

UUAA Partner Church Program Annual Report for 2017

Submitted by

Phyllis Valentine, Chair

In 1997, the UU Church of Ann Arbor formally voted to establish a formal partnership arrangement with the Unitarian Church in Kézdivásárhely, Romania. This coming year we will celebrate our partnership and are looking forward to that. Our partner church has approximately 100 members, with about one-third of them active. This program supports all 5 core values of our congregation: spiritual life, social justice, community, stewardship, and culture. We share many of the same values as our partners, although there are variations in the way we practice our religions; both partners learn from each other.

We have accomplished two of the goals set out for the past year: increased communication and continued financial support. A combined goal, a visit and Sunday service, from our PC minister Rev. István Buzogány-Csoma and his wife, also a minister, had to be postponed to this fall. Their visit will be an opportunity to celebrate our 20th anniversary in very tangible ways.

Communication continues to be enhanced through Facebook, especially by those who travelled to Transylvania in 2014. That group works together to discuss potential visitors and assist with decisions. Most recently the group participated in promoting a separate fundraiser in late March to help with the purchase of a used mini-van by our partners. We have published several UUAA Newsletter articles about our partners. We continued our financial assistance for a University student (Lestyan Attila), the Kezdi congregation's building search, and for the minister. Attila wrote an article about his studies for the February 2017 Newsletter.

Beginning in November 2015 we added an on-going goal to coordinate our activity with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Blacksburg, Virginia, the new partner of Rev. Istvan's village congregation in Szentivanlaborfalva. We have not been able to further the goal this year, as they too have an interim minister and are occupied with all the work that entails. Rev. Doug Wadkins helped us coordinate with Blacksburg the fundraising for the mini-van project. Thanks, Rev. Doug!

Our goals for the coming year are:

- Celebrate our 20th anniversary of Partnership:
 - Collaborate with the Blacksburg, VA congregation to bring Rev. Istvan and his wife Csilla to the United States for a visit in Fall 2017
 - Work with our ministers to plan and execute a Partner Church Service during Rev. Istvan's visit in order to build on the visibility of this program in the wider congregation.
 - Plan a pilgrimage for Spring or Summer 2018 and/or facilitate travel by UUAA congregants
- Continue regular communication with our partners via Facebook and other means, especially as they develop plans for a church building of their own.
- Continue to engage this year's and previous travelers in conversations about the partnership.