village.

Our Partner Church Relationship began in 1990 when Rev. Ralph Stutzman, FUC minister at the time, accepted the invitation of the UUA to be assigned a partner Unitarian church in Transylvania. In October of 1990, Emery Lazar made the first contact with Szentgerice, traveling there to meet the Unitarian minister, Rev. Attila Csongvay, and learn first hand about the village.

Since then, there have been several exchanges. In the Fall of 1991, Attila and his wife, Zsuzsa, visited FUC. In July 1992, 34 members of the FUC Chorale, plus eight other FUC members, including Rev. Josiah Bartlett, interim minister, visited Szentgerice, bringing much-needed medical and school supplies to the village. The Chorale not only sang at a service in the Unitarian Church there, but in four other Unitarian churches in Transylvania and one each in Budapest and Prague - a total of seven concerts. In October 1993, and again in October 1994, then people from FUC returned to the village to visit and bring additional medical supplies and other items of assistance. In June 1995 twelve high school students and fifteen other FUC members traveled to Szentgerice, staying for a week.

In November 1993, Szentgerice suffered the tragic loss of Rev. Attila Csongvay, who died from a malignant brain tumor. An emergency operation in Budapest could not save him. Rev. Jim Nelson, FUC minister, conducted a memorial service here for Attila.

In May 1994, the Szentgerice congregation installed its new minister, Rev. Sandor Balazs.

PCP PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- Raise money to help build a medical clinic in Szentgerice, in memory of Rev. Attila Csongvay
- ADR: Alternative Dispute Resolution project - a conflict resolution effort, mainly concerning Romanian and Hungarian ethnic groups
- Periodic visits by FUC members to Szentgerice to get to know peep better, bring medical supplies, etc.
- Regular meetings of the Partner Church Coordinating Committee, which is open to all interested FUC members

- RE. projects, such as pen-pals Annual Partner Church service conducted by the minister

PROJECTS CONTEMPLATED

- Hungarian language/culture class
- Adult education course on the Transylvanian root of the UU movement
- Sponsor someone from the village to come to the U.S. for an extended period to study agricultural and/or business methods

- Bring more FUC teen-agers to visit Szentgerice

PROJECTS COMPLETED

- Josiah Bartlett Scholarship Fund for Unitarian seminary students in Kolozsvar (Cluj)

- A successful visit of Rev. Sándor Balázs and his family in the U.S.

The Great Visit

On June 23rd, twelve FUC high school students, along with thirteen adults and two younger children, arrived in Szentgerice to spend an entire week. Included in the group were Jim Nielson, his wife Kathe, and their two young daughters, Claire and Hannah. The group flew to Budapest on June 19, and after staying there for three days, took the 10-hour train ride from Budapest to Marosvasarhely.

Though there were many adults with the high school group, having the kids spend time in the village was the primary purpose of the visit. Each student lived for the week with a local family, usually one that had a teenager. The local young people planned many activities for the American kids, including a bus tour of the surrounding area, a visit to Marosvasarhely, a soccer game with the Americans, hikes in the nearby fields and forests, three disco nights, an evening bonfire on one of the hills above the village, folk-dance and theatrical productions featuring the Szentgerice teenagers, and more. Also, our young people participated in the Sunday church service. The day spent in Marosvasarhely included visiting a local organization involved with ameliorating inter-ethnic conflicts; this was a particularly valuable learning experience for our high school students.

Perhaps most memorable for the students was the experience of living with local families, participating in their daily lives, helping with the work where they could, establishing friendships, and learning how to cope in a world very different from theirs. All of these were accomplished through communication in a language they did not know--although each student did have a small phrase book with a two way English-Hungarian

dictionary (the *Harrap 's*). There were a few translators available, including one local student and one of the American teenagers who had immigrated from Hungary when he was a child.

Our young people rose to the challenge, and they became worthy ambassadors for the Partner Church Program. We can be very proud of them. These are their own words:

“When Bob Tripp offered us the opportunity to go to Transylvanai, none of us knew about where we were going or what it would be like. We learned about your culture through videos, pictures, slides, and stories. The more we learned, the more our anticipation grew. As soon as we arrived, your culture became a reality. We soon began living the lives we heard so much about—the lives that are very different from our own in America. But religion has brought us together. For six more days we will live united.”

“The reception has been overwhelming. From the lavish foods to the soccer games, we feel so welcomed by the entire community. Thank you for taking us into your homes and including us in your lives. We will never forget these experiences and your kindness. We love you all. God bless.”

Our young people presented to the youth of Szentgerice a specially made chalice with the inscription, “*From the Fairfax Unitarian Youth with Love and Friendship.*” Also, they sang “Amazing Grace,” with Shannon rendering the solo part. And later, when Karen Foley, one of the adult visitors, read a selection from the New Testament in flawless Hungarian, there were no dry eyes left among members of the Szentgerice congregation.

Also, Jim’s beautiful sermon in which he reminisced about his boyhood experiences on a Minnesota farm, struck a responsive chord among the villagers. Jim wove into his sermon a theme connected with Beethoven’s life, and at the conclusion of the service we were treated to a surprise by the young village organist. Without having had any prior notice about the subject of Jim’s sermon, he selected his postlude from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. It sounded like music must have sounded in Beethoven’s time, because the organ was built in 1845--a rather modern musical instrument when considering that the church was built in 1370.

Our feeling at the “Great Visit of 1995” can perhaps be best summed up by these farewell remarks:

“Seven days ago we came to Szentgerice in the dark; but today we leave in the light of your love and strength. It is a light that has brightened

our lives and shown us a compassionate, caring people who were previously strangers to us”

FUND-RAISING ACTIVITIES PLANNED

- The annual Szentgerice Feast--dinner with entertainment
- Several musical recitals each year
- Church collections
- Annual FUC Partner Church Budget item
- Sell note cards and/or calendars with pictures and/or block prints of Unitarian churches in East-Central Europe
 - Coordinate this last activity with other UU Churches in the Greater Washington Area Partner Church Council, sharing talents and proceeds
 - Sale of hand craft made by Szentgerice women, 1/2 the proceeds going to the woman who made the item, the other half going to the Church in Szentgerice
 - Teens plan to raise money to help fund a return visit to Szentgerice

A Heroic Transylvanian Woman and Two Model Projects

by Judit Gellérd

A few years ago Rozalia Kiss, the minister's wife at Kénos, began her crusade for an Old Folks' Home in the neighboring village of Lókod. The few families still left in this dying village were old folks. After one of the old men froze to death in his home, Rozalia decided to look after them, walking over a mountain every day - until she broke her leg in the deep snow.

By then she had a plan and began to find donors for her project. Organizations and generous individuals in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and the U.S. are helping her in her endeavor. Many American UU women (especially from the congregation at Shelter Rock, Manhasset, NY) helped her by purchasing and auctioning her gorgeous weaving, and sending regular small donations through the Center for Free Religion. She was fighting like a lion with bureaucracy of the government and of the church.

After five years, her Old Folks' Home is a denominational success and a unique service, truly a model project. 12 elderly people live out their lives in dignity in a modern facility, once the church's parsonage. They are self-sufficient, growing their own vegetables and raising their own livestock. The inhabitants are busy working around their happy home.

This project employes Rozalia's adopted orphans and her own daughter. There are so many enrollment requests from old people all over Transylvania, proving an enormous need for such services.

But this is only one of Rozalia grand projects. The other is just as unique a model. She has created the "Youth Foundation of Lókod". Its goal is to support - morally and financially - young adults who grew up in orphanages and graduated from high school. These young people, after leaving the orphanage behind, have absolutely no support system or job. Rozalia tries to overcome their great difficulties in social adaptation. Rozalia offers them a family, teaches them social and other basic skills. Girls learn to cook and manage a household - pretty complex when you prepare for self-sufficiency. They also learn artistic skills in weaving - right from the

master - embroidery and tailoring. Boys are trained in farming first of all, but soon there will be workshops for traditional craftsmanship.

The Youth Foundation has a tractor and all kinds of agricultural equipment and even a car.

Lokod is one of the most charming villages, with orchards around and beautiful, but abandoned, farm houses. Rozalia accomplished her bold dream: to transform this dying village into a village of youth. With tremendous labor of love and donated money they rebuilt and refurbished four houses - with plumbing and modern facilities - so far. 13-15 young people live in the village and each has their own room, working together as a close community. They come for three year period of adaptation and learning. This is the first time in their lives to experience love, belonging to a community based on love and mutual support. Orphanages of Romania are places of spiritual desolation. These young men and women are so hungry in their spirit and so capable of giving and receiving love.

The village once again is filled with laughter, joy, optimism. There are more and more living here as some have already married into this village of youth.

Small groups of people of good will can change and ultimately save the world - what could be a better symbol than Rozalia's village!



IV. MODEL PROJECTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A Journey of Partnership Berkeley First Unitarian Church - Homoródújfalú 1990-1997

by Jay Hanks

For the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley, the story of our partner church relationship with the village of Homorodujfalu, Romania, grew out of our European tour in 1990. Our minister Dr. Richard Boeke led a group of 37 on a tour, first to the World Congress of the International Association for Religious Freedom in Hamburg, and then by chartered bus through the newly liberated countries of Eastern Europe. Most of those in our group were members of our choir, plus several members of the Oakland church's choir and a few from other places.

The choir performed several times at IARF. Attending this World Congress was an impressive way to begin the tour. Our first stop was Berlin, no longer West and East divided by the wall, but still two cities, with citizens from both sides tearing down the three-decade-old wall and selling its painted pieces to tourists.

The choir sang at the Unitarian church in Prague, where hymn writer Norbert Capek was minister before his imprisonment and death at Dachau during the war. In Vienna, church members Joseph and Judith Fabry were our guides on a tour of the city in our bus. Joe had arranged for the choir to sing an evening concert in the City Hall, a magnificent building, where we had our only audience that was not Unitarian. In Budapest the choir sang at an evening dinner at the Third Unitarian Church.

In Kolozsvár [Cluj] the choir sang at the Sunday Service in the historic First Unitarian Church, and the Revs. Richard and Johanna Boeke participated in the service with Dick giving the sermon. Here, Judit Geller and George Williams joined us for the trip to our partner church in the Homorod valley.

Probably for all of us, the afternoon visit with the villagers in Homorodujfalu was the high point of a spectacular journey. The five-hour ride ended near the village at a bridge too small for our bus to cross. Carrying gifts and singing *Dona Nobis Pacem* (Give Us Peace) the choir walked down the dirt road accompanied by cackling geese and met the two hundred villagers, the adults in somber black, the children in colorful national costumes. It was a moment to remember.

Two groups of people with different languages but a common purpose can find many varied and delightful ways to express themselves to each other within a few hours. The small, high-steepled church, a gleaming white landmark on a hill above the village, was filled to overflowing for the special service of singing and the exchange of gifts. They had slaughtered one of their pigs for the festive dinner in the community hall and had been saving their rationed sugar for months to treat us to special Hungarian delicacies. Judit Gellerd served as our interpreter, assisted by the minister, Istvan Kovacs (now a professor at the theological school).

We returned with many photographs from that memorable day and sent their church an album of pictures of the special time we had all shared together.

In the spring of 1990, when our congregation voted to accept Homorodujfalu as our partner church we learned from Judit Gellerd some long-forgotten history of an earlier relationship between our two churches. This was confirmed when we discovered in old church minutes that in the early 1920's our church began sending \$100 each year to the Homorodujfalu church. Istvan Kovacs discovered a 1936 entry in their church minutes stating that \$100 had been received from the Berkeley church. We realized that part of the meaning of our new partner church relationship was in the reconnecting of a link between our two congregations which had been broken by the war.

Our journey to Eastern Europe ended with the beginning realization that we, and many others in America and Transylvania, were embarking on a much longer journey which we would walk together in a new kind of partnership between church congregations.

While we were in Kolozsvar, Richard Boeke had posed a question to Arpad Szabo, then dean of the Protestant Theological Institute, and now the newly elected Bishop of the Unitarian Church of Romania. Dr. Boeke's question was, "What would you most like to have for your school." The reply was, "English classes." That exchange was the beginning of a plan. Dr. Boeke submitted a grant application to the UU Funding Program and

had discussions with Dean Spencer Lavan on arranging for Meadville/Lombard to administer an English teaching fellowship for seminarians in Kolozsvár.

Our newly formed partner church committee made the original funding commitment of the \$1200 promised in the grant application to demonstrate this church's support. With a \$5000 grant from the UUA and additional funding from Meadville/Lombard, the first instructor began teaching English to the seminarians in the fall of 1991. During the three years of UUA grants our committee continued annual support of \$1200.

The success of this six-year-old program and its popularity among the seminarians, indicate that, over time, it may become one of the more significant achievements of our UU Partner Church movement. As the committee that helped initiate the English teaching program we are especially pleased to see the expanded base of support, involving contributions from the Partner Church Council and many churches.

Over the past six years our committee's fund-raising efforts have had three primary focuses: (1) our partner church, (2) sponsorship of a Transylvanian minister, Sandor Leta, at Starr King School, and (3) the English Teaching Program. The first money we sent to our partner church was used to buy a new organ, to replace one that was beyond repair. We have provided monetary help at times to both ministers' families. Some of our donations helped remodel the parsonage. Village ministers need to be farmers, so with our largest donations we have sought to enable Rev. Arpad Ilkei to support his family by farming. Several donations bought the materials for a small barn the village men built for Arpad's livestock.

By 1994 some churches around the U.S. had already bought tractors for their partner churches. We had had an exchange of letters with our partner church on whether they wanted a tractor. Their church elders considered the matter and the final answer was "Yes" if we felt we could raise the money for it. We were uncertain about setting such a large goal and didn't know how long it would take to raise \$10,000 or even how we would do it.

We had already committed ourselves to raise additional money that year to supplement a \$5000 UUA grant for sponsoring a minister at Starr King. It was obvious that the commitments we were considering had outgrown our past methods of raising money. With a detailed report to the Board of Trustees we requested and received approval to begin conducting an annual mail solicitation of church members. Over half of our \$10,000 goal was received in donations from members and local Hungarians.

A welcoming fund-raising dinner for Sandor Leta netted over \$1000 for his expenses. That was the second time at a dinner in the social hall one could walk around the room and hear Hungarian being spoken at a number of tables.

The other half of our goal, by a stroke of luck and a lot of promotion, was raised in one night in our sanctuary at a sold-out concert donated by Andre Watts. The church music program received the other half of the \$10,000 proceeds from the evening. For several years Andre had been making his recordings in our sanctuary and had previously given us a concert. Dr. Boeke just happened to see him at the symphony and asked if he would like to give us another concert. Andre said "Sure" and the planning began.

With a \$10,000 goal plus much work and a stroke of luck, we had raised over \$12,000 in six months. A little more than \$5000 of this total was donated by 99 individuals that year.

When the money for the tractor was received by our partner church, the minister demonstrated that he was a prudent buyer. Arpad traveled the countryside and found a good used tractor plus a wagon and plow for less than \$10,000.

In May 1995 (three months after the Boekes' retirement and move to interim ministries in England), Dr. Boeke returned to Transylvania. At a ceremony in Homorodujfalu he helped dedicate the "Andre Watts Tractor." It is proudly driven and cared for by a villager also named Andre.

From \$3500 in donations received in 1995, we gave \$1000 to Project Harvest Hope, an economic development plan for the village of Oakland, funded by the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, California. An abandoned state collective agricultural building was purchased for conversion to a flour mill, a bakery and a dairy for cheese production. These businesses will help stimulate the farm economy in local villages throughout the Homorod valley. The mill was installed in early 1996 and is providing the villages with a local source for flour.

In the 1996-97 church year we have received \$4000 from 72 donors. We also received half of the proceeds from a Hungarian Guest Artists Concert featuring pianist Zsuzsa Eszto, and soprano Zsofia Roska, from Budapest. We have sent our partner church \$4400 for additional farm machinery--a disc plow and seed planters.

Of course, money and letters are not the only things we have sent. Last summer the Oakland church tour group delivered for us a ceramic communion chalice and flagon for the village church, a selection of nature

books and solar-powered calculators for the schoolchildren.

We have also received gifts from our partner church, including several tapestries and tablecloths, one of which adorns the chalice table in the sanctuary. Recently they sent a small, carved wooden replica of a kopjafa which they placed in their village churchyard. These tall carved posts have served as a religious symbol in Transylvania's Protestant churches for several centuries. Our little kopjafa is displayed near the pulpit.

Artistic, lovingly handcrafted gifts--symbols of one of the great gifts we have received from these people. From the religious tradition Transylvanian Unitarians have preserved, we have received the great gift of an opportunity to observe and experience, in another culture, the liberal Christian tradition which in early America gave birth to Unitarianism and Universalism.

Recently, we began wondering how much money we have raised and donated to Transylvanian Unitarians in the past seven years. It seems a little odd, but we simply had never added up the figures for the whole period.

There have been two primary sources of money. The amount includes the four grants received from the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program, which together equaled \$20,000. When you add to that the money we in this church have raised and donated in seven years, the grand total is over \$50,000.

Fortunately, it seems we had the inner wisdom to not begin this project with the goal of raising fifty thousand dollars. It was never a goal and when it happened we didn't even realize it. So it should not now be looked upon as an end result. It is simply a marker along a path which at the moment seems noteworthy. Sometimes it's worthwhile to look back and see how you got to where you are. It also should not mean that what we, as a partner church, decide to do in the future has to depend on what we have done in the past.

It is time to take a serious look at not only what we have achieved, but at things we have not done, or not done well enough. A partnership is a demanding relationship. Partnerships between churches are still in an exploratory phase. What does this relationship demand of us as a church community? What does it demand of us as individuals within a church who have developed a special interest in the partner church movement?

We have managed to do the fund raising, but we have not made a return visit to Homorodujfalu. This will change in August 1997, when a group from our church will join the Transylvanian Pilgrimage **being led**

by the Reverends David Keyes and Ben Meyers. We will finally meet our new partner minister, Arpad and Judit Ilkei and get to know them and the villagers we met in 1990. We will spend a week as the paying guests of village families. With the help of translators, we will be able to have conversations and discussions.

It will be a chance to learn more about life in this community; about the hardships and hopes of these people in a country where raging inflation and reports on the shrinking value of their currency are daily reminders of the difficult struggles they face.

We will explore the meanings of partnership between our churches. What can we learn from each other? What can we achieve together? In what ways can we offer help as they deal with their present situation and try look to the future? Already we know of their interest in sending young farmers from the village to participate in the Unitarian Trainees' Exchange Program, by spending a year living and working on dairy farms in the U.S.

During the past seven years our two churches (and a few hundred others) have progressed on a journey of partnership which has spanned the distance many times in many ways. Between our brief visit to Homorodujfalu in August 1990 and the longer visit we have planned for August 1997, we have exchanged numerous letters, greetings cards, and occasional pictures. Each church has sent and received treasured gifts in recognition of our special relationship. We have been able to offer financial help to strengthen their church, and in small but significant ways to help strengthen their farming economy.

As the journey continues with a new opportunity to become better acquainted, we can plot a course for the future of our church partnership. Where do we go from here as we look back over an eventful seven years and proceed to look ahead? *Bon voyage!*

**Project Harvest Hope: Micro Enterprise for
Transylvanian Villages
Addressing Issues of Paternalism and Money in the
Partner Church Program**

By David Keyes

Near the city of Brasso in Eastern Transylvania is the village of Illyefalva, a model of successful small enterprise and international cooperation. This sparkling town boasts a demonstration farm with meat and dairy processing plants, a children's village where adult volunteers care for orphans, and an ecumenical conference and youth center.

Illyefalva's stunning success was made possible by Protestant churches in Western Europe in cooperation with the visionary village minister. It is a beacon to other Reformed (Calvinist) villages throughout Transylvania, a source of hope and clear proof that centuries-old village culture can thrive in the twenty-first century.

What the Calvinists have done in Illyefalva is in many ways what Project Harvest Hope is working to accomplish for Unitarians in the Homorod Valley village of Okland, in the heart of traditional Unitarian lands with the highest concentration of adherents of our liberal faith in the world. Already Unitarians from all over Transylvania are looking to Okland with pride, pleased to be able to bake their bread with flour ground in the efficient, modern mill there.

The vision of our project extends far beyond Okland, and very much involves Unitarian Universalists thousands of miles away. The UU's who founded and raise funds for Project Harvest Hope have a vision —To expand from successful, model enterprises in Okland to support, encourage, and secure funding for economic development in communities throughout Romania, and —To work in cooperation with the Unitarian Church in Romania, in order both to assure the leadership in the project of the people of Transylvania, and to serve project goals of preserving religious freedom and the human rights of ethnic minorities. The project states its mission this way: "The mission of Project Harvest Hope is to strengthen and preserve Transylvanian villages through appropriate economic development."

Thus, while the project is anchored in Unitarian lands and seeks to work in cooperation with the Unitarian congregations of Transylvania, the hope is that a rising tide will be created to ‘lift all boats’ and improve village life for people of all faiths and nationalities in the region.

How might Project Harvest hope serve Unitarian Universalist congregations in the U.S. and Canada? Those who have worked in the Partner Church Movement know how difficult money matters can be in partner relationships. The Unitarians of Transylvania are suffering painful adaptation to a free market economy, are being thrust into a capitalist system without benefit of capital, and in many cases as the economic crisis grows, are without the basic necessities of life. They recognize the opportunities for small enterprises and the creation of jobs that will keep at least some young people in the villages, but do not know where to turn for funding.

UU churches have provided Transylvanian partners with vital and timely assistance over the last seven years of crisis and transition, and seem likely to continue to give at least some strategic aid for years to come. However, there are problems:

—A partnership that is mostly about money is really not much of a partnership. Paternalism precludes mutuality. With the focus on raising and distributing money, there may be very little opportunity to get to know the people, religion, and culture of the Transylvanian partner.

—The sustained giving of cash gifts from the wealthy North American partner to the Transylvanian sister church can result in a destructive dependence. And when the money stops flowing, the partnership can sour.

—Most UU congregations are not expert in raising money for external projects, writing foundation grants, or sustaining economic development half a world away. Project Harvest Hope cannot solve all these problems, but we are working to address each—to provide an alternative vehicle for financing micro enterprise for Transylvanian villages. Our base of support has certainly been, and will probably always be the Unitarian Universalist congregations of North America. Only the good will and volunteer hours of UU’s, coupled with mutual good will and volunteer dedication from our Transylvanian partners, will allow the project to survive and succeed.

Realizing the limitations of congregations when major funding for economic enterprise is the agenda, Project Harvest Hope in 1996 became a project of the Tides Center (formerly Tides Foundation) of San Francisco. Establishing our home with this internationally-recognized umbrella organization for progressive non-profits gives Project Harvest Hope the tax-

free, non-sectarian status needed to receive corporate, foundation, and government funding. Our Tides Center affiliation is vital to our objectives, which include:

- Expanding our board to include leaders in business and agriculture (many from UU congregations), and including Transylvanian representatives on the board.
- Establishing a micro credit program for Transylvania, and encouraging farming and manufacturing cooperatives.
- Assisting small Transylvanian businesses in securing loans from international non-governmental organizations.
- Making available the services of an advisory corps of leaders in business, law, finance, and cooperative enterprise.

Our first priority is to complete the three-phase model village program we launched in 1995 in Okland. To date, Project Harvest Hope has, in large part because of the dedication of our partners in Okland:

- Purchased a gigantic agricultural building.
- Divided the building for multiple use.
- Installed a modern flour mill capable of handling the wheat harvest of more than a dozen Unitarian villages.
- Purchased an option to buy another large agricultural building. — Purchased equipment for a commercial bakery designed to supply bread to the Homorod Valley.
- Made plans for a yogurt and cheese factory with products to be shipped to nearby cities —Initiated dialogue in the region on cooperative and strategic agricultural alliances.
- Sponsored two tours of UU's to Transylvania to increase understanding of Romanian economic needs, support a fledgling bed and breakfast industry, and raise money for the project.
- Invited Bishop Laszlo Tokes, hero of the 1989 Romanian uprising, to the Phoenix General Assembly, where he will be guest of honor at a fundraising luncheon for Project Harvest Hope.
- Efforts to support training in the U.S. for village dairy farmers, in cooperation with Madison, Wisconsin UU's, occupied many of our volunteer hours, but ultimately had to be shelved. We suspect the road to success in such uncharted territory is bound to lead to occasional dead ends.

At this writing in the spring of 1997, about \$15,000 is needed to complete the bakery, another \$10,000 to retire debt on current operations, and an additional \$50,000 to complete the cheese and yogurt plant. In the

coming year, we expect our project activities to will consist primarily of

- grant writing, as we seek foundation and corporate support,
- efforts to improve communications with Transylvanian partners so that our planning can be a truly mutual effort,
- and continued fundraising among UU's in North America.

The project began in and has been sustained by the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, whose ministers, Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs have provided the essential leadership and inspiration. Beverly Smrha of that congregation (and Pacific Central District Co-Executive) has chaired with skill and tenacity the Transylvania Task Force of the Oakland church, out of which Project Harvest Hope was born.

But it was all made possible by the energy and vision of the dynamic young couple who lead our model village project in Oakland, the village minister Levente Kelemen, and his wife Eva, an English teacher. Their 1995 visit to Oakland, California was the real starting place for the project.

Just as Levente and Eva inspire us, so they are inspired by the memory of Francis Balazs, the great innovator of the pre-World War II generation of Transylvanian ministers. Balazs, educated at the Unitarian seminary in Berkeley (now Starr King) and assisted by his American wife whom he met in Berkeley, gave his life to his conviction that cooperative economic development could save Transylvanian villages and thus help revitalize the Unitarian church. (Many are now reading about Balazs' vision in the important new Skinner House book, *Alabaster Village*.) In a way, Project Harvest Hope is a living memorial to the dedication and international partnership of Francis and Christine Balazs.

In 1996, the UU Partner Church Council approved a 'special relationship' with Project Harvest Hope, setting up an interlocking board, and approving the creation, under the Tides Center umbrella, of this new vehicle for raising money and awareness to strengthen and preserve Transylvanian villages. Current board members are Frances Buckmaster, Lawrence Coburn, Rob Eller-Isaacs, Dr. Judit Gellerd, Leon Hopper, David Keyes, Peter Raible, and Beverly Smrha.

Gifts of cash and securities are greatly appreciated, and will enable us to complete specific, concrete projects which will continue to bring hope and know-how to Unitarians in Transylvania. Checks may be made payable to PROJECT HARVEST HOPE/TIDES CENTER, and mailed to Project Harvest Hope, 685 Fourteenth Street, Oakland, CA 94612.

PARTNER CHURCH EXPERIENCES:
Bedford, Massachusetts - Abasfalva
1992-1996

by Sarah Dorer

BACKGROUND HISTORY:

First Parish in Bedford first became involved in the Partner Church project back in September, 1992 when John Gibbons presented the idea to the Parish Committee (governing lay board of the church) as a project for the upcoming year. We thought the project sounded promising and just the kind of thing to expand our horizons outside our local area. Some of us were excited to learn that Transylvania actually existed - that it was not just the legendary home of Dracula. And before too long we were assigned the church in Abasfalva.

One of the first things we did was to enlist the help of the Sunday School children. In August, 1993, at our annual Parish Committee retreat, John declared (taking everyone by surprise!) that one of his goals for the year was to send a delegation to Transylvania during the upcoming summer and have everyone return safely. And soon we had a delegation of fifteen parishioners committed to traveling to Transylvania four months hence! Each one of us could tell you a different story as to why we chose to go.

We joined the Partner Church organization and we began to do some fundraising for the trip. We applied and were awarded a grant from the UUA to help offset costs to send our four youth and youth advisor on the trip. We also held a giant barn auction to raise additional funds for the group. With the exception of the money provided the youth from the UUA, all other funding came out of our own pockets - we did not use any church funds for the trip.

THE TRIPS:

Our first trip lasted 10 days, and it turned out to be an amazing experience for all of us - surpassing any previous expectations. We had been met in Budapest by Denes Farkas and Csaba Bulbuka (who spoke fluent English) and were chauffeured around in two rather tenuous vans. At times we didn't know if the vans would make the drive, or if we would

survive Denes's driving. It was quite an experience. We all returned safely.

Following our trip, we conducted a Sunday service in September, to which we invited Hungarians from neighboring towns. We shared our stories, photos and craft items with the townspeople at our annual Town Day in the fall. Our enthusiasm was contagious. More people in the congregation began to take an interest. We established our own official Partner Church Committee. We even continued trying to learn Hungarian. I think this first trip could easily be summed up by the words of one of us who said upon his return that "I went as a tourist, and came back a pilgrim." It was an overwhelming and life-changing experience for all of us.

In March and April, 1995, we paid for our partner minister, Aron Barabas and his family and Csaba Bulbuka to come to America. All of us realized what a tremendously courageous act of faith it was for the Barabas family to travel to America. The minister and his wife were clearly overwhelmed by our lifestyle. Csaba was thrilled - it was a dream come true for him. And the kids loved it! The family stayed in the US for two weeks - most of the time here in Bedford.

The Barabas' visit succeeded in bringing even more First Parishioners into our partnership relationship. The Barabas family and Csaba charmed everyone just as they had charmed us the previous summer. At least one hundred of the Bedford congregation was involved in one way or another with the visit. We had several large pot-luck dinners, a few all church outings (a cold trip in April to the beach because they had never seen ocean water), a birthday party - American style - for the minister's wife, a couple of information sessions (We met Judit Gellerd for the first time, as she arrived for a visit while the Barabas family stayed in town), and three church services. One of these was a Communion Service, complete with our set of Communion Silver which we own jointly with the local Congregational Church and which normally resides under lock and key in a vault at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Needless to say, it is no easy task for us to take the silver out of the Museum. The experience of Communion with our own silver was a first for many First Parishioners. The inspiration for the service came from knowing that our partner church has communion approximately three times during the year. We had had a powerful experience that previous June at the Unitarian Church in Kolozsvár. The minister brought out, for our viewing, their set of communion silver which was centuries old. We were all awed by the age and beauty of their treasures. The Senior Youth marveled at the fact that they were allowed to hold such ancient artifacts which represented to them the tumultuous his

tory of the Transylvanian people. One youth in particular still talks about the moment she held this silver in her hands.

We have actually gained several members to First Parish directly because of our connection with Transylvania. When the Barabas family arrived in Bedford, we decided to hang a banner welcoming them to Bedford across the front of the outside of the church. This banner was huge, written in Hungarian "*Isten Hozott!*", and visible to all who drove by the Bedford Common every day. Even town residents were curious and began asking us what this banner meant. A young Hungarian American couple new to Bedford and expecting their first child amazed to see the banner written in Hungarian. Since then they have become very active in the life of the church and particularly on the Partner Church committee. Robert Kokenyesi now has become our resident translator. They and their child traveled to Abasfalva the next year.

Cathy Cordes, another member of our congregation is now one of the Mass Bay District representatives to the Partner Church Council.

During the next summer, 1995, John Gibbons took his family over to visit Abasfalva. His wife and son began to develop a close relationship with the villagers. They returned with a stunningly beautiful tapestry which Edit, the minister's wife, had stitched all by herself. This tapestry now hangs behind the altar area in the front of the church above where John preaches. It is absolutely the first thing one sees when you enter the sanctuary from the main door.

Meanwhile, some of us who had gone the previous summer were jealous of John's return visit, so began to plot how we would return the next summer.

Denes Farkas and Judit Gellerd visited us in September on a mission to raise funds for a new van. We hosted them for several days during which we had a reception and a special church service where both Denes and Judit preached. This was the first occasion for other First Parishioners to meet the legendary Denes.

We continued to try to learn Hungarian - it was now being offered as a First Parish University (adult education) class each week. Cards and letters continued to be exchanged. We have tried to set up a more extensive family pen-pal arrangement, but have yet to have much success with this. We have interest on this end, but it seems to be difficult on the other end. We post every letter we receive on one bulletin board of the church and keep photographs on display.

This past summer, 1996, was unusually busy around Partner Church

affairs. We hosted Noemi Szeredai, a Transylvanian Divinity Student from Kolozsvar for the month of July and part of August. She was here as part of an arrangement with Meadville-Lombard Divinity School. She stayed with five families and easily won our hearts.

Later in August we sent over the first of two delegations of First Parishioners for another ten day visit. Seven of us went on this first trip. We arrived at the day when Hungary celebrating its 1100th birthday! We watched the most dazzling fireworks any of us has ever seen over the Danube River - a sight none of us will ever forget!! Our stay in Abasfalva was just as lovely and hospitable as the first time. The villagers had postponed their annual Harvest Ball to coincide with our arrival. So as soon as we arrived in the village, we were scouted off onto their horse drawn wagons, accompanied by villagers in their native costume singing and drinking, to invite neighboring villagers to the evening's festivities. Once again, during our visit, our senses were filled in ways that are unknown to us here in Bedford and we were showered with their generosity, hospitality, homemade gifts and palinka.

This time, though, the villagers were somewhat less formal with us than the first time and we began to have discussions about issues that really mattered to them. Their resentment toward their village's gypsy population was clearly voiced. Concerns about the school, the gypsy children who attended the school, and commitment of some of the teachers were voiced. We began to wonder how we deal with the obvious and overt prejudice of our Transylvanian friends against the gypsy people in their own little community. It was unsettling. There were conversations about the Romanian government and the lack of support it shows to the remote villages. There was lots of talk about money and the unbearable inflation rate. Concerns were raised about the children all wanting to move to the cities - thus leaving the villages without the manpower to keep the workload manageable. Complicated logistics about trying to acquire the combine we have raised money for were discussed. We learned that there is very little communication between even neighboring villages - that people are more used to being distrustful of one another. We came back with a much more realistic picture of how hard life really is in Transylvania. Nothing is easy. Hope for a better life is elusive. It was a sobering experience. In 1994, we had returned with such a romanticized vision of this small village life. Reality had now hit us, but difficult as it was to accept, we were glad it had.

FUTURE PLANS AND PROJECTS:

At this point, our hope is to send another delegation during the summer of 1998. We will once again try to encourage youth to come on

this trip. We have a large population of young teens who are eager to travel to Transylvania.

We are also in the process of making some decisions about potential joint projects with the people of Abasfalva. We are talking about building renovations, the possibility of establishing a credit union similar to one that has been tremendously successful in another partner church relationship, and possible financial scholarships for students.

Over the years, we have contributed approximately \$5000 to the village - most of which have been raised through numerous earmarked fundraisers. The village has been in the process of trying to buy a combine with our funds for almost two years now. The inflation rate has been so high that the initial money we raised for them was not enough. When we arrived this summer, we learned that they were still shy approximately \$1500. We were determined to bring this combine project to closure. It was dragging on for too long. It has become an important concrete symbol of our commitment to one another. We rushed to raise the remaining funds and they have just purchased the harvesting combine.

During financial discussions this summer, we learned that people do not trust the banks, so they kept their American money hidden in the attic. We realize that whatever we do, we will do jointly with the people of Abasfalva. We will not impose on them some scheme of ours which feels uncomfortable to them.

Dialogue needs to and will continue between the two congregations.

IMPRESSIONS:

Though each of us that has traveled over to Transylvania has his or her own story, we have all agreed on the following points which have been the topic of many a conversation over the years.

Point #1. The Transylvanian people (the ones we stayed with), though they have little in the way of material goods, are far more courageous, generous, honorable and warm-hearted than most people that any of us have ever encountered elsewhere - including our own town. When the Barabas family came to visit us, we were hard-pressed to figure out a way to reciprocate the generosity and warmth they showered on us.

On our first visit, we were greeted at the gates to the village by the villagers themselves dressed in native costume - some on horseback, many with bouquets of flowers. This was a complete surprise to us. We were overwhelmed by emotion and the scene before us. None of us had ever experienced such a greeting in our lives. A young man read us a declaration saying that these villagers "awaited our arrival as did the wisemen await

the star of Bethlehem” - a heavy statement for all of us to contemplate. None of us felt worthy enough to be honored in such a way - we were just Americans on an adventure. After this emotional greeting at the gates, we were led by hand down into the village and straight to the church where an evening service was held and once again another proclamation was read in our honor. After the service, we were honored at a community dinner.

Point #2. We, in this country, take so much for granted. It was humbling to be with people who have struggled so over the years. As Unitarians and Hungarians in Romania, our Transylvanian friends have struggled for religious as well as personal freedoms. We take freedom for granted in America, as well as all the amenities we have in this country. We are a suburban, middle-class, educated, well-traveled group of people at First Parish. It was a new experience for us to live in a very rural community where most of the food was either grown right there in garden enclosures, where animals were raised and slaughtered for the evening’s meal, where the bread was freshly baked, where there were only a few flush toilets (most of us had to use outhouses), limited hot water, no showers, and only a couple of televisions and telephones in the entire village.

The children had a small, if that, collection of play things. They were much appreciative of the kinds of gifts we brought them: drawing paper, crayons, markers, pens (things which our children consider essential classroom or home items), toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo - things we consider common household goods.

We also realized that we take for granted the infrastructure that holds our country together - an open government, good roads, safe sidewalks, adequate transportation, emissions and other pollution controls, good housing, decent health care (relatively speaking), good public education for the most part, stocked shelves at the grocery stores, and more. It was a shock to see them state of disrepair throughout parts of Transylvania - little money for infrastructure and repairs. It was sad to see the helplessness of the citizens to make the kinds of changes in their communities that they so desperately want.

Point #3. We have all returned to this country with a realization of the excesses and proliferation of commercial goods that exist here in America. Many of us can not enter our local supermarkets, department stores without wondering why we have so much “stuff”. What possible use could it all serve! Extremely excessive! It’s shocking to see what the advertising world tries to make us believe we cannot live without.

Point #4. We are frustrated by the language barrier and the lack of

resources for easy communication (telephone, fax machines, computers with e-mail). Though we can communicate via an interpreter, there have been times when we know that things have been lost in the translation. Misunderstandings have arisen due to cultural differences that have been difficult to explain. Some of us have tried to learn Hungarian. With the exception of one of two real linguist types, the rest of us are struggling and see little hope of making good progress. It is such a difficult language to learn. So, for the most part, we communicate with our Transylvanian friends in person word by word using Hungarian-English dictionaries, with gestures, and with lots of smiles and laughs. It has been a challenge to conduct more serious conversations.

We correspond by letter. They write to us in Hungarian, and we to them in English. Both groups have found willing translators, but it often takes a while to have the letters translated.

As an aside...One of my favorite stories related to the difficulty in communication occurred when the Barabas family was visiting Bedford. I had arranged for the children to attend the local elementary school with my children one day. Little did I know that this particular day was one of the "Wacky Theme Days" which the school held once a month. On this particular day, we arrived only to find many of the students, teachers and principal in pajamas, robes and slippers. It was Pajama Day! I looked over at Aron and Boglarka whose faces were in shock. This was their very first impression of an American school system. I couldn't imagine what was running through their minds at that moment about American schooling. I certainly did not have the language to explain to them that people were dressed in "costume" for the day. I tried to pantomime, but it was not until several hours later back at the house that I was able to ask Csaba to translate for them what had been going on. It was truly a memorable experience. We all had a wonderful laugh!

Getting back to the challenge of communication... though, John Gibbons has successfully corresponded to Denes by fax to Kolozsvár, this is the only fax around and not always reliable. Phoning is close to impossible, and the mail service is also not always reliable. Over the years, my host family claims to have sent at least 9 separate letters. I have only received 4. They firmly believe that the Romanian government censors anything they say that is negative about the living conditions in the region. They claim the government has destroyed their other letters. While we have no proof, I see no reason to doubt them, given some of their other stories about the kind of police state they claim to still live under.

Point #5. We all came back from this past summer's trip with a resolve to keep better informed about internal Romanian politics. We also felt it is important to keep pressure on the US government to become aware of the abuses we hear about, especially since Romania wants to attain good standing and trade status with the international world.

IN CONCLUSION:

Since the summer of 1994, a total of 26 parishioners from First Parish in Bedford have traveled to our partner church village of Abasfalva, a village of 300 residents located in the Homorod valley. . There have been three separate trips from Transylvania to Bedford. At least one hundred First Parishioners have been involved in one form or another over the years. Interest continues to grow for many, but as with any program church, some people are just not interested and would much rather do something else closer to home. The youth are "hooked" and can't wait until they are old enough to travel over as Senior Youth. Though, each of our own individual personal journeys is quite different, we all realize that we have entered into a relationship which continues to evolve. We have entered into friendships with wonderful, courageous people who live half way around the world. There have been wonderful moments, and incredibly challenging moments. Concerns have been expressed which have resulted from cultural differences and misunderstandings. Verbal communication is tricky. We all realize that any good relationship takes determination, commitment, flexibility and compromise to make it work. We in Bedford are committed to keeping this relationship going. We are in it for the long term and excited about what the future may hold.

Our Partner Church Connection

First Parish Brewster, MA and Jobbágyfalva

by Betsey Skeirik

When my husband, a retired Unitarian Minister, and I first traveled to Romania in 1989, we became interested in the beginnings of Unitarianism in Transylvania.

Later I found that Rev. Jim Robinson, in 1990-91, was one of the first ministers to commit his church, First Parish Brewster to the Partner Church program. When I questioned him about the program I found that he would be happy to have someone take responsibility for the program at our parish. Thus I became a PC Coordinator for our Partner Church of Jobbágyfalva [Valea] in Transylvania, having Rev. Sándor Szén as minister.

Fortunately, I found a Hungarian woman in town who had escaped from Hungary during the 1956 Revolution and was happy to help in translating letters for me. So I began my correspondence with Sandor and later established a pen pal program which is still going strong today. Out of these first steps began a growing concern for our Unitarian people in that world and a personal need to do what I could for these new found friends.

In 1992 my husband and I returned to Romania with a pariahs member. We were fortunate to have Dr. Elek Rezi, a professor at the Protestant Institute in Kolozsvár [Cluj] as our guide and translator. We spent several great day with Sandor, Csilla his wife, the pen pals and the villagers who congregate at the church with the ringing of the church bell.

Elek then drove us to Kolozsvár, touring the Headquarters and the Seminary and spending time with his family.

Returning home with vivid memories and learning about the need of the Transylvanians, I approached the First Parish Board with a request that the church consider a yearly salary supplement of \$200 for Sandor and his family. I was voted upon and passed at the Annual Meeting in 1993. Although it is a small amount in terms of our own standard of living, it is a helpful amount in Romania and it is an important commitment by First Parish.

We invited Sándor to visit First Parish for three weeks in the spring or 1994. He spoke at our church, at Barnstable Unitarian Church, Middleboro Unitarian church and at the Nauset Fellowship, receiving the guest speaker fee. Lucy Duffy took him to visit New York City and Rev. Jim took him to the Boston Headquarters, and we took him to Harvard Theological School. He returned home to Jobbagyfalva with memories of a lifetime, new friends, a considerable amount of money and good clothing for himself and the church, as well as with a better use of the English language.

During this time a number of programs were initiated to establish a Partner Church Fund which is now a church budget item. In brief the activities included:

1. Rev. Jim Robinson's planning of a PC morning service with me and the pen pals, illustrated with information from our letters. A special offering was taken and the people were most generous.

2. An International pot-luck dinner with Hungarian recipes supplied for brave cooks in 1995. Our program included video show on Transylvania, Csardas dance demonstration by a Hungarian couple.

3. We also sold, on a continuous basis, some Geza Kovacs [a Transylvanian artist] woodblock prints gathered in part from Judit Gellérd and from originals purchased in Transylvania. Postcards of a detail taken from a print were sold in packets of 12 for \$5. They were a useful item and quite popular.

Our PC Fund has helped us to give small gifts to: the Van fund for use by UU visitors; the Meadville/Lombard Theological Fund to support English Teacher at the Kolozsvár Seminary; and the US Theological Student Fund to help fund the seminary students' need.

In order to keep the PC fund an ongoing concern we held another International pot-luck in 1996. The Vinovana International Folk Group of Boston and MIT presented a colorful program of music and song of the Eastern European countries, in folk dress. They closed with a Hungarian dance step demonstration for the audience with our participation in the church aisles. I suggested donation was collected from the diners and from the area people attending the program, which paid for the program and still left us with a generous amount.

Whenever I have had a question concerning the PC program I have called on Judit Gellérd and she has been most helpful and supportive. People of the church had the privilege of meeting her at a couple of luncheon meetings where she was our guest when she came to the Boston area. Her

great energy and love which she pours into her native land and people are an inspiration for all of us.

At the time of this writing we are planning for Sándor's return (May 1997) accompanied by his wife, Csilla. Anticipation is high and Rev. Jim and I have been outlining plans for both of them with many people taking part. Csilla is a nurse-doctor in a nearby village medical facility in Transylvania. We hope to have her return home with a number of useful medical supplies for the facility.

Plans for the fall are also in progress. After consultation with Rev. Jim of First Parish and Rev. Richard Fewkes of Norwell Unitarian, an invitation was extended to Dr. Elek Rezi, now the Vice Bishop of the Unitarian church in Transylvania, to visit the area. The two week visit would bring him to First Parish and the Cape Cod Unitarian community as well as to Norwell and the Boston area community.

The two churches would share the airfare, hospitality and time. Dr. Rezi has accepted the invitation and we look forward to sharing our hospitality with him in October. The churches, people and district will certainly benefit by his presence and his knowledge of our historical Unitarian roots and present Partner Church Program.



First Parish in Concord, Massachusetts
and
Szekelykeresztur, Transylvania

by Tom Brosnahan, Committee Member

Activities to Date

1. The General Fund and the Women's Parish Committee made a contribution for the modernization of the heating systems in the Unitarian Church and parsonage in Szekelykeresztur.
2. Our church made a contribution for the establishment of a dental clinic in the Unitarian high (boarding) school in Szekelykeresztur.
3. Our church made a contribution to the book bindery used to teach a useful, remunerative craft to high school students.
4. We helped the Transylvanian Unitarian Church in Kolozsvar to purchase a van for church transport.
5. We sponsored Ms Zsuzsanna Szombatfalvi of Szekelykeresztur for a month-long visit to our church and our community.
6. We helped to furnish the teacher's conference room in the Unitarian high school in Szekelykeresztur.
7. We made contributions toward the cost of repairs to the church in Szekelykeresztur.
8. Several families in our congregation are sponsoring (providing funds for room and board for) seven high school students in Keresztur.

9. Two delegations of members of our congregation have visited Kolozsvar and Szekelykeresztur to bring our Unitarian friends in Transylvania our greetings, best wishes, and spiritual and material support.

New Initiatives

1. At the request of our partner church, we plan to send our Senior Minister, Rev. Gary Smith, to Transylvania to advise ministers there on methods and practices of American church administration and operation.
2. We plan to host Ms Zsuzsanna Szombatfalvi again so that she can spend a year attending our local high school.
3. We hope to provide funds for Zsuzsanna's mother to visit Concord this year when Zsuzsanna's father, Rev. Szombatfalvi, visits us on his way to attend the General Assembly in Phoenix.
4. We hope to be able to make a contribution for the modernization of the heating system in the Unitarian theological seminary in Kolozsvar.
5. We hope to be able to establish pen pal relationships between students in Szekelykeresztur and Concord.
6. We hope to foster contacts and exchanges between church youth groups in Concord and Szekelykeresztur.



Report from Transylvania

May 5, 1996

by Rev. Richard M. Fewkes

You will be happy to know that I didn't have to take a cab from London to Bucharest, although I came ever so close to having to do so. I had left my boarding pass to TAROM behind in the airline office, so I had to return. And suddenly, I heard my name being paged. I was the last person to get on the plane. I lost track of the time and nearly had to take that cab to Bucharest.

I arrived in Bucharest at 6 p.m., Monday, April 22nd, 1996 and was met there by our translator, Bill Polcsa, and then by Paul Coolidge, and our tour director, Don Harrington, his wife, Aniko, and our van driver, Moses. We had dinner that evening at The White House, otherwise known as the Casa Alba Restaurant, along with 20 or so UUs from the Arlington, VA church who were also there on tour. We were royally entertained with singers and dancers and, believe it or not, barn swallows flying around the ceiling. They made their nests in the roof beams and fly hither and yon while you eat your dinner. This would never pass muster in an American restaurant. The health board would never allow it. But it was interesting. One could not help but wonder if bird droppings do not end up from time to time in someone's coffee or salad.

We spent the first night in the Hotel Silva in Busteni, about a two hour drive from Bucharest. It had a lovely view of the Carpathian mountains and only cost \$30 a night for the room split two ways. We had planned to take the cable car up the mountain for a spacious view of the area, but it was shut down for technical repairs. On Tuesday we went to visit Dracula's castle in Bran. It was not really the old boy's castle, but had been promoted as such by former dictator, Ceausescu. Pure manufactured legend. But it was a lovely medieval castle anyway. Down below were the remnants of an ancient Hungarian village which the Romanians were trying to say was old Romanian. They keep trying to rewrite history to their own liking. Recently, **in their new constitution, they have said that there are no Hungarians or Gypsies living in Romania, only Romanians**, which is

news to the thousands of Gypsies and Hungarians who have been there for more than a thousand years, long before the Romanians ever got there.

So much of Romania is “under construction”, which might be a good thing, but the progress towards completion is too often a snails pace to nothing at all. The same concrete testimonials to Ceausescu are just the way they were four years ago--government housing collectives left in a state of suspended animation. It’s sad really. Because there is so much natural beauty in Romania. They just do not have the infrastructure to maintain and improve what they already have, much less develop something new. Buildings are erected and then left that way for decades with no maintenance or improvements.

We visited the famous Lutheran Black Church in Brasov, “black” because it had been burned so many times in previous centuries. The church is also famous for its rugs and tapestries which hang in abundance from the walls of the building. We spent the night at the Hotel Park in Sepsiszentgyorgy or St. George. St. George is a predominantly Hungarian city, 90%. The Romanians have erected a statue of a Romanian general from a few centuries ago who ruled for 3-days before being killed by a presumably German ally. The Hungarians in the city consider the statue a joke and a denial of the Hungarian roots of the city’s history.

While in St. George we saw one of the new Unitarian churches being built in Transylvania. The minister, Aron Torok, a 70 year old man with a vision, gave us a tour of the building which is about 90% complete after 5 years. The construction has stopped because they have run out of money. Their bell is “on loan” to the Reform Church in order to prevent its confiscation by the government who would not allow it to be stored on the grounds of the property. This gives you a sense of the minor harassments that Hungarians endure under Romanian rule.

The Unitarian Church in Brasov was not allowed to put a sign on the exterior of their building, unless they paid the city a \$3,000 tax, which, of course, they cannot afford. The Romanian Orthodox Church has no such restriction. They are the only church to have their properties, which had been confiscated by the Communists, returned to them. The Unitarians and Calvinists were not so fortunate because, of course, they are predominantly Hungarian. Another irritant: the roads in Brasov county, which is predominantly Romanian, are fairly decent and passable, while those in Harghita county, predominantly Hungarian, where our partner church resides, are atrocious. Don Harrington referred to it as “the wretched road to Reccsenyed” which was the name of one of the villages along the way.

Recently, the Romanian Parliament passed a law making it mandatory to teach all children in the Romanian language, thus forbidding the use of Hungarian language in the schools. It is an unenforceable law. There are not enough teachers to make it effective and some of the villages and cities are nearly all Hungarian and have no intention of renouncing their language and culture and to deny their children their heritage. The Romanian mayor in Cluj/Kolozsvar tried to get the statue of Matthias Rex, the historically famous Hungarian king, removed from the center of the city, but he met with so much political resistance that he relented.

[The exchange rate of Romanian lei is 3,000 to the dollar. I got a huge wad of bills for a mere \$50 which lasted me throughout most of my trip. The one good sign in terms of the economy is that inflation seems to have subsided for the time being. It has remained around 3,000 to the dollar for the past six months. We ate at some nice restaurants as well as at some pizza parlors while in Romania. For five or so dollars you could get a full course meal, Hungarian goulash or winnerschintzel, including wine or beer. Not very many Romanians eat out at the fancier restaurants because it is too expensive for them. For Americans it seems incredibly cheap.—Editor’s note: these comments on the value of the dollar and restaurant prices are no longer valid. In 1997 the lei was 8-10,000 to the dollar and prices are reaching the level of those in the United States].

One of the things we did while visiting with our partner church in Kadacs was to take the Biro family out to dinner in a nice restaurant. This was the first time they had gone out to eat in six years. We raised our glasses and shared a Hungarian toast: “*Egészségedre*”, which means, “To Your Good Health.” If you leave off the accent on the third “e”, the toast means, “To Your Whole Backside”, which I said on one occasion. I’ve decided not to use that phrase anymore.

I can say that I saw more and learned more on this trip than I did four years ago. I met more Transylvanian Unitarian ministers and saw more Unitarian churches than I did before and I saw a few I had seen before and renewed acquaintances. We visited churches and ministers in: Bölön village with its 100 year old Unitarian basilica; Nagyajta and its Unitarian fortress church with its inside ceiling like the hull of a ship (much like Old Ship Church in Hingham); Almas (Apple Village) with its remnants of Roman and Gothic periods; St. Martin Unitarian Church and its new Youth Conference Center (their new young minister, Bela Krizbai, and his lovely wife, were very gracious, and spoke excellent English--their partner church in San Jose had burned to the ground and they sent them a \$100 gift; Barot

with its brand new church building completed in 1995 and its talented minister, Alpar Kiss.

And Janosfalva (John's Village) where we stayed for two nights with home hospitality. This is where Don Harrington's wife, Anikó was minister. She is a bright and very energetic minister. She once shaved her head to protest the treatment of prisoners and made the cover of the Hungarian edition of "TIME" magazine. We had some wonderful meals together in the parsonage, hosted by the ladies of the village. There was a fair amount of palinka (a Hungarian plum brandy), wine and beer, consumed by the men, and singing of Hungarian songs, and swapping of war stories. It was a fun evening.

Many times as we visited another church and minister we were offered a hit of palinka which was hard to refuse. One time Bill told our kind host only a little: kicsit, kicsit - and he responded by saying it was a very thick glass (meaning the space inside was small). Well, I can tell you this, a little bit of palinka goes a long ways.

I was pleased to renew an acquaintance in the village of Korond (famous for its pottery) with its minister Laszlo Farkas, who took us to one of the few remaining Unitarian potters in town, and we were given a tour of the operation from start to finish. Each of us bought a few pieces to take home with us. I was also pleased to return to Szekely Szentmihaly (St. Michaels) and its minister, Kiss Gergely. He took Paul and I up into the church bell tower, quite a climb I can tell you, to see its double set of bells, and a magnificent view of the region from which we could see the steeple of the Kadacs church in the distance. We also saw the old first church and a new second church in Udvarhely, a city I had visited during my last trip. Back then the new church had only a foundation. Today it is 80% complete and awaits a new source of funds to finish the job.

I know you are all wondering, how did things go in Kadacs? Did spring come and was your sermon well received? Yes indeed, spring came, the flowers were beginning to bloom and the hills were greening with life! My sermon with its text from the Song of Solomon fit the occasion. We were very warmly welcomed by the Biro family. Paul, Bill and I stayed in the parsonage, while Don Harrington stayed with a near-by neighbor a few houses away. We ate all our meals together in the parsonage with Anna Biro as our cook and hostess. They were all thrilled with the gifts we brought--the clothes, the fabric, the toys, the money. And they showered us with gifts in return--embroideries, pottery, handcarved items, and a bottle of palinka for Bill Polcsa, the pure white stuff, which he calls Hungarian ben

zine or gasoline. One swig and you'd understand why. The site of the Biro's grandsons playing with their little toy tractors and of their granddaughter combing the hair of her Barbie dolls, was worth the whole trip. Those were three happy kids who had Christmas come in April. Their daughter's son, Levente, wore his green watch plaid pants proudly and wanted to sleep in them. Anna Biro spoke lovingly of Judy Campbell and said she had four sisters and Judy was like a fifth sister to her.

You will be pleased to know that the \$600 we sent for the purchase of a washing machine bought not only the washing machine, but a new gas canister stove, with money left over to repair the kitchen windows. The parsonage now has an indoor toilet, no more outhouse with chickens. The toilet flush runs by opening a faucet to fill up the tank for about a minute or so. If you forget to turn it off the tank overflows as it did a number of times for yours truly.

The parsonage has one of two washing machines in the entire village, and one of seven indoor toilets. In the winter there are still some women who break through the ice in the river to wash their family's clothes. Anna feels richly blessed by our gift. There are only three telephones in the village, the parsonage is not one of them, and the waiting list to get a phone is five years. Not very many people have cars. The minister's daughter, Csilla has one of them, a 24 year old clunker that gets her to her job and to school. Next year she will complete her teaching degree for work with young children.

Kadacs has 210 souls. The village has two sections: Kis Kadacs (Little Kadacs) and Nagy Kadacs (Big Kadacs). A bell marks the site of the former church in Kis Kadacs. The building is no more so the people come to Nagy Kadacs for church. There are a couple of abandoned houses in Nagy Kadacs. The owners died and their heirs have yet to sell the property. One of the homes, a fairly nice building with an acre of land and a barn, could be bought for less than \$1500.

Jozsef Biro has had 40 years in the ministry, 25 of them in Kadacs. In all these years he has never had a day off or a vacation. He's now of retirement age, 65, but the Bishop has asked him to stay on for a few more years, which he will do. The lay leadership of the church consists of a Church Council of five men, no women, two from Kis and three from Nagy Kadacs. There is a president, a secretary and three other members. The minister is the treasurer and controls the expenditure of the modest funds that they receive.

Paul Coolidge was delighted to learn that Jozsef Biro could con

verse with him in French, which he learned when he was in high school. The minister's daughter, Csilla could also speak French. So there were times we had three way conversations going in French, English and Hungarian. It was great fun.

The service on Sunday morning was a moving experience. When I mentioned the Stole or *Stola* which Anna had given to Judy and me as a gift, and compared it to the banner of love from the Song of Songs she started to cry, and her daughter Csilla followed suit. The banner of our two churches which Judy made was deeply appreciated and more tears came as I spoke of the boundless love which it symbolized. After my sermon Paul presented the gift of money to the minister and then the children, dressed in their native Hungarian clothes, did recitations and presented gifts of flowers to Paul, Bill, Don and myself. As Paul said to me afterwards, the memory of those children doing their recitations, and then singing a song together, is something we will never forget. The minister's daughter, Csilla, read a prayer, which she had written, about her native land Erdely. She read with such feeling that even the men began to wipe the tears from their eyes. Hungarians are very emotional people and so genuine.

On Sunday night two boys, accompanied by their mother, offered a gift to me of two large antlers from a deer which they found in the forest. They never would have fit in my luggage, but the thought was endearing. In my sermon I quoted from the Psalmist: As a hart (deer) longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God." What a pleasant coincidence to have that image brought back to me by those thoughtful boys.

The minister's daughter shared with us her deepest dream of someday becoming a Unitarian minister and to follow in her father's footsteps. But she said the theological school will not allow married women to enroll. I told her I would inquire about that matter when we met with the Bishop on Monday, which I did. The Bishop told me that rule was no longer in effect and that there were no barriers to her attending theological school in the future if she should wish to do so. I will write to her shortly and give her the good news. She would make an excellent minister and I would like to help sponsor her if she should decide to pursue her dream.

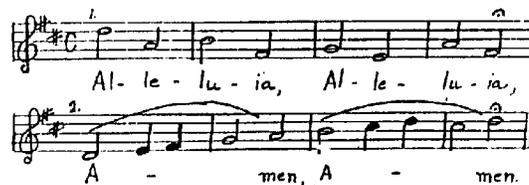
Yes, I had the pleasure of meeting with the new Bishop of the Unitarian Church in Transylvania, Janos Erdo, 84 years old, but a man of young and progressive views. [Bishop Janos Erdö died in July 1996). He was very gracious and welcoming of us and spoke excellent English, something his predecessor could not do. He is held in high regard by many because of his resistance to the former communist tyranny and even spend

ing some years in prison because of it. Three members of the Partner Church Council, including myself, reviewed with the Bishop the guidelines for use of the new van which will be owned by the denominational headquarters in Kolozsvar (Cluj) and used for church business and Partner Church Council tours for American Unitarians.

On the way back to Bucharest we stopped in Torda where the famous Diet or religious debate was held in 1568 when Francis David, a former Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and now a Unitarian, convinced the King, young John Sigismund, to grant an Edict of Religious Tolerance for people of all faiths, Protestants and Catholics, and not to impose one form of faith and worship on all, because faith was the gift of God and could not be forced upon anyone. A famous painting of the Diet of Torda, done 100 years ago, hangs in a museum there. The model for the figure of Francis David is said to be the famous musician Franz Liszt. Francis David called for a “continuing reformation” of the church and declared for “Non adoramus Christum”, to not worship Jesus, but to follow him.

In many ways I felt like St. Paul of old who sought to bring a ministry of consolation in suffering to congregations in Macedonia and Corinth, places not that far removed from where I traveled. He sought to bring to his congregations an affirmative ministry of YES in Christ Jesus. My mission, on your behalf, was to bring a ministry of hope and support to the church in Kadacs, Romania, with the message that neither they nor we are alone in our free faith, that we have brother and sister Unitarians across the waters who care for one another, pray for one another, and are committed to keep faith with one another. The Spirit of Love and Truth has set its seal upon us and has taken up its dwelling place in our hearts.

"The Bell Alleluia"



**ELIOT CHAPEL -
NYARADSZENTMARTON-CSIKFALVA
A Model Sister Church Project**

By Rev. John Robinson

Under the Communist Dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu, Unitarian Churches in the Transylvanian Region of Romania, had a difficult lot. Property was expropriated, religious articles were taken for museums, and the very existence of the villages, many of which were ethnically Hungarian, was threatened. Communication of Transylvanian Unitarians with Unitarians in America was discouraged by the Communists regime which was hostile to religion.

In 1989 after the fall of the communist government, the dissolution of the collective farms and rampant inflation made life in Romanian even more difficult. Congregation members had almost no means for supporting their churches. Retired minister's salaries were only \$5 to \$10 per month and working ministers often went months without any salary. By "Partnering" congregations in North America with Transylvanian congregations, UUA members in the United States and Canada began the important task of helping to keep these churches alive. Not only had these Transylvanian churches suffered because they were religious, but they are also ethnic Hungarians in Romania, and a minority religion among Hungarians.

Dr. Judit Gellerd of the Center for Free Religion in California, the daughter of a Transylvanian Unitarian minister, knew of the struggle of the Unitarian Churches in Transylvania. Responding to a program organized by Judit, and supported by Bill Schulz then President of the UUA, Eliot Chapel made a request to be paired with a church in Transylvania in early 1990.

The relationship with our sister church in Transylvania began in 1990 when we (Eliot Chapel) were paired with Nyaradszentmarton- Csikfalva (literal translation "St. Martins on the White River - Border Village"). We formed a sister church committee that year. At first, because of the confusion between Hungarian and Romanian names for the same place,

and for the minister, it took a little time to get communication established. Eliot Chapel then sent \$100 to the church in the fall of 1991. In a grateful letter, their minister, Rev. Sandor Varga, expressed thanks for that first gift, which his congregation had used to buy for the children of the Sunday school, Christmas packages which included such luxuries as oranges. Much has been accomplished since that first contact. In 1992, responding to an appeal from their minister, members of Eliot Chapel contributed \$40 monthly to help Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva meet their minister's salary (a figure set by the bishop). This sum came to about 40% of the budgeted amount. However, because of the church's shortage of funds it is in reality nearly 60% of the salary their minister receives each year. Eliot Chapel has since included this as a part of the chapel's regular personnel budget. Now \$500, this money gives the minister a real salary of about \$90 per month. However, he still often goes without his salary, because of chronic money shortages, for two to three months each year.

In March of 1993, Rev. Varga visited the United States in a joint effort with the Unitarian Fellowship in Raleigh, North Carolina (the cooperation of the Raleigh church which is paired with Islo the second of the three churches Rev. Varga serves, has been a god-send in this project). During that three-week visit, much enthusiasm was engendered as Rev. Varga participating in two services at Eliot Chapel. Almost \$6000 was raised in an effort initiated by members of Eliot Chapel, to buy a tractor for the village. Rev. Varga had brought many gifts to Eliot Chapel and in turn many were given to him for his family and Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva.

Rev. Varga had brought with him a video tape of his village, church, and congregation. Among the parishioners in Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva, is a 54 year old woman who had polio at two years old, rendering her a paraplegic. The video showed her coming to church, as she does, despite great difficulty, each Sunday. When our Sunday School learned that she was going blind, and no longer able to earn her living by doing needlework, they decided to raise some money to help her out. They have been raising \$150 each year since which is a great help to her (her pension from the government is now valued at about 25 cents per month). When Rev. Varga returned to the village, his church board felt that a tractor was not practical for their needs. Rev. Varga wrote with their proposal for the use of the money. Eliot Chapel concluded that it was important that Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva make the decision as to the wisest use of the money. As result, their church board voted to

make repairs to the parsonage; to buy the minister a used car for his transportation to preach at and serve the three churches that he circuit rides each Sunday (a total of 19 kilometers each circuit); to buy a television-VCR and satellite dish for the Parish house so that members can gather there to watch Hungarian programming. In July of 1993, David Conrad, a member of Eliot Chapel, in conjunction with a Raleigh, NC tour, visited Transylvania, to assess the needs of the church and village, and get a better sense of how our money might be used most effectively. In the Summer of 1994 Eliot Chapel's minister, wife and daughter traveled to Transylvania by car from Vienna for a 10 day visit. They carried with them gifts and contributions that the members of Eliot Chapel and other friends had gathered over the previous months. They were received with warm enthusiasm by congregation members eager to offer friendship. Lavish meals were held in members home's, and many gifts of local crafts were given to bring back to Eliot Chapel. The villagers in Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva (the village and the church have the same name) have preserved many of the arts of their Hungarian heritage. Wood carving and marvelous needlepoint are among the works of art that they carry on. Eliot's minister and his wife arranged to bring back a consignment of these beautiful pieces to offer to Eliot members and other St. Louisians, with the proceeds to be returned to the artists with a portion to go to St. Martin Church. This group of art objects was sold at a very successful silent auction netting more than \$1980. One half of the proceeds went to Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva and one half to the artist who do the work. A second consignment was brought to Eliot Chapel by another visitor. Offered at coffee hours after church services, and at other church events, this consignment of 42 items was sold for \$1011. The money going to the six artists (about \$120 each on average) represents about one fifth of a typical annual income in Romania. It is easy to see how such an amount that seems so small here, becomes large in their economy as they attempt to move from state control to a free economy. In October of 1994, a newly graduated minister from the theological school in Kolozsvár, Szilard Sandor, came to Eliot Chapel to spend nine months as an intern. He learned English and the Chapel learned about Transylvanian Unitarianism. He lived with church families, conducted services, preached, laughed at the quaint customs of Americans, and made many jokes from the confusion of language. He introduced the Transylvanian Christmas

depends on developing a sustainable income base for the people, the ministers of the two churches worked with congregational leaders to initiate a loan program to enable villagers to begin businesses and other income producing efforts. The program seeks repayment in one year's time with interest. Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva's board of trustees are the caretakers of the loan fund. The money placed in the fund by Eliot Chapel is theirs. But the chapel was clear that it would not replace money lost to bad debts. The Board of Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva, on their own, resolved that should any loan go un-repaid that they would themselves pay it back to keep the loan fund going.

An initial \$480 from Eliot members started the program. The first loan was made to a villager for a used tractor to enable expanded farming efforts for his farm and other farms in the area. It was scheduled for repayment in one year. However, the money was repaid ahead of time. Since that initial loan, the loan fund has grown to \$4115 (that includes interest of \$140). Eliot Chapel had suggested an interest rate of 7%. The Transylvanian Board asked after three years for permission to raise the rate, as it was so low that it was not realistic. On further inquiry we learned that interest rates on loans in Romania are typically between 46 and 56% per annum because of the high rate of inflation. Again we have told Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva that we want them to be responsible for setting the rate as they are the ones who know the conditions.

Since the first loan, loans have been made that help purchase a second tractor, two combines, and wood working tools. One loan was also made at no interest to a widow whose 23 year old son was rendered quadriplegic in a swimming accident. At present a tailor has been promised the next loan to purchase a new sewing machine. The church in Transylvania has also asked and receive our agreement that they loan some of the money to the church for additional restoration work. We continue to raise money for the loan fund and hope in the future to sell "shares" in the "Eliot Chapel's First Bank and Trust of Transylvania." The shares will of course be donations, but we hope to design something fancy to hang on the wall. This is a priority so that more villagers will have a chance to turn their good plans into productive enterprises.

The ceiling of the church in Transylvania is composed of some seventy wood panels or cassettes. The cassettes were all hand-painted in 1657 (in a renovation that followed a fire set by raiding Turks). The roof of Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva church is

leaking and the panels have suffered considerable damage. Members of Eliot Chapel are adopting these cassettes for \$50 each. To date this has resulted in a sum of \$1,765. This money will be used first to repair the roof and second to restore the art. \$500 has already been forwarded to Transylvania for roof repair which is underway.

The bells in Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva are rung every day at noon and for services on Sunday. The bells are also used as an alarm (this goes back to times when they were rung to warn of invaders, the bell in one village alerting the next village in a relay that carried the warning far and wide). Rev. Varga told us they wanted to buy an automatic bell ringer to save the cost of having someone ring the bell. With unemployment so high we committed to paying the bell ringer's salary, \$20 per month to keep a person employed.

In late June and early July of 1996, The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh and Eliot Chapel once again joined forces to bring Rev. Varga to the United States, this time with his wife and daughter. Obtaining visas for their visit took some effort, but a letter from a United States Congressman turned the trick. It was a delightful 21 day visit which gave many people the opportunity to meet these wonderful and courageous people. In October of 1996 the minister of Eliot Chapel took a two week tour to Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva, to further assess what joint undertaking might be considered and to see how the projects underway were coming. He also carried in \$900, raised by Raleigh and Eliot, to purchase another used car for Rev. Varga's use in ministry (the old one having worn out). In addition he brought out with him more handiwork to sell for the benefit of the church and its members.

Edit Varga spoke to Eliot Chapel's Women's Alliance on her families visit in June of 1996. Our Alliance was moved by her conversation with them to send \$250 to the Women's Alliance of Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva. The Transylvanian women were very grateful. Immediately they asked Eliot Chapel's minister to give \$50 of this money to the blind and paraplegic woman of whom they were so caring, and that Eliot Chapel's Sunday school is helping. They commissioned Eliot Chapel's minister because they knew that Emma would not refuse such a gift from him, but would from their own alliance. They also sent beautiful handiwork to the Women's Alliance of Eliot Chapel.

For that trip Eliot Chapel had metals struck with a picture of

Eliot Chapel on one side, and in Hungarian the words “Sibling Church” in Hungarian. On the other, was a picture of Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva with the words “Sister Church” in English (sorry we are not PC here). Half of the coins were sold to members of Eliot Chapel in order that the other half could be given to the members of Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva. They were deeply touched to have such a token of Friendship, from members of Eliot Chapel.

There is one additional project which waits for our funding. It is the restoration of the beautiful tracker organ built in 1847. Nyaradszentmarton-Csikfalva congregation had given up hope of restoring it and were planning to replace it with an electronic one. Our hope is that by our interest, they will come to value some of the beautiful old things which they have and not see all that is good as coming from the mass production of the West (or is it East, most of these come from the far East these days). We hope to raise the \$1200 for the organ in the future.

THOUGHTS ON MAKING A PARTNER CHURCH PROJECT SUCCESSFUL

- First, find and motivate a committee of committed church members who have some vision of what a congregation could do.
- Arrange an exchange visit as soon as possible. There is no substitute for getting to know one another first hand. The Partner Church Council’s tours are any ideal way for you to get to know your Partner church. With the new vans this is much easier and less expensive to more well known locations in Europe or Asia (it is even cheaper than travelling in the USA on some accounts).
- Have regular fund raising events to which the whole church is invited, and the community at large. We have had annual Hungarian dinners with dancing and folk art demonstrations.
- Locate local Hungarians; they are very helpful in these matters. One of our most helpful people has been a United Church of Christ minister who came to this country in the 1950’s. He has not only translated for us, he has also visited our partner church twice, befriended our partner church’s minister, and has made substantial personal donations to help support the partner church.

- Be regular and consistent in your support of your partner church. They need to be able to count on us not so much for money as regular contact. We have met villagers in Transylvania who received a token donation, that was not followed up with regular contact. It is heartbreaking and embarrassing.
- Re-interest your congregation in the partner church program yearly with fund raisers, sermons, slide shows, religious education programs, craft sales etc.

To those who are considering a partner church: This is a wonderful project for both congregations. We at Eliot Chapel, have gained as much or more than we have given in this exchange. In no case have we found the funds that we have sent, spent with less than absolute care and consideration. Even small amounts of money have an enormous impact in these villages and in the lives of the people. Even more, they feel a strength and support to know that they are not alone and that there are people outside their little corner of the world who know and care. Eliot Chapel has had the privilege of becoming friends with those who have carried for 400 years the light of religious freedom. They are honest, decent people who have suffered immeasurably and who will help themselves if we but lend a hand of friendship.



This bell is dated at 1496.

Partnership in Dreaming Boldly
Ideas of fund-raising
UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, Manhasset, NY and
Csikszereda [M.Ciuc]

by Midge Jones

After the fall of the Communist regime in Romania, Bill Schulz, (president of the UUA) and Natalie Gulbrandsen (moderator) visited Transylvania where Unitarianism began. There they witnessed the many deprivations of the people, and felt their great need for help. Their reports to the Unitarians here stirred many of us to want to do something for our fellow religionists. So our church applied to be a sister church (later re-named partner).

Our first contact with our Partner Church was minister to minister. But soon it was followed by pairing people in our church with members of our Partner Church, to become pen pals. Correspondence is very important to our friends in Transylvania. It gives them the feeling that someone cares about them. But the difference in language made correspondence difficult. Postage is very costly from Romania to the States. Our partners do not have much money. Correspondence is now mainly between the chair of the Partner Church, and the minister, There is a young man in the Transylvanian congregation who has studied English, and now our partner minister is also learning.

In addition to letters, and holiday greeting cards, our children have drawn pictures, made cards, and have written notes.

We have learned that contact is very important. Unitarians in Transylvania are a double minority - ethnically and religiously. Sometimes they feel very much alone. Shortly after the fall of the previous regime, money was pouring in from the west to other denominations. Our partner minister, Reverend Simen, however, has told us that this was short-lived. But the contact with Unitarians abroad has been ongoing. They are very grateful for this.

We would like to send more packages to our friends in Transylvania but this is a problem. Censorship is very real. Packages often do not reach

their destination, or might be taxed by Romanian custom. Sometimes, letters do not either. We try to overcome this difficulty by sending small size packages with visitors during summer.

We admired the beautiful traditional needlework of women in Transylvania. Someone pointed out that some of the women needed reading glasses which they could not afford. So we made an appeal to our church members. 48 pairs were collected and sent through a visiting group. Even the Romanian border guard needed a pair of glasses and was quite happy to get one as a gift.

Our main activity as partner church is fund raising. It has become a tradition to have a **fund-raising Transylvanian dinner** each year. We serve authentic Hungarian dishes, such as goulash or chicken paprikash with noodles, cucumber or cabbage salad. For dessert we serve strudel (using phyllo dough.) We usually hire a **Hungarian folk-dance** group who, also teach some simple dances to the guests. And while we raise the much needed money for our partner church, everyone has a good time. We enjoy the camaraderie while cooking and baking together in the church kitchen.

Another yearly fund-raiser is a **jazz concert**, which is very popular. We hire 4 or 5 musicians known in the jazz world, and serve beverages (cash bar), and nibble food. This is always a most successful fund raiser.

We have also had an **auction**, which is a lot of work, but does bring in a good return. We auction items, services, dinner parties, whatever contributed by our members.

A book shop is an on-going and profitable enterprise. Our members contribute their books which we resell for a nominal charge. After a slow start, now we have a steady income from these sales. We recently sent \$1500 to our Partner Church representing just 8 months sales of books.

We have also served **soup after service**, on the Sundays when a congregational meeting is held. Having a kind of lunch before a long meeting is convenient for our church members and provides some income for our Partner Church.

One of the highlights in our partner church relationship was the **visit of our partner minister**, Reverend Domokos Simen and his wife, Eva. Our church purchased their tickets and paid for all expenses. Church members provided home hospitality. We took them to a few days sightseeing trip starting with New York City and down to Arlington, Virginia where we were guests of that congregation. There were five of us for Judit Gellerd had graciously agreed to spend the two weeks with us and be our translator. While there, we were able to show Washington, D.C. to our guests.

We also joined other Transylvanian Unitarian visitors in Bedford, MA and together went to the UUA Headquarters and to a few UU churches in the Boston area.

While the Simens were with us, we arranged dinner parties in church member's home each night. In this way they were able to interact with many people. It also gave members of our congregation an opportunity to get to know better their partner minister and his wife.

Our visits in Transylvania. One summer, our then minister Rev. Tom Chulak, and his wife Diane, had their first and last pilgrimage to Transylvania, to Tom's ancestral land. [Diane died the following year]. The next year I followed their example - for Romania is the land is also of my ancestors.

A Transylvanian visit is an one a lifetime experience. When we first entered the country, I was struck by its beauty, by the green land, two mountain ranges and lovely valleys. I saw people farming the old-fashioned way, by hand. Under the previous regime, the farms were collectivized and after Communism had fallen, the machinery was taken away by the state. Unless farming as much as they can, people would lose their land to the government. For this reason, some of our churches have raised money to buy tractors for their partner churches in villages. Rev. Simen once wrote to me that what separates us is more than an ocean - there are also about 100 years of difference in culture.

Going from village to villages, we got the feeling that we had moved back in time. You see ox-drawn carts on unpaved roads, cows driven from the pastures by man with a whip, cracking it on the ground. It seemed like each cow knew her address. Without any prompting, as a house was passed, a cow would drop out of the procession. We saw women washing clothes in a communal trough. We rarely saw a motorized vehicle.

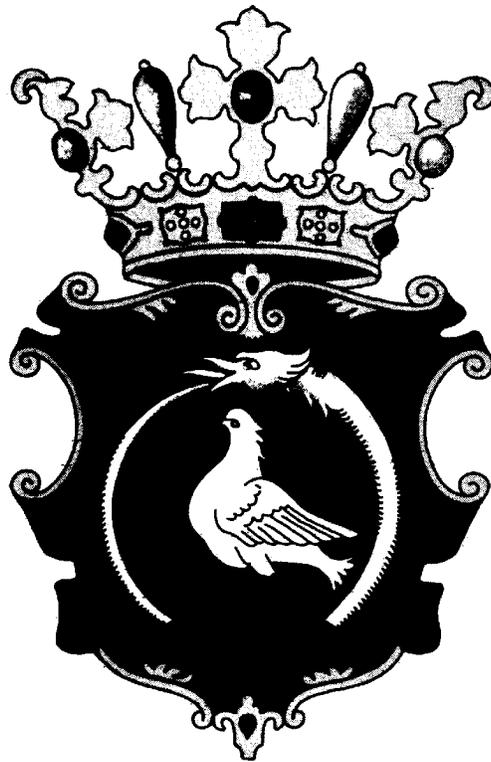
The people we met are just as beautiful as the scenery. We were overwhelmed by their warmth and generosity. They may not have much, but they were very giving. Wherever we went we were greeted with flowers. Tables were set with food and beverages. Often, the children in native costume danced and sang for us. I will never forget this pilgrimage.

In addition to raising money for our Partner Church, we have also contributed to the fund for the English teacher in Kolozsvár as well as to the fund for the Partner Church van fund.

All in all, being paired with a *partner* church in Transylvania has been very rewarding. They say it is better to give than to receive. We who

have been involved in this Partner Church Program have given so little compared to the warmth and gratitude we have received in return. There are times when one gets discouraged for it sometimes takes a long time between our letters and their answers. We have given our Partner Church more than money. We encourage them and keep their hope alive by showing them that we care. You cannot measure that.

[The Unitarian Church of Csikszereda is in a process of building a new church for the 700 member congregation in a traditionally Catholic city. Now they hold their worship service in the parish hall. The UU Congregation at Shelter Rock has decided to substantially assist them in this mighty project. —Editor's note]



The Transylvanian Unitarian symbol (seal)
["Be gentle as a dove and wise as a serpent"]

Building Well and Church

Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Salem, OR and Siménfalva

by Tom Lancefield

It is flattering to be asked to share our experience, but our connection with Simenfalva does not belong to the strong or “great” category. This reflects both the vagaries of lay leadership in Salem, and the less “dire” situation in Simenfalva, i.e., no farm tractors were said to be needed there, compared to some other congregations in Transylvania. We have had a couple of nice and moderately attended events for visitors from Transylvania over the last three years, but no Transylvania dinner nights with Hungarian folk dances, etc. We send and receive two letters per year, on average.

Several gifts have been exchanged, most notably an altar-cloth that was woven by the minister’s late mother in Simenfalva. A member of the Salem congregation first visited Simenfalva in May of 1996 for several days, and a videotape of that visit was ably made by Rev. Farkas Denes. Several Salem members express interest in visiting Simenfalva.

We have tried to raise some funds to help our partner church each year since 1993. The high-water mark so far was 1993, when \$1,200 was taken up in response to our minister, Rick Davis’ sermon on Transylvanian Unitarianism. Since then, transmittals of \$500 to \$600 per year are the norm. We usually allocate about \$100 for support of the minister, and the rest is pretty much unrestricted, but is spent on repairing their church and realizing some of their dreams and needs. Like digging a well or building a bathroom in the parsonage.

Every Sunday in the pulpit our minister wears a stole embroidered by women in Simenfalva. His interest and support have been very helpful in sustaining the connection. Our R.E. director has attempted to start a pen pal program with our youth and theirs, but initial response in Salem was low, and the need and costs of translating have so far discouraged repeat attempts. Slow turnaround-times for correspondence, and somewhat inconsistent acknowledgment of parcels we have sent are frustrating, sometimes.

We are building a new church building, which diverts some energy among our members. Much can be done to invigorate this program at both ends.

Partner Church Program

Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, Virginia with the Unitarian Church of Segesvár [Sighisoara]

The UUCA's Transylvania Connection Committee is part of the Partner Church Program of the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council.

Our partner church is the Unitarian church of Sighisoara. The minister is the Reverend Francis Nagy (pronounced "Nodge"). Rev. Nagy and his wife, Piroska, were visitors here in late summer 1992. Besides his responsibilities with the church in Sighisoara, Rev. Nagy is also the minister to two other small Unitarian congregations in the Sighisoara area.

Unitarian Universalist churches in the Washington area that are involved in the Partner Church Program have formed a Washington Area Partner Church Council which meets quarterly to exchange information on ongoing projects. Churches involved are Fairfax, River Road, Rockville, Cedar Lane and Arlington. The meeting of the Council is always a very lively and informative meeting.

One of the special contribution of the Greater Washington Area Council is the Conflict Resolution Project. Under the leadership of the Fairfax Unitarian church, the Washington Area Partner Church Council is supporting a project to provide expert technical assistance and training in mediation and other conflict management techniques to the Liga Pro Europa ("LPE"), a multi-ethnic group in the city of Tirgu Mures (Marosvasarhely). The LPE has been attempting to improve communication among the communities in the city since the downfall of the Ceausescu dictatorship. If the program is successful in this city, it could offer a model for managing ethnic conflict in Romania.

Our partner Church Program

Segesvár [Sighisoara] is one of the ancient "Siebenburgen" or Seven walled cities of Transylvania. The citadel is on a hill in the center of the town, with a magnificent city wall studded with medieval towers dating from the 14th century. Each tower was built by a different guild - the shoemakers tower, the tinworkers tower, the leatherworkers tower and so on. Within the city wall, streets, houses and plazas date back through the centuries and have picture post-card charm. The town that spreads around the citadel hill is struggling for economic self-sufficiency, showing the imprint of decades of a harsh form of socialist rule. Contact with the West is still limited and American visitors are a relative rarity.

In the several Years of our partnership with the church in Sighisoara, we have had a number of projects:

- Sale of embroideries made by the Women's Association of the Sighisoara church.
- Rev. Kim and Barbara Beach's gift of the James Luther Adams library to the Unitarian Seminary in Kolozsvár.
- Visits of two groups of Unitarian dancers to participate in the International Children's Festival at Wolf Trap. In 1991, the dancers came from Székelykeresztúr; in 1992 from Kolozsvár. Although these groups were independently financed (through the efforts of Barbara Beach and George Lehner), UUCA provided people power to enhance the experience of these young visitors.
- Fundraiser in April 1994 featuring a lecture by poet, raconteur and NPR commentator Andrei Codrescu, resulted in a gift of \$3,000 to our partner church's satellite congregation in Fehéregyháza [Albesti], which is in the process of building a small new church of its own (having previously shared space with a Lutheran congregation). With some materials, land and their own labor already in hand, this monetary gift made it possible to move the building towards completion.
- Pen pal correspondence between 4th graders in the UUCA School of Religion and 9 and 10 year olds in the Unitarian Sunday School in Sighisoara (1993-94).
- Packages and magazine subscriptions as individual gifts from members of our congregation to members of the congregation in Sighisoara.

In addition, there have been a number of visits back and forth, including two visits by Kim and Barbara, one by Eric and Fran Chetwynd, and the visit of Francis and Piroska Nagy to Arlington in late summer 1992.

Making the Small Partner Church Effective

Spring 1997

by Dr. Jean Witman Gilpatrick

Our church is pleased to be included in a group of effective partner churches. We are a small Unitarian Universalist church in the city of Lynchburg, Virginia, which has a population of about 67,000 in central Virginia. In 1990 when our partnership began, our membership was about 90. We now have 96 members. Our preceding minister--the only full time minister we've had--initiated contact with our partner, the Rev. Dezső Fülöp, in a formal letter in December of 1990. And before he had left our church in January 1992, he passed the leadership on to me.

Our partner minister, Rev. Fülöp shares his time between two congregations and farming. Our partner church, Csegez is his smaller church with only 50 members. It is close to Kolozsvár [Cluj].

Following, in random order, are some of the characteristics contributing to the success of our partnership. First and second are energy and motivation. I benefited from getting to know and to hear the vivacious Judit Gellerd and her spouse, George Williams at Collegium as well as at General Assemblies. Their stories of Transylvania energized me, and subsequently other congregation members.

Direct personal contact with the geographical area and with the people there nurtures enthusiasm and motivation. And two couples in our church - one of them my husband Tom and I - as well as our quarter-time minister - visited Transylvania earlier. While our visit happened before the Partner Church program had started, Molly McClenon and her husband had a chance to combine their Sabbatical with a visit in Csegez in 1994. A warm and committed relationship was forged at that trip. And the subsequent correspondence have kept our church related and interested.

A third characteristic is careful organization. There is no substitute for a relatively large—6 to 10 members—strong and committed partner church committee. I was asked to be the first chair, so I hand picked committee members and also asked for volunteers. In 1995 Norma diAngelo and Norma Sleziki served as co-chairs, followed by Pat Bower in 1996. Among active PC committee members are Tom Gilpatrick, now Church membership Chair, three former or acting Church Board Presidents: John

and Molly McClenon, and Ruth Ball, as well as Martha Stimpson, Cindy Zerfoss, Helen Bridget and Jan Goode.

We had no models for setting up a PC committee or how to function. And there were no parameters for the job. We struggled with questions like: Where do we start? Where should we stop? At first the task seemed overwhelming to me as founding chair. Until we shared responsibilities, establishing “positions”, like editor of a Partner Church Program Newsletter, the “PARTNERS”. This is a two-to-four-page bimonthly, attached to our Church Newsletter. The editor is Jan Goode and we have been particularly commended for her work. Our Newsletter is being sent to all newsletter editors and churches who requested it. (There is an annual \$10 fee to be on our church Newsletter mailing list. If you are interested, send you subscription to Church Newsletter Chair, The First Unitarian Church of Lynchburg, VA 24504). We have someone to keep our correspondence, newspaper clippings and other related material and bring them up to date. I, as a retired UU minister play the role of the secretary, doing the correspondence and liaison work. For project we have ad hoc committees.

A fourth characteristic of successful work is long range commitment both within the Committee and by the whole church which voted to establish the relationship. Later our committee asked the congregation to include some continuing financial support. We requested a minimum of \$100 as a line item in the annual budget. We often requested and received more. As other church members and friends became enthusiastic and involved, long range financial commitment was no longer a problem, particularly when the PC committee organized fund-raising activities. The church has sent money--cash-- several times which totaled about \$3,500. This money was designated for a much needed tractor. However, with high inflation and prices going up, our partners still don't have enough money to buy a tractor. So the dollars haven't been spent yet.

Implementation of ideas and communication with church and community members, as well as in a larger denominational structure. The most fundamental, however, is communication with our partner church. Finding translators on both sides sometimes is difficult, but not unsolvable.

And as in everything, luck helps, too. We are lucky being able to visit our partners, and having one member who donated \$1,000 in one fund drive.

Ministerial support can be crucial in building a successful relationship. Our part-time minister, Virginia Knowles had already “fallen in love” with Transylvania on our common trip, sharing the same bus.

Patience, patience, patience. Sometimes we need a lot of patience

in waiting for letters, answers from persons who are much more busy and burdened than we are. Much perseverance is needed from our part as well as graciousness, and finally, dependability.

Our communication included educational activities with talks, slide shows, and Hungarian dinners for church and community.

Setting up pen pal relationships, sending pictures to each other about our lives, church and community activities, Sunday school, etc.

We tried out many ideas, like sending over a variety of seeds for garden flowers and other plants, which did not work, but sending embroidery thread did work for them. Our visiting members took a suitcase of clothing to Transylvania, simple over-the-counter drugs, crayons, pens, chewing gum and candy.

On another occasion we sent a lovely quilted banner made by Nina Schott. Members and friends were all invited to ad a stitch, which increased our congregation's sense of involvement with our partner church. The banner is now hanging in the Csegez church. The McClenons brought back Transylvanian handiwork form our partner church and Martha Stimpson framed them to hang in our church. Ruth Ball photographed them and we made greeting cards to sell. We will send proceeds to our partner.

What we were not able to solve: to receive timely replies. Especially pen pals and particularly children are frustrated by this. We lack sufficient understanding each other's culture and certainly each other's languages. Another frustration is that though we raised large amount of money, yet not enough to buy a tractor - raging inflation, a nightmare for people in Romania, has kept us from realizing this goal.

We are greatly enriched by the partner relationship. Our "success" lies in still being there for them.



Ideas for a Successful Partner Church Committee

by Julie Jose, Spokane, WA

1. Build friendship in your committee. Meetings should be fun with time for personal sharing and perhaps a snack as well as business. You can become an efficient team that organizes a yearly event for your church. Committee members often have enjoyment of travel in common and/or family history from eastern or central Europe.

The Spokane committee wrote a mission statement which we sometimes read to begin meetings. We have played a tape recording of our partner church's bells or its choir to help us feel closer to them.

2. Explain the *how* and *why* of your partner relationship from the beginning to your congregation at least once a year. Newcomers find it interesting and longer term members like the sense of accomplishment that grows as the relationship develops. There is still confusion over where Transylvania is and why Hungarian is the language of partners in Romania. A couple lines of historical information is always helpful. An invitation in your church newsletter to any partner church activity is a good time to describe the partnership.

3. Plan some type of activity/fund-raiser. The Spokane church encourages inter-generational, community-building events, so the partner church committee developed a family friendly evening, featuring a *gulyas* and pastry supper followed by Transylvanian folk dancing - usually a performance followed by dancing for all. A local dance troupe leads our dancing and often provides a video or slides from central Europe. Our committee displays items from Hungary and Romania, photos from our partners, and a history of partnership activities. Copies of P.C. Council newsletters and our district newsletter are available as well as books and videos the committee owns.

4. Travel. People who have visited their partners are often strongly committed to maintaining the relationship over time. Bringing the partner minister to visit the US or Canada brings the relationship to life for the whole congregation. More people are interested in Unitarian history, in the politics and culture of the partner region and in the possibilities of travel. Our committee dreams of an exchange of young people.

5. Projects. The three most exciting things our partners have sent us: Sent us their minister for a month. He did everything from playing soccer with kids to discussing theology and attending General Assembly. It was deeply meaningful for all concerned.

Our partners sent us embroidered hymnal covers - no two alike - it's like holding hands with them as we sing.

They sent us a girl's folk costume which a girl wears at our dinners and at Easter or other special occasions.

We share with religious education classes slides and objects from visits to our partner church. We tried dying eggs the way it was done in our village. We have sent money, a quilt showing scenes from Spokane, and we have sold sewing from our village and sent the money back. So far two couples from our congregation have visited.

6. Patience. View the relationship as long term. Some years there may not be a particular project. There may be stretches when letters are scarce. Keep writing. Project ideas and interest will flourish when the next visit occurs or during an important event for one of the partners.

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS PARTNER CHURCH COMMITTEE

The partner church committee is dedicated to upholding our shared living Unitarian traditions of freedom, reason, tolerance and love by interacting with our partner congregation in Felsorakos, Romania. We inspire, nurture and support one another across the ocean by sharing our stories.

The mission of the partner church committee is to foster a partner relationship through support, communication and education. Our faith deepens as we put our understanding into practice.



A Seven-Year Experience of Partnership Between Madison, Wisconsin and Nagyajta.

by James S. Gibson

A brief history of our relationship: The congregation agreed to enter into a Partner Church relationship with the Unitarian congregation in Nagyajta, after having a vote on it in 1990. Things progressed slowly at first. However, warm communication from the minister--and finding a way to get the letters translated--helped create a connection.

In 1992, our choir made a concert tour of Europe, after which five of the travelers were joined by the minister of religious education and the emeritus minister, for a visit to Transylvania, where we spent a week with our Partner Church. Since then, six other members of the congregation, separately, have also managed to make at least short visits, some more than once. Here is where the real energy and commitment come from, in terms of keeping the relationship alive; most of the Partner Church Committee folks are people who have been there. A member of our congregation is a native Transylvanian and speaks Hungarian; this is enormously helpful.

In our Partner village, the new minister, and the lay leadership are enthusiastic about, and committed to the relationship. The connection is also strengthened by the participation of the schoolmaster (who is not Unitarian) and from the families who provided hospitality for visitors, and who continue to correspond. We occasionally hear from the retired minister, now living in another village. Communication with the minister now serving our Partner Church is difficult. We know that on some occasions he has sent mail and it has not arrived; we also have been told by other ministers that one-time members of the secret police, having nothing better to do, sometimes read, steal or otherwise tamper with minister's mail. So the practice of only writing when there is a visitor who can carry the letter out of the country for posting seems to continue. However, Rev. Fekete makes an effort to use of FAX and email connections; this is inconvenient for him, but it works.

Partner Church Program Organization: After the 1992 visit we established a Partner Church Committee, which at times consists of 3-4

people, and which meets--or at least connects by phone--monthly, more or less. Our congregation's operating budget provides for the expenses of keeping the relationship going--postage, sending the church newsletter to our partner minister, Council dues, and an honorarium to pay a speaker each year (often someone from Transylvania). All the money that we use for special projects, comes from fund-raisers organized by the Partner Church Committee here, or, with handicraft sales, jointly organized. These extra fund-raising activities need advance approval from the Board.

From the beginning, the leadership of the congregation approved a practice of dedicating one Sunday offering each year to the Partner Church and the Partner Church program. Except for a small portion set aside for collective Partner Church Council projects, the money is given directly to the congregation, to be used for whatever purpose they may choose, in consultation with their minister. The date of this collection has been variable; we are considering the possibility of choosing a predictable date, each year, for this. The last Sunday in September, when Transylvanians celebrate Thanksgiving, might be a good time. Also, when we visit, we donate money to the congregation and to the school, as an expression of appreciation, and also, so that the church can reimburse people for the expenses they incur because of us.

So far, the money we have sent has helped the congregation to purchase a bell, replacing one which recently broke. There was quite a debate about whether it would be better to put the money towards a tractor. Subsequent funds have been used to repair one of the bastion towers, to renovate the parsonage a bit, and recently, we hear, to do some repairs on the interior of the church itself.

Activities and projects: We are a large congregation, with a good bit of turnover in our membership; not everyone is even aware that we have a Partner Church in Transylvania. Not everyone is committed, or even interested. My impression, from my visits there, is that the same situation exists over there as well. Now that the joy of the first outreach, and the initial curiosity have begun to wear off, on both sides there is some critical examination of the relationship. For example, once I had finally gotten conversant in Hungarian, I got into a conversation with some of the church women, who were astonished to hear that we did not have a Bishop, or celebrate communion, or read from the Bible. "You aren't really Unitarians in America, are you!" one woman declared. "Funny you should say that." I answered. Some of the people in our congregation, when they hear that you do read the Bible each week in church, and have communion, and

a Bishop, they think you are more like Catholics and say just the same thing-- ““They aren’t really Unitarians, are they?”” A lively discussion followed, in which everyone agreed that of course Transylvanian Unitarians were real Unitarians, but that American Unitarian faith and practice, although different, was also “real” and served us well. “They are Unitarian Universalists over there.” one woman explained, “so they teach from all the world’s religions, but they are real Unitarians because they all believe in the One God. Right?” I don’t know if I should have just said “Right.” and let it go--instead, I tried to explain that while we all believe in one natural power in Creation, some of us have different ideas about God, and some of us don’t believe in God at all. “How can you possibly have atheists in America?” the women asked, “There is no communism there!”

We have tried several different ways of getting people involved and strengthening the connection between our two congregations. **Pen pals:** These relationships tend not to work out very well; the time lag between letters sent and response is too long, so, in most cases, the commitment soon fades. Still, some of our Sunday School classes have enjoyed making the connection. The exception to this is that correspondence does continue between people who have gotten to know each other through visits. We also have one correspondence that continues although no one on either side has visited; through this, the family in Madison was able to send some medical textbooks to their penpal’s son, who is a doctor. **Craft Sales:** We raised \$1000 to help with medical expenses for the previous minister, by selling things his wife had woven. More recently the Women’s Group has donated craft items to raise money for joint projects. We send half the money to the women’s group, so that the artisans may be reimbursed for at least the cost of the material, and some of their time. The other half we use to help with the cost of exchange visits.

Exchange Visits, Young Farmers’ Training in the United States

Our first visitors from Nagyajta were two young farmers who spent a year as trainees on local dairy farms, after about a month in a Madison family, learning survival English. The process of getting year-long visas was difficult, and uncontrollably delayed their travel. It is too soon to tell if the training on a modern farm will be useful to them, or improve their success at home, but the project certainly sparked interest, and demonstrated a serious intent on both side to work together on something that would connect and benefit both communities. We had hoped this project could serve as a pilot for a larger exchange program sponsored by the Partner Church Council; the difficulty in getting the necessary extended visas

has made this impractical for the time being. However, those who may be interested in trying something like this, through an existing USAID - approved agency, may contact Rev. Ruth Gibson in Madison for more information and support. And we have ideas about other more cost-effective ways to support agricultural education.

While the farmers were with us in Madison, our Minister of Religious Education spent three months of her sabbatical in Transylvania, mostly in the village. The next year we had a youth exchange, one from each congregation, who spent the summer with their partner community. Two older youth were chosen, and as they are now each away from their communities for university study, it is hard to say exactly how the exchange may have strengthened the relationship between the two communities, but I think it did, as well as making a difference in the lives of the young people themselves. For the future, we want to bring the minister and his family of our partner church for a visit, but as he is newly settled in the congregation, he has asked that we wait a bit.

We helped to fund and sponsor the visit of the Reverend Farkas Denes to the United States, and raised a bit over \$1000 for the Pilgrimage Project, to purchase the new van. This was done with one excellent Transylvanian dinner, along with music and dancing, and Denes as guest speaker.

Speaking of dinners, another successful project has been the collection of recipes sent to us from our Partner Church, translated, and tried out here. We may eventually put together a cookbook.

Videotapes: Two of the people who have traveled to Nagyajta more than once are also professional videotape producers. They have produced four half-hour programs of edited narrated tape, with two more on the way. These are used in programs as well as being available from the church library for home viewing. (Sales of these tapes help fund our Exchange programs.) Rev. Gibson has also acquired a collection of Hungarian movies with English subtitles; some of these were shown in a Film Festival series.

Murder Mysteries: A young woman from our Partner Church indicated that the best resource for her growing fluency in English was reading murder mysteries. A member of our congregation has been happy to pass along great quantities, and it appears that they go safely in the mail!

Our most recent project is a **High School Scholarship program**, which provides funds for room and board at one of the two Unitarian High schools for a student from the village--who need not be Unitarian. (There is no tuition fee, but the room and board costs, \$250-\$300 a year, are difficult, even impossible for some families.)

Each year, in the late spring, we publicize the program and ask for 10 families to make a commitment of \$25 a year, for four years. We collect pledges after church for two weeks, and shortly thereafter, collect the first payment. We send the money and the names of the families to our Partner Church, and they select a student to receive the stipend. We ask the student to write to us once or twice a year, so that we can get to know each other.

Each year, we hope to bring in 10 more families, to sponsor one more student. So far we have two sponsorships going. The Partner Church Committee keeps track of who has made their payments, and writes a thank you letter. Every spring, a reminder for the next year's pledge is sent, along with any news we may have about the student.

Reflections: Does the money we send really help? I think it does, since an American dollar can do so much more in Romania than at home. However, it can also get in the way of building friendship and trust between our congregations. I imagine more than one Romanian thinks, when they hear of a Partner Church visit: "Here come the Americans with their money. We'd better go to church this week." Over here, people can so easily drop a check for \$10 or \$50, and feel benevolent--but never bother to find out about who they are helping or how. Also, when time or money get tight, people may complain about spending any more of either on people or projects to which they feel no connection.

We have tried from the beginning not to let money be the center of our relationship, and to this end, some of us have undertaken to study Hungarian, and our Committee tries to be a source of informative and cultural events for our congregation. We give the annual Transylvania offering with no strings attached; this allows our Partner congregation to determine for themselves how best to use it. However, not knowing what the money is used for makes it more difficult to focus the attention of our American congregation; they are less motivated to give. Not knowing how much they can count on, or when it will come, must make it difficult for our Partner Church as well.

Do our visits help? or have we become a sort of intrusion--like rich aunts who have to be accommodated on occasion? But hospitality is one of the gifts our brothers and sisters give us and one of the things we can learn from them. And the visits of members of our congregation to Transylvania are the most effective means we have found to keep renewing interest and commitment. Most of the people who are involved with significant commitment have made visits, or have hosted visitors. On both ends, the people who maintain a connection through correspondence have

almost all been involved in visits.

Also, I think it is helpful in ways that are hard to explain, for people who take freedom for granted to be in relationship with people whose whole lives have been a struggle against oppression. Identifying with Transylvanian Unitarians has helped me to better understand the dynamics of racism in my own country. It works the other way around, too. A Romanian pediatrician, whom I met along the way, never tires of looking at American faces. "I used to think that we looked normal in Romania and you looked strange. But now I see--you look like people who are free and not afraid. And that is normal for you. I hope it will become normal for our children, too."

With all that we have attempted, there has been some success and some failure. Things don't always work out as we expect. But we hang in there, and keep learning. We hang in there, and keep learning and bit by bit the relationship grows. We know that this connection has changed the lives of our brothers and sisters in Transylvania. Our lives are changed, too, and, some of us would say, enriched immeasurably, because of our Partner Church connection.

A NEW APPROACH TO ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE VILLAGES, THROUGH AGRICULTURAL TRAINING

The Farm Exchange project, which we had hoped could be a model for a wider program of exchange, is stalled for the foreseeable future, because it is so hard for the young farmers to get visas. Our government assumes that any unattached young person who comes over here for any length of time, will be so thrilled by the material comforts of American life that they will not return. Our attempts to build relationships with the American Embassy in Bucharest have not been effective, since there is so much turn-over. Romanians with professional and business affiliations can more easily obtain visas, --a young Romanian farmer we met on the farm where one of our guests was placed has no trouble at all getting a visa to come over here and work every few years. He gets it through the Romanian Farmers' Association. Such connections are hard to come by for the Hungarian-speaking minority.

We have learned of an agricultural school in Romania, however, the University of Horticulture and Food Industry, which provides training for Hungarian speaking students, on a schedule which allows for them to continue to work on their farms or at other employment. The University is affiliated with, and organized by, the University in Budapest. Earlier the

Romanian government refused to recognize or accredit this and other Hungarian language schools; however, the new government has recently approved their accreditation. A member of our congregation has visited the school and spoken with its directors; we will be considering scholarship to this school as an alternative to bringing dairy farm trainees to Wisconsin.

The program goes for three years, offering technical education in vegetable, grain and flower farming, as well as in viticulture, wine making, and food technology training, such as meat and dairy processing, and bakery management. The training takes place in Nyaradszerada (Miercuria Nirajului), not far from Marosvasarhely (Tirgu Mures) and serves students from all over Transylvania, who come to study on the weekends. At present, they have about 20 Unitarian students.

Farming is an integral part of Unitarian life in Transylvania. Most Unitarian ministers are also farmers, providing leadership to the church's agricultural committees, which advocate in the community for fair distribution of pasture lands, and may supervise the cultivation of church-owned property, and access to church-owned tractors. Throughout the centuries, Unitarian villages survived the many political pressures to abandon their faith, by remaining isolated in their small farming communities. Indeed, this is one of the reasons for Ceausescu's plan to destroy the villages entirely, flattening all buildings, and resettling and dispersing the inhabitants.

These traditional communities and their farm culture, have been damaged by the previous government, and by the prejudice which still continues to exist. Hungarian villages are discriminated against when it comes to job creation and training opportunities. In addition many skills necessary for family stewardship of the land have been lost in the state-run agricultural system.

The school will be happy to accept scholarship funds designated for Unitarian students. They also could use funds to renovate their building, to purchase books and educational supplies, and to pay their teachers! An individual, a Partner Church group, or a UU congregation without a Partner Church could sponsor Unitarian students in this school. The annual tuition is about \$150.

To fund a Unitarian student, you may send the tuition check to: Banca Romana De Dezvoltare B. R. D. Tirgu Mures Cont. valuta: 1520796062815 and a letter, explaining your wishes to:

Fundatia Bocskai Istvan Alapitvany
4333 Miercuria Nirajului, Jud. Mures
Romania telephone: 011-65-576-057

Or you may contact:

Orsolya Salzberg

3130 Oxford Rd

Madison WI 53705

Tel: (608) 231-2912

FAX: (608) 251-4629

Orsolya can deliver your donation and your message to the school,
as she makes annual visits to Romana.



A Canadian Partner Church Model

By Prof. Barbara Bowmar

The Unitarian Fellowship of Kelowna has been partnered with the small Unitarian church of Csehetfalva in Transylvania since 1994. There are approximately one hundred ninety people in the village. The Unitarian Fellowship of Kelowna too is a small group. When the partnership arrangement was initiated the Fellowship had fewer than fifty members.

The relationship began with the children of the congregations exchanging cards and drawings and the adults exchanging letters.

In 1995 an unexpected opportunity arose for one of the Kelowna Fellowship members to go to Transylvania and to visit our partner church. This opportunity cemented the relationship and for both partners made the relationship tangible and personal. From the Kelowna perspective, the photographs which were shared and personal experiences which were related to members helped to generate significant support for fund-raising activities. In 1996 another member of the Kelowna congregation visited Csehetfalva and was warmly welcomed by the minister and family and people of the village.

The Kelowna congregation has learned that a reciprocal visit by the partner church minister will be made to Kelowna this summer.

Contacts with the Okanagan Hungarian Society have helped the partnership project enormously. The local society has contributed exhibitions of dancing to help fund raisers. They were able to identify a very capable interpreter who has translated letters into English and into Hungarian on numerous occasions. Two members of the Kelowna congregation attend Hungarian language classes twice a week in an effort to learn some language skills.

Fund raising activities or special collections are carried out three times a year. One major activity is scheduled annually and two smaller events usually occur.

A modest salary supplement is being provided to the minister and his family on a regular basis and funds have also been sent each year to the Csehetfalva congregation which have been used to make badly needed re

pairs to their church and to put heat into the church. Funds for Christmas treats for the children of the village are sent annually.

A carving with the Transylvanian Unitarian symbol, made by the partner church minister, has been framed and hangs in the church. A piece of the magnificent red embroidery is also in the church. These items are a continuing reminder to the congregation of the partnership between the two congregations.



The new Unitarian church building in Székelyudvarhely [Odorhei]

Urban Congregation as Partner Unitarian Church of Vancouver - Brassó

by Rev. Dr. Phillip Hewett

When the partner church program was first announced, the Unitarian Church of Vancouver was among the first to put in a request to be paired, and our request was specific. For a long time I, as minister of the church at that point, had maintained contact with the family of the then minister in Brasov (Brasso), whom my wife and I had visited back in 1972, and we sought to make Brasso our partner. As matters turned out, we found that the rapid expansion in the number of Unitarians there had resulted in a second congregation being formed in the city, and it was with this one that we were partnered. We found that although the two congregations were intended to serve different areas of the city, under prevailing conditions it had been impossible for the new congregation to get permission to build its own church, and for the time being they continued to share the existing building with the first congregation. The situation has more recently changed in that permission to build is now available, and they have actually been allocated a site, but current economic conditions make it impossible even to think of being able to afford such a project. Apart from the Romanian Orthodox Church, which receives help from the state, all denominations are facing the same problems, and in practice the only new buildings being erected are financed very largely from outside the country.

I was fortunate in being able to meet the minister of the new Brasso congregation, Ferenc Szasz, at the IARF Congress at Hamburg in 1990 though his grasp of English at that point was scarcely better than my grasp of Hungarian, so a meeting of minds was difficult. In subsequent correspondence, though, the presence of competent translators at each end has eased the process.

Our partnership is quite markedly different from most in that the Transylvanian member is not in a village with a historic

church building, but in a large city and using a shared building. Brasov is the second largest city in Romania and a major industrial centre. Most of the congregation work in factories and live in apartment blocks. In many cases they have come comparatively recently from the countryside as part of the mass movement of population which was actively pushed during the Ceausescu regime, but is in any case a feature of modern life everywhere. The resulting problems for church life are considerable. A much lower proportion of the membership attends church with any regularity than is the case in the villages, and there is no sense of rootedness in the community (there was no congregation in Brasso at all until the present century). The struggle for economic survival under current conditions is much more difficult than in the villages, where people grow most of their own food.

Though in the past the survival of Unitarianism in Transylvania depended primarily upon the viability of the village churches, it would appear that in years to come much more will depend upon the maintenance of strong urban congregations. We in Vancouver, coping with a situation which is similar in this respect though very different in others, can perhaps both teach and learn if we can develop the partnership dialogue to deeper levels. Some of us will be in Brasso this year (1997); it will be my third visit since 1970. We have now raised enough money to be able to assist substantially in the purchase of a modest centre in the new congregation's part of city, suitable for small-scale activities -- a project which is being actively considered.

VI. WHAT & HOW? SENDING MONEY

If your congregation is considering becoming a Partner of a Unitarian Church in Transylvania or Hungary

These are some questions you will need to consider:

- Are you looking forward to, and prepared for a longterm (many years) connection/partnership? (To make this connection and then let it lapse after a year or two would do more harm than good.)

- Have you considered how this partnership will benefit you? Do you know the differences between partnerships, refugee relief, and charity?

- Who are the particular people in your congregation who are interested in this project, are able to maintain the congregation's on-going interest and enthusiasm, and can organize the work? (e.g. those of Hungarian ethnic origin, those who speak Hungarian, those who've studied or worked in Eastern Europe or traveled there, those with abiding interest in Unitarian history, those who've enjoyed participating in other sister/partner connections, those who simply think it's a neat idea) Could any of these people possibly make a trip to Eastern Europe?

- Is there a possible source of Hungarian-speakers to translate a good deal of correspondence--whatever you send and receive? (If your partner minister will be one of the recent graduates, you don't need translator, because the young generation of ministers speak English).

- How much money is a realistic amount to raise for this project, either from your yearly pledges/budget or from occasional Partner Church fundraising events? (Many congregations have found it is comparatively easy to raise US\$1,000 a year, as well as sometimes more for special one-time-only projects.)

- How will this project fit into the life and work of your congregation? (social action? denominational work? education? minister's special projects?)

- The Board as well as the congregation needs to vote on becoming a Partner Church before the actual assignment. Certainly, you can find out about prospect churches awaiting for match prior to bringing the issue before your congregation.

Here are some typical first steps:

- The two congregations, and ministers if there are ministers, exchange letters.

- Both sets of children and/or youth exchange letters, photos, drawings, tapes describing their lives at church and at home. On-going “pen pal” connections are arranged between interested families, or between musicians, treasurers, RE teachers, artists, Board members, etc. about their similar work.

- Both Partners set up bulletin boards where they can display letters, photos, maps, art/craft work, with regular up-dates.

- Transylvanian notecards and postcards are sold in the Canadian/American congregation’s bookstore. (The cards are published by Meadville/Lombard Seminary in Chicago. 10% goes to your Partner Church.)

- A slide show or a video film is made picturing all aspects of your congregation’s life and your geographic area, and sent along with maps to your Hungarian/Transylvanian Partner Church.

- You raise several hundred dollars and arrange for it to be delivered with appropriate ceremony and celebration.

- There are regular reports from the Partner Church Committee/Task Force to your Board and in your newsletter.

- A member(s) of your congregation goes to Hungary or Romania for a week visit. (All congregations have found their partnership truly “takes off” after someone’s visit.)

These are “second steps” (usually in the 2nd or 3rd year):

- Sunday Service and special RE program once every year that celebrates the partnership. (often led by returned visitors)

- The two congregations cooperate in a joint project.

- Religious Education and worship materials are exchanged (music, cloths, plaques, banners, chalices, stoles with Hungarian embroidery; tapes of services, parts of services, songs/hymns in both languages or bell ringing; and regular greetings are exchanged and used in services as well as in newsletters)

- Hungarian and North American social/educational evenings are held each year in both congregations. (slide or video film shows, folk dancing and singing, music, ethnic dinners, handcraft exhibits)

- More of your members visit, or make return visits, to your Partner Church in Hungary or Romania.
- Creating a market for handcrafts (needlework, prints, dolls, carvings, pottery) made by artists in your Partner Church. (This is not simple to do, but it can provide a significant, even life-saving income, especially for single parents and elders.)
- A seminary student from your partner village, city or district is “sponsored” (cost US\$300 per year until they graduate, usually five years) by a group in your congregation. (e.g. a women’s group or men’s group.)

Possible third level steps several years down the road:

- Creating a network of nearby (perhaps district-wide) Canadian/American Partner Congregations for information/idea exchanges and joint projects.
- The Hungarian or Transylvanian church’s minister (or another person--but usually the minister) comes to visit their Canadian/American Partner Church. (Sometimes a congregation member is able to donate a frequent flyer ticket.)
- There is a longterm, large fund-raising drive for a one-time-special-large-project. (e.g. for a tractor, medical clinic, school, church repair, etc.)

If you are a Canadian congregation that has decided to join the Partner Church Program, and/or if you are interested in being the partner of a Unitarian Congregation in Hungary, contact Rev. Gretchen Thomas, 262 Major St, Toronto, ONT, Canada, M5S 2L6. Phone/FAX: 416 - 963 8806. E-mail: gretchen@inforamp.net

If you are a United States congregation that has decided to join the Partner Church Congregation, contact Dr. Judit Gellérd, 1012 Bryant Ave, Chico, CA 95926, Ph: 916 - 895 3222, FAX: 916 - 895 0430. E-mail: gwilliams@oavax.csuchico.edu

OR contact Pat Rodgers, 3182 Isadora Drive, San Jose, CA 95132. Phone: 408 - 926 3799. E-mail: rogers_pat@tandem.com

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Each District has a Partner Church Representative. Please identify that person (since representatives change from time to time) and work with them. They will have invaluable information and insights.

How to Send Money to Your Partner Church

The UU Partner Church Council, in cooperation with the Unitarian Headquarters in Kolozsvár has developed a process for transfer of funds. Please use the form at the back of your PCC Newsletter. When sending checks, it is important to include:

- The name and address of the donor church
- The name and address of the contact person in your congregation who should receive the acknowledgment of delivery of the funds
- The name of the partner church in Romania
- The name of the minister or contact person of the partner church
- The amount designated for the congregation (and the purpose, if designated)
- The amount for the minister's support (if any)
- The amount designated for other persons or purposes

Funds are wired on a regular schedule from our Seattle bank to a bank in Hungary where they are received in US dollars. Judit Geller translates the list of donations and sends to the Transylvanian Headquarters via FAX at the same time day when the transfer of funds is made.

Congregations and individuals in Romania are notified by Unitarian Headquarters in Kolozsvár that funds have been received, and the funds are then distributed directly to the churches or individuals designated. Receipts of delivery of funds are sent to the Partner Church Council Treasurer who in turn sends them to the original donors.

The process of your partner receiving the money can take 1-2 weeks to 2 months. Receiving the receipts takes longer time. The process is very reliable. The PCC assumes the bank fee in the U.S. There is no bank fee in Hungary and no other fees.

The PCC is in the process of determining the most effective system for transfer of funds from North American congregations to Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Inviting Your Partner Minister to the United States

There have been many successful Partner Church-organized visits of Transylvanian ministers and their families, church members and students coming to the United States and Canada. And there will be more in the future.

One crucial step of an upcoming visit is the proper invitation, a condition for a US or Canadian visa.

The following will help you write one for your guests:

1. You should write a formal invitation letter addressed to your guest, (Correct name as it is used in their Passport, address and employment) describing briefly the nature of your connection and motivation for the invitation (Partner Church relationship). The essential statement in this letter is assuming full financial responsibility like this: "All expenses of your visit will be borne by the XY Church. This includes round-trip airplane tickets (travel agent's confirmation enclosed), housing, food and incidentals. "

2. A second, supporting letter should be addressed to :

**Consular Officer
Embassy of the United States
Bucharest, Romania
Non-immigrant Visa Section
APO AE 09213-1315
or FAX: 011 - 40 - 1 - 211 3360**

In this letter you ask:

"We write to ask you to act favorably upon the applications of the following person(s) for tourist visas to the United States: *Names....* For the reason outlined below, we have invited them to be our guests in X city and Y church between ...*date of arrival and of departure* ...to visit our Unitarian Universalist Church and other churches of the denomination, as well as historic and other sites of interest in our area."

Describe briefly the Partner Church program and your involvement in it, as well as your guest's job, position in Romania. Use the Roma

nian name of your partner church!

Describe your earlier trips in Romania (if any) and the hospitality which you wish to return. Also mention mutual benefits for the two congregations.

Financial responsibility statement here again (see in the Invitation letter), adding this: "Moreover, we wish to inform you that all members of this group (you invite) must return to Romania after their stay because:

a. Rev. XY as a minister serves a needy congregation in..... and fully intends to continue his ministry there

b. Rev. XY is responsible for home (and family), elderly parents, children, etc.

c. Mrs. is actively employed as...

d. Neither of them speak any English (if it is the case) and thus would be totally lost if they remained in the USA

e. Neither of them could afford to remain in the USA because our church" (name) financial commitment is for the limited time-period mentioned, and that period only.

We hope this letter provides sufficient information to enable XY to obtain the necessary tourist visa."

Signed by the UU Minister and other members of the Board.

Send a set of the two documents to the invited guest and one to the US Embassy in Bucharest. Or, send two original copies in two envelopes to the applicant to take them personally to the Consulate.



VII. GENERAL PROJECTS

Help the Youth, Help the Future!

Many UU Churches have been supporting their Transylvanian Partner for many years. Some churches have now their real need met. It is time to think of sharing some of your precious resources with other Projects than your own Partner Church. Besides a certain demoralizing effect of the increasing inequity among churches in Transylvania, the Seminary and other Youth Projects as well as humanitarian and educational needs have no real structure of support.

Please, consider joining in support of some of the following projects:

How to Help the Unitarian Youth of Transylvania?

1. Contributing to the food package of the Seminary Students at Kolozsvár [Cluj]

The 30+ Unitarian Seminary students' \$30-40 monthly food package (one hot meal a day) is unaffordable for most of them. The Church and the Theological School's subsidies are possible only with our help of \$400-500 per month for all the students for eight months. The Partner Church Council, the UUMA and the Center for Free Religion have provided substantial help for them. Now the economic situation of the country makes this need even more crucial.

2. Contribution to Meadville/Lombard Transylvania Projects:

• SUMMER SCHOLAR Project for Unitarian Seminary Students

Introduced in 1996 by Dean Spencer Lavan, the program was a great success. Four Unitarian Seminary students were invited to Meadville/Lombard for a month intensive courses, followed by a month of internship arranged with four UU Churches. The student also participated at GA.

Because of lack of funds, the program was canceled in 1997. We hope that with your help, this most meaningful form of advanced study will be a possibility for 1998.

• ENGLISH TEACHING PROGRAM at the Theological School in Kolozsvár

This program was initiated and sponsored by Meadville/Lombard Theological School and Berkeley First Unitarian Church. For six years now, three English teachers: Michael Burp, Mary Geran and currently Rev.

Scott Prinster have taught English to Seminary students and church members. This is probably the most successful PCC-related program, resulting a young generation of English speaking ministers.

Please, continue supporting the program which is struggling with finances.

3. Sponsoring Village Students in Two Unitarian High Schools

The first classes of the two Unitarian High Schools in Szekelykeresztúr and Kolozsvár will graduate this year. UU churches generously supported the schools, especially in providing money for boarding facilities, equipment, computers, music keyboards.

More and more UU-s are sponsoring children from villages who are talented, but their parents cannot afford the town's boarding school costs. \$200-250 per year per students for five years program would be a great investment in the future of the church. These children are being trained, in addition to the high school curriculum, in church music, religious education, four languages and computer literacy.

4. Donate a Computer to the Theological School and to Seminary graduates.

Seven years ago we brought a large and a small desktop publishing system to the seminary students and George trained them in desktop publishing. Since then they regularly publish their own student newspaper, the ZIZI. The quality of their writings makes this paper highly prestigious. A few talented students--lead by Janos Kriza--are now typesetting the church's periodicals and books published by the church.

Students who have become computer literate, using e-mail, will lose their access to computers with their graduation and moving into village parishes. To provide them with a computer (and modem)--minimum 386 IBM compatible--is crucial. We plan to create a computer network among them and us. Especially laptop computers—even 286 laptop are greatly appreciated. Your donation is tax deductible through the Center for Free Religion.

5. Support the Transylvanian Youth Movement

Seminary students are the organizers and leaders of the Unitarian Francis David Youth Alliance. They are the church of the next century. For their organizing activities, summer conferences, children' summer camp and many other projects, they need our help.

We are raising \$1,500 to buy a used van for the Youth organization to help them connect with each other, to participate in regional programs. For most of the young people live in isolation in villages.

Support for Old People Sponsor a retired minister or widow!

The endowments and pension funds of the Transylvanian church were confiscated by the state. Now, though lacking resources, the church is responsible for its retirees who try to subsist on \$10-30 a month. We encourage individuals and churches without partner churches to “adopt” a retiree and support them morally and provide with a minimum financial relief. A few such relationships are most rewarding. Ms Jeanne Kilpatrick from the Unitarian Church of Bellevue, WA has been helping Ilona Benczedi, former secretary of the Bishop for four years. Ilona could not subsist without Jeanne’s help because she has become blind at old age.

THE CENTER FOR FREE RELIGION IS SEEKING HELP

The Center for Free Religion was able, for nine years, to respond to various emergency needs and worthy—but not funded—projects, because of a few faithful and generous supporting friends. It is so meaningful to be able to alleviate suffering, prevent disaster with just a little money. A minister’s young wife is suffering from breast cancer - they have two small children. She desperately needs a special chemotherapy that had spectacular results for other patients. It is a matter of a few hundred dollars to get the life-saving medicine in time, because they are available in Romania. They call us... We call others... Money is on its way... And she gets the medicine next day.

Thank you all our friends for being partners in saving lives!

The Center has run out of money, but the expectation to assist partner churches at both sides of the Atlantic, is constantly increasing. George has half retired, so our budget is no longer adequate for the level of our usual gifts.

The Center for Free Religion gratefully accepts donations for emergencies, humanitarian and cultural-educational needs. Donations are tax deductible and we provide the necessary certificate.

<p>Co-Directors: Dr. Judit Gellérd & Prof. George M. Williams 1012 Bryant Ave., Chico, CA. 95926 Phone: 916-895-3222. FAX: 916-895-0430. email: gwilliams@oavax.csuchico.edu</p>
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IX. WORSHIP MATERIAL, MUSIC

Materials Helpful in Designing Worship About Unitarians in Eastern Europe

Compiled in March 1996 by the UU Partner Church Council
Executive Committee

Many UU congregations have a tradition of holding special worship services to remember and celebrate Unitarianism in Eastern Europe. Some use this occasion to have a special collection taken to aid churches in Transylvania, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The annual Flower Communion service is a wide-spread practice in UU churches.

Possible dates for such a service:

There are specific calendar connections: Whenever you hold a Flower Communion service - usually in **June** and in connection with a Religious Education or Children's Sunday. (The first Flower Communion was on June 4, 1923, as part of a Children's Festival. Also Norbert Capek (1870-1942) was born on June 3.)

On one of the four most important holidays for Unitarians in Romania and Hungary: Easter, Pentecost (the 7th Sunday after Easter), Harvest/Thanksgiving (the last Sunday in September), and Christmas. On **November 15** Francis David's death is remembered. **January 6-13** is the anniversary of the Edict of toleration at Torda. It is an excellent time for such occasion when members of your congregation are departing for or returnign from a trip to Eastern Europe and visiting Unitarians there.

Possible participants in such a service: Besides church members, you can also invite friends who have Eastern European connections--who have ancestors or relatives there, who travel or work there, who teach related subjects, who speak their languages, who have themselves lived through similar political upheavals. Invite musicians. Members of IARF, IALRW, IRF, and EUU. Contributors to UUSC, USC Canada, and UU-UNO. Social Action, Religious Education, and Worship Committee members are good resurce persons.

Materials: The PCC tries to collect worship material on the subject. If you have materials that have worked well for you, please

the PCC, send to (e-mail is the most useful form) to Gretchen Thomas, 262 Major St, Toronto, ONT, Canada, M5S 2L6.
Phone/FAX: 416 - 9638806; e-mail: gretchen@inforamp.net

Flower Communion materials:

Prayer: # 723 and 724

Religious Education Materials: "Around the Church, Around the Year" p.28-9 (There must be others!) Help in designing Flower Communion worship: May 1990 CLF "Quest" "The Flower Communion," an out-of-print publication (#5276004) of the old Worship Resource Office of the Department of Ministry full of fascinating and clarifying history of Czech Unitarians and Capek that some longtime Worship Committees and ministers have in their files.

Czech composers: Dvorak, Janacek, Smetana, and Cernohorsky

Children's Story: Bishop Norbert Capek: "A Live Communion" from *A Stream of Living Souls*, Vol.II by Denise Tracy (see Addresses)

If your service focuses on Transylvanian Unitarians

Hymns: New Hymnbook: #37, #56, #322, #352

Choral music:

*Transylvanian Unitarian composer, Bela Bartok (1881-1945)
Hungarian Folk Songs

Transylvanian Unitarian composer Bela Bartok (1881-1945)--Three Hungarian Folk (performed at UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, Manhasset NY in January 1995)

*Hungarian composer Zoltan Kodaly (1882-1967)--*Psalms 121 and Psalm 114* (performed at UU Church of Arlington VA in February 1995)

*Choral version of This Is My Song #159 (performed at UU Congregation, Milford NH in November 1992)

Taped music:

*The (Christmas and Easter) Chants of the Reformation in Hungary performed by the Debrecen College Choir, Sandor Berkesi, director. [Magyar Protestans Enekek, A Debreceni Reformatus Kollegium Kantusa, Berkesi Sandor vezenyel] Hungaroton MK 12665, 1988 (Gretchen Thomas has a copy. There is no copyright.) Every week for 425+ years congregational singing that sounds like this has rung forth in 160+ Transylvanian Unitarian churches.

*Old Testament Psalms ["Otestamentom"] as translated by the most prominent Unitarian poet Miklos Fazakas (1548-1592) and set to melodies from the 16-17th centuries, Jewish dances and Central European folk mu-

sic played on authentic instruments. The tape was professionally recorded by renowned Hungarian musicians in the fine acoustical space of the Second Unitarian Church in Budapest, Hungary. (Gretchen Thomas has copies for \$10 (US or CAN) she distributes to help the Budapest II congregation and its Partner Church.)

Congregational singing:

- gathering/opening songs and hymns:
 - The Bell Alleluia (see in Appendix).
 - When the two parts are sung together, it sounds like bells ringing. The bell tower is the oldest part--the 730 year-old
 - Our World Is One World #134
 - Come, Come, Whoever You Are #188
- hymns mid-service:
 - God Who Fills the Universe #37
 - Thanks Be for These #322 (16th century Hungarian melody)
 - Find a Stillness #352
 - View the Starry Realm #28
 - Bells in the High Tower #56
 - We Sing Now Together #67 (for a Thanksgiving service)
 - Let Freedom Span Both East and West #148
 - Light of Ages and of Nations #189 and #190
 - Faith of the Larger Liberty #287
 - Sing Out Praises for the Journey #295
- closing hymns and songs:
 - Spirit of Life #123 in Hungarian and English (in Appendix)
 - This Is My Song #159
 - We Are Not Our Own #317
 - Rank By Rank Again We Stand #358
 - The Szekely (Szekler) Hymn
 - (translation by Rev. Nagy Ferenc and George .K. Beach)
 - Who knows the pathway where hard fate shall lead us,
 - What gleam yet pierces through the dark of night?
 - Still lead your people once more to their glory
 - On legend's starpath, Csaba, prince of light.
 - Small band of Szekelys, battered as an old rock
 - Faithfully standing in the plain, we saw.
 - We're inundated by a hundred storm-floods.
 - God, save our homeland, Transylvania!"

Children's story /story for all ages:

See "The First Transylvanian Unitarians: Francis David and King John Sigismund (based on the "Francis David Story" by Heather McDonald and included in the Pilgrimage lesson in *Holidays and Holy Days* published by Brotman-Marshfield, 1983 and 1986)

Readings:

Hymnbook Responsive Readings #465, #566 (by David Ferenc), #569

Many readings can be found in "*Ending the Storm: UU Sermons on Transylvania*" compiled by Judit Gellerd.

The Decree of Religious Tolerance--known as The Edict of Torda--enacted at the Diet of Torda in 1568 by King John Sigismund of Transylvania: "His majesty reaffirms that in every place the preachers shall preach and explain the gospel, each according to his understanding of it, and if the congregation likes it, well; if not, no one shall compel them for their souls would not be satisfied. But they shall be permitted to keep a preacher whose teaching they approve... [No one] shall abuse the preachers on account of their religion... nor allow any to be imprisoned or removed from his post on account of his teachings, for faith is the gift of God."

The Transylvanian Unitarian affirmation in Judit Gellerd's translations:

"I am a Unitarian,
I live and work in this faith.
Jesus is my guide
And God is my help.
We are all brothers and sisters,
Our law is one: love.
The goal of our work is shared:
a happy land - God's Kingdom."

A traditional affirmation:

"Where there is faith, there is love,
Where there is love, there is peace
Where there is peace, there is blessing.
Where there is blessing, there is God.
Where God is, there is all we need."

Sermons:

A wonderful source of materials for sermons is "*Ending the Storm: UU Sermons on Transylvania*" Volume II, compiled by (and available quickly from) Judit Gellerd.

Special offerings:

(take the offering as close to the end of the service as you can, definitely after the sermon)

“Today we have the opportunity to contribute to a special offering for the Unitarians in Eastern Europe whose stories you have just learned. Writing a tax-deductible check, marked Transylvanian Unitarians, is how we can each do far more than simply watch. Our contributions can sustain the heartbeat of these unique Unitarian communities...”

Quotes for orders of service:

Jesus's most important teaching according to David Ferenc, the founder and first Bishop of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church was “Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” (Bible: Matthew 10:16) A peace dove encircled by a snake is the symbol of Transylvanian Unitarians. It is a symbol that focuses on how to deal with your enemies--wisely, cleverly and peacefully.

“Our faith can give us wings to fly above the clouds of darkness.” (Atilla Csongvay, minister in Szentgerice, died young).

“Help sometimes can have a twelfth hour. Our time is close to this. If we don't make a move, we soon will find ourselves buried under the Balkanic earthquake....Nobody is looking to rescue us. But we know that through our Church the world's eyes are upon us. We want to believe these eyes are not blind.” (Rev. Domokos Simen, 1992, Csikszereda).

“We can suffer deprivation together, but if we do not strengthen our church we will lose our community.” (Dezső Jenei, Lay President of the Transylvanian Church)

“If our arms are full of gifts, how can we embrace?” (sermon title)

“For forty years we were sick with fear. Then last winter we rose up, sick with courage. Today we are a people who must re-learn how to dream.”

Suggestions for aesthetics:

A coffee-hour table of attractive resource materials, maps, handcrafts and interesting, informative handouts will extend the effectiveness of your worship. A fine bibliography of materials on Transylvania in English is available for \$3 US from Richard Beal. Ask also about the professionally produced video and information on UU travel to Transylvania that Richard has produced.

Judit Gellerd has an excellent video about traveling to Transylvania to visit one's Partner Church.

If you want the flowers for the service to be symbolic: Sunflowers are the symbol of the Capek Unitarian Church in Prague. Tulips are the Hungarian freedom symbol and often appear in traditional embroidery. Carnations symbolize the Protestant Reformation.

Addresses:

Rev. Richard Beal, 809 So. 4th Street, Louisville KY 40203
church phone (502)-585-5110

Dr. Judit Gellerd, Center for Free Religion, 1012 Bryant Ave.,
Chico CA 95926 phone: (916)-895-3222 fax :(916)-895-0430
e-mail: gwilliams@oavax.csuchico.edu

Rev. Gretchen Thomas, Gretchen Tomas, 262 Major St,
Toronto, ONT, Canada, M5S 2L6. Phone/FAX: 416 - 9638806; e-
mail: gretchen@inforamp.net

All hymns are from new edition of the "Singing the Living
Tradition"



One of Transylvania's Gothic chalices

X. LITURGY AND ORDER OF SERVICE

The Meaning of the Communion for Transylvanian Unitarians of Today

By Rev. Dr. Imre Gellérd. Translated by Dr. Judit Gellérd

The Lord's Supper can be understood as a real or imaginary communion with the intuited divine. Even historically this is our most popular service. The number of participants at the Lord's Supper is usually two and a half times than the average church attendance. What is the explanation for this?

The roots of the Lord's Supper are very deep. The Communion fulfills certain spiritual needs that just nothing else can do. The second reason is that this is our only permanent service. While baptism, confirmation, marriage, and funeral occur a single time in one's life, the Lord's Supper recurs four times each year. In this service church members have a certain active participation and this is always attractive. We could also argue that the Lord's Supper is our most concrete service; this is not only about abstract ideas and words, but actually about bread and wine, that is, tangible conditions. Simple people are more moved by concrete things than by the abstract.

The communion has also a certain compensatory character today. People who neglect or lack the conditions for church attendance, try to make up for. And, finally, the popularity and prestige of the Lord's Supper is greatly increased by the special opportunity for us to face ourselves inwardly.

. . . As far as the Lord's Supper is concerned, the Unitarian position seems to be the closest to early Christian principles. Jesus clearly said: "Do this in memory of me". Therefore the Lord's Supper is an act of remembrance, or condition to bring up memories. Like pictures left by our parents who passed away. The Lord's Supper is also a picture in which

Jesus's face is shining back to us. Jesus is asking, calling, evoking devotion, urging, and opening a whole world before us: the world of love, of purity, of joy for being in the divine, in the light of values, of God's kingdom.

The Lord's Supper pertains rather to psychology than theology. It starts a fertilizing process of association in us which leads eventually to value transformation. Remembering Jesus and his teachings reminds us of our commitment to follow his example. This then urges us to evaluate our spiritual life and to meditate upon our moral weaknesses. It gives us an opportunity to affirm what is positive in us. At the same, time it creates the psychological conditions for repentance and change, for forgiveness, for purifying ourselves, for becoming better human beings, for getting closer to the divine, and eventually to divinize—to become divine in spirit. The Lord's Supper is not only the first, starting step of this process, but it is the acting forth as well. It is the divine spark which starts positive changes and it is the fuse which leads to the explosion of right actions.

The communion is the starting point: stepping onto the path. It won't bring miracles or automatic salvation. It is just the way toward the divine, toward perfection. And it is not a stairway either. It only guides us, but we have to walk on the path, make personal effort.

Preparation for the Lord's Supper has a great capacity for growth. It is the sacred moment of being face to face with ourselves, [our consciences], when we renew our commitment to follow the path. It is a communion with the divine and with our neighbors: a communion of ourselves with our highest values. Jesus invites us to sit at the table and eat and drink, absorb these higher values of spiritual growth so that we can prepare similar tables for others.

The elements of the Lord's Supper are the bread and the wine. Religious history provides us with plenty of reasons for this. Throughout human history, many associations have been linked to the notion of bread and wine. Two theological problems will be address:

1. What did Jesus' affirmations represent when he compared himself to bread and wine? Are our theological associations the same as those associated by early Christianity?

2. What is the basis for us to reject the theory of transubstantiation and consubstantiation? Is religious experience enough to reject these theories?

From a practical viewpoint the following questions arise:

- a) Are there any criteria about the quality of the wine and bread?
- b) Is cutting or breaking the bread is more expressive?
- c) Which method is better: the common chalice or individual cups?

d) In the past the woman was praying while she was baking the bread for this occasion. The same rule applied to the minister who prays before cutting the bread.

e) Can Unitarians talk about the validity of the Lord's Supper?

As we had already mentioned, from a Unitarian viewpoint the bread and wine are symbols and, as such, cannot be underestimated. However, they are not creators of the desired change but rather its material elements; they are not a goal but a means for change.

Time of the Lord's Supper

According to Tertullianus the ancient Christians partook communion each day, and later each Sunday. According to Heltai, Unitarians in the 16th century partook it six times each year, but at people's request even more often. The custom of four communions yearly started relatively early in our church.

From the position of religious psychology, the best time for the Lord's Supper is the time which is optimal for religious experience. According to some psychological works, the morning hours facilitate intellectual and theoretical activities, the afternoon the volitional and the evening hours the emotional, introvertive or spiritual functions. If we follow this pattern, we should have the communion in the evening, like the ancient Christians did. But we follow the tradition of the church which administers communion in the morning worship service. However, social demands might dictate other times.

The place of the Lord's Supper

The natural place of the communion is the church, but occasionally it can be a hospital, home, prison or in nature. According to our religious precepts, there are no sanctified places privileged by God. The main criterion for the place is that it be inspiring—but at least not to disturb devotion. Disturbing circumstances should result in suspending communion.

Preparation of the Lord's Supper

Preparation of the Lord's Supper is an extremely important task with a great responsibility upon the minister. It has two aspects: the ministers' own preparation and preparing his church members. Ministers have a twofold responsibility: liturgical preparation and their own inner, spiritual preparation. It basically consists of a conscientious intensification of his continuous self-pastoration. During the week of the Lord's Supper, ministers should live an intense spiritual life, pray much more often, read the Bible and avoid any disturbing situations which would violate their devotion and inspiration. This is the time for the minister to analyze his [or her] faults

and shortcomings, feel repentance and find the way out of them. He does it not in isolation but along with his congregation.

Though the two preparations are happening simultaneously, they are not the same in their method or objectives. From the pastor is required much more than from the flock.

Preparation of the congregation starts with the worship service just before the holy week starts. The minister announces the Lord's Supper at this occasion. Preparation is continuous for the whole week. Its methods include counselling, occasional prayers, Bible-study and other religious practices. The minister calls the congregation to listen to the sound of the church and pray. The minister should study the relationship among church members and must do anything possible to reconcile them among themselves. The great minister Ferenc Balazs made copies of the program of preparation and distributed it to all the members, asking them to post it on the most visible wall of their homes. (It is also a very efficient way of the Presbyterians to have daily short prayer services in the church.)

The minister should preach a so-called faith-strengthening sermon the Sunday before, which prompts people to self-examination and repentance. The minister must safeguard over the week and keep it undisturbed. In every contact with church members, he should remind them about the holy week"and that the Lord's table is waiting for them.

The worship service of the first day of the feast must also serve spiritual preparation. Though the sermon is dominated by the theme of the feast, the Lord's Supper should be in its focus.

The tablecloths of the Lord's table and clenodia [chalice, etc.] must be cleaned, and the bread and wine must be properly prepared.

The communal homily [in Hungarian called the *Agenda*]

One of the main moments of the Lord's Supper is the special homily before the communion. Etymologically, the word *Agenda* comes from the Latin *ago* which means action, remembrance, effect. Even the word suggests its goal. But let us analyze it:

The *Agenda* especially reminds those who come to the church on the first day of the feast, but had no time or opportunity for spiritual preparation. The ultimate goal of the homily is expressing the communion-character of God-human relationship. This is the place and moment of being face to face with ourselves and before the divine. The moment of experiencing the divine, comprehends that transcendent presence and closeness. It is a religious experience, a vision of Mount Horeb, a drama of Bethel. It is the entering the divine and letting God enter our lives. The homily ex

presses this experience of communing. Certainly the minister has to compose this experience within himself first of all. If he is capable, the homily is a matter of a simple transfer.

Another goal of the homily results in communion with ourselves. We create wholeness within, re-balancing, regaining our integrity and reconciling ourselves with others.

The homily should preach Jesus. Not as a mere historic personality, but as a present ideal. He is also the way to the ideal. . .

The words of the Lord's Supper are not "remember my death", but "do this in memory of me." So we rather focus on his life and teachings, his humanity, and the wholeness of his personality. We don't deny the power and significance of his death, however, his impact is not to be found only in his death. Actually death is a part of life.

The homily should help people get closer to each other. The common table, common chalice and common bread, and the physical closeness of people all suggest that. The symbol not only expresses but obliges everyone. The homily reaches into the depths of the spirit and portrays people in their social relationships. It emphasizes sister- and brotherhood. Love those who are standing right near you, demolish the walls that divide us, accept others as they also accept you.

The homily goes further. It must prompt people to action, to value accomplishment, to service for country, church, and humanity. It also must stimulate sacred emotions, shake us up, cause a maximum inner tension, and release certain crisis in the joyful moment of the ritual.

The homily and following prayer are also a form of confession of our weaknesses. They call people to confess in secret their negative feelings and behaviors—to bring them before God. The minister must be a master, an artist of this moment, to guide in this "crying out" process. It must bring healing instantly. Ministers should study psychology and become like psychotherapists to a certain extent.

The minister must be careful and not be harsh in criticism. He rejects evil as such, but not people who err. The judge is God not the minister. The homily must be a healing tool. The minister must know his people's spiritual wounds.

Gratitude must be a part of homily. As to formal criteria concerning the homily, it is quite different from the sermon. The homily focuses on the Lord's Supper; it is affirmative and not analytic as the sermon can be. It has a deeper psychological potential. We can say that while a sermon is an oratorical act, the communal homily is characteristically a prophetic one.

The homily has also a biblical text, which is less important than in the sermon. The homily is short, it shouldn't be longer than ten minutes.

Prayer before the Lord's Supper

The prayer comes naturally if the minister has been preparing for the Lord's Supper. The prayer should be a lyrical, emotional continuation of the homily, a final accord of communion with the divine, a dramatic moment of facing the divine and ourselves.

The main element of the prayer is giving thanks and praying to be able to keep the accomplished values in ourselves.

The Order of worship service and of the Communion

(at Easter, Pentecost, Fall Thanksgiving, Christmas Sunday)

1. **First hymn** (standing)
2. **Invocation and greetings** (by the minister from the pulpit)
3. **Call for worship** (by the minister from the pulpit) "Blessed be our Lord, the one God, who guides us to this sacred house. Come, sisters and brothers, dedicate this day to holy service: working for six days to care for life and on the seventh day to rest in the holy. Let us designate this day for spiritual growth and praise."
4. **Second hymn** (seated)
5. **Short prayer and Lord's Prayer**
6. **Hymn** (continuation of the previous one)
7. **Biblical text**
8. **Sermon**
9. **Free, concluding prayer**
10. **Call for silent meditation:** "God is spirit and those who worship him, should worship in spirit and truth... (Meantime soft organ music)
- (11. Unitarian Creed. On the feast day the liturgy of the Lord's Supper replaces this.)
12. **Announcements**
13. **Closing hymn**
14. **Lord's Supper** (at Sunday of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Thanksgiving)

For the Lord's Supper the minister comes down from the pulpit to the Lord's table.

- *Agenda or short communal homily* [as described before]
- Communal prayer [as described]
- The Minister now takes the plate with the bread, uncovers it and says the traditional biblical words: "Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it..." The minister eats the first piece of bread, serves it to his assist

ing lay president and cantor, then administers to the congregation which surround the Lord's table [in Transylvania first men, then women]. The minister goes to each of the members and gives them a piece of bread from the plate.

The bread is cut into 2-3 cm cubes, the crust of the bread is not used. The minister cuts it early in the morning while praying. The bread is piled up in the form of a pyramid.

- The minister goes back to the Lord's table and takes the chalice of wine, and says the biblical words again: "After the supper ended..." He drinks the wine first and then the same order is followed. He carefully wipes the chalice with a cloth after each member. The wine is being replaced by the lay president using a special *clenodium* for this purpose. Only the minister may administer the Lord's Supper.

- After this a short prayer follows. During communion the rest of the congregation keeps singing special hymns for the occasion.

15. **Benediction**

16. **Closing, parting hymn**

The leftover bread and wine are taken to the parish by the members of the Consistory (*Presbyterium*). They greet the minister's family and each other and they eat the bread and drink the wine more casually along with the traditional sweet bread (*kalacs*), which is being baked in each house.

Recently the ancient tradition of wearing national folk costumes for the church worship service of feast days is coming back. People of each village who live far from their homes come home from all over the country for this day to partake Lord's Supper. This day is a great reunion day; churches are filled everywhere. Outside of the church after worship service, the minister greets the homecoming people and reads the gospel of the week before they leave for their homes for lunch.



Rev. Dr. Imre Gellérd (1920-1980)

Esti Dal

Kodály
(1938)

Lassan (♩ = 60)

Soprano: Er-dő mel-lett est-vé-léd-tem, Su-bám fe-jem

Alto: M

Tenor: M

Bass: M

M

(Lehetőség Gesz-tén)

Soprano: a-lá tét-tem, Ősz-szo-tél-tem két ke-ze-met, Úgy kér-tem jó

Alto: m

6

Soprano: Is-tenémet: Én Istenem, ad-jál szállást, Már meguntam a jár-kálást, a jár-kálást,

Alto: Én Is-tenem, ad-jál szál-lást, cresc.

Én Is-tenem, ad-jál szál-lást, ad-jál szállást

mf cresc.

mf cresc.

mf cresc.

11

17

dim. *p*

A jár - ká - lást, a bujdosást, Az i - de - gen föl - dön lakást. Adjon Isten

f *p*

Már méguntam a jár - ká - lást, a buj - do - sást. M

f *p*

Már méguntam a jár - ká - lást, a buj - do - sást. M

p

a buj - do - sást. M
(bariton) (mind)

sempre dim. e rallent. al Fine

22

Jó éjsza - kát, Küldje hozzám szent angyalát, Bá - to - rít - sa szívünk álmát,

28

pp *ppp*

Ad - jon Isten jó éjszakát, Adjon Isten jó éjszakát, m. m.

ppp *ppp* *ppp*

m. m. m. m.

ppp *ppp* *ppp*

m. m. m. m.

ppp *ppp* *ppp*

m. m. m. m.

XI. BOOKS

The following books on Transylvanian Unitarianism are available. To order contact the Center for Free Religion, 1012 Bryant Ave., Chico, CA 95926. Phone: 916 - 895 3222; FAX 916 - 895 0430; e-mail: gwilliams@oavax.csuchico.edu

• ***Ending the Storm - UU Sermons on Transylvania.*** Compiled by Dr. Judit Gellérd, published by Uniquet and Center for Free Religion, 1996.

President Dr. John Buehrens congratulated us with these words: "The new volume of UU sermons on Transylvania, *Ending the Storm*, is a triumph! Thank you."

It is a highly inspirational and informational volume by illustrious UU ministers and lay writers, about their pilgrimages and spiritually transforming experiences in the magic of Transylvania. It is excellent reading for those who plan a trip and can be used in UU churches for Transylvania Sunday service or other events.

Cost: \$12.00 (+\$1 shipping.)

• ***Early Transylvanian Antitrinitarianism (From Servet to Palaeologus)*** by Prof. Mihaly Balázs of Szeged University, Hungary. This volume is a bombshell in scholarly circles, long-awaited and finally published in English by a German press. You can order from the Center for Free Religion, as we keep a few volumes on hand. Unfortunately the publisher charges \$125.00 (200 DM).

• ***Unitarian Hungarian Catechism*** published in English by *The UU Christian* -- available from the Center for Free Religion (\$6) or the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship, 110 Arlington St, Boston, MA 02116.

• Bishop László Tökés, hero of the Revolution in Romania and Nobel Peace Prize nominee, recently published ***In the Spirit of Timisoara - Ecumenism and Reconciliation.*** This special publication contains the Bishop's historic speeches and other documents, reflecting an era of struggle of a minority for human and cultural rights. Price: \$10.00. (Order from the Center for Free Religion)

• Rev. Richard Beal's ***Partner Church Book*** will soon be published and you will need it. (Order from Richard).



Honorary Doctorates
Given by
Starr King School for the Ministry, May 20, 1994

Center for Free Religion

The Center for Free Religion was founded in 1983 to address the paradox of religion's tension between being a major force for freedom and liberation and its history of contributing to conflict and repression.

The Center for Free Religion reflects the principles of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American Transcendentalist who helped begin the American Free Religious Association in 1856, and of Shinichiro Imaoka, whose Zen meditational practice and Japanese Unitarianism led him to follow Emerson and start the Japanese Free Religious Association in 1926.

CFR works on the assumption that interfaith understanding and cooperation will reduce tensions in any area of the world. And where this occurs, work for peace and social betterment naturally follow. Accordingly, work in interfaith understanding and cooperation is a primary and necessary starting point for world peace and prosperity.

Co-directors George M. Williams, professor of Asian Religions, and Judit Gellerd, MD (specialties in neurology and psychiatry) and daughter of martyred Transylvanian minister Rev. Dr. Imre Gellerd, are currently

focusing most of the Center's work on Transylvania and Hungary. The Center was the de facto coordinator and organizer of an entirely volunteer UU grassroots movement which has now become the Partner Church Program.

The Center for Free Religion is carrying on many programs in Transylvania, from spiritual renewal and psychotherapy workshops to helping those who struggle for real democracy and renewal within church life. CFR has established two foundations in Hungary and Romania with a focus on reconciliation through education and publication. CFR continues -- in complete cooperation with the Partner Church Council -- to raise money for direct relief of struggling churches and families, seminary students and retired clergy, as well as for reconstruction of churches and rebuilding the infrastructure of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church in the post communist era. Some tasks just do not fit into the partnering model.

CFR is sponsoring expanded educational opportunities for students at the Theological school and at two denominational high schools. George Williams introduced academic study of religion and Asian Religions into Hungary's greatest universities. This will lead to greater interfaith understanding and cooperation. The Center for Free Religion's main focus is publication of new Unitarian materials in both English and Hungarian. Further, placing desktop publishing systems and sponsoring workshops on their use has enabled students, cultural leaders, and visionaries to establish a free press. Making sure that the best voices are empowered is a wise investment in the future.

The Center for Free Religion has negotiated with both Hungarian and Romanian Academies of Sciences to archive electronically rare religious manuscripts and publications. The first publication of this archival work will be the catalog of the Transylvanian Unitarian College Library and Archive.

CFR works closely with IARF in its social service network in Eastern Europe. Donations to the Center for Free Religion are tax deductible (501 c).

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