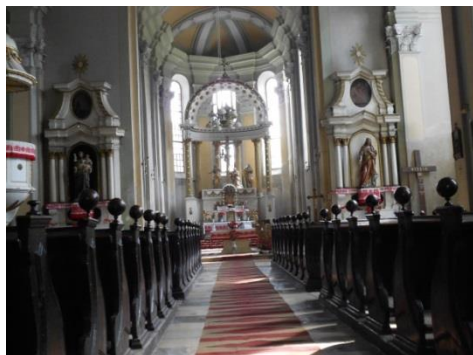


2006 Visit

The UUPCC worked with First U to set up our trip to the partner church. Due to a scheduling problem, our leader Marida Hollos was not able to join the group on the trip. She did manage to go a week before us and was an ambassador to the group who followed. She is pictured in the church that at that time split the men and the women in church seating.



We began the trip at Kolozsvár which is the home of the Unitarian Church in Romania. While there, we visited the Unitarian Church that is home to their Bishop.



The next day we took a short bus ride up into the mountains and came to the village of Turda, where the Edict of Turda was discussed and formulated in 1568. This doctrine established and recognized the equality of the main religions of the time. It allowed people to choose the religion they wanted to practice, in a time when religious wars were prevalent.

Marosvasarhely is one of the great Magyar cities in Transylvania. While there, we visited the Palace of Culture that had impressive gilded and stained glass windows that illustrated local myths. A short walk away was the Teleki-Bolyai library, which contain many first edition books from the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The library also houses a copy of the U.S. Declaration of Independence that was sent to Hungary soon after it was published.

We then made our way into the heart of Transylvania where we toured Sighisoara. This city is also supportive of the work of Samuel Hahnemann, the father of homeopathy. This city was built in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Sighisoara was a free town that was protected by the craft guilds.

The next day we visited the Saxon Fortress church at Biertan which was completed in 1522 and has a sacristy door that was constructed with nineteen locks. It also housed a divorce room where couples who did not want to be married, were shut up into a small room for two weeks. They had only had one utensil, plate, and one cup. It was said that very few people were granted a divorce after that experience.

We arrived at the Unitarian frescoed Church in Szekelyderz. This Church had frescos dated from 1419 that were hidden by fifteen coats of whitewash. The frescos depicted a number of famous battles of the Szekely, who were the guardians of the Carpathian Mountains defending against the tribes to the east.



We arrived in Szentegyhaza on Thursday evening to the warm embraces of our potential partner Church members. We were given palinka, a kind of homemade brandy, lemonade, and beer and toasted to a new friendship. We left the church grounds to the sounds of hoof beats of the many cows who were finding their way home from a day in the pasture. At this point we were brought to our hosts from the village where we began to get acquainted with our new friends.



During the weekend we toured the town of Szentegyhaza. We were first shown the school where their children were educated. In the school complex were woodworking shops where townsmen displayed their woodworking skills. The surrounding rooms held tools and farming implements that have been used in their farming practices.

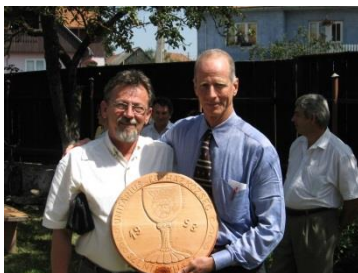


Szentegyhaza is very proud of their heritage and they are working hard to keep their tradition alive. They have their own Children Philharmonic or “Phili” as they call them. The students are taught to play instruments and their group also includes a choir. The Phili is well known for its excellence and is invited to perform throughout Europe.



The Cultural Center houses practice studios for the musicians and includes an historical archive of implements and clothes worn by musicians housed there through the centuries. We also were shown where their tradition painted furniture was made and their many Transylvanian print designs.

Sunday included morning services in their church, which is the bottom floor of the Minister’s home. The services were conducted in Hungarian and included singing, scripture



reading, a homily, and a benediction. The flow of the service is similar to ours, but the readings are biblically based. After service was finished, we were presented with a number of hand-carved plaques and other wooden gifts. We presented our gift and we expressed our appreciation of the hosts’ hospitality. We



hoped to meet again. After services the congregation and our travelers were treated to a hot lunch that was cooked in a kettle over a wooden fire. This was Hungarian goulash at its best! We had a chance to talk to

people either through our three interpreters, the Rev. Kelemen and a few of the congregation who spoke English. That afternoon, we enjoyed a visit to a local thermal pool that soothed the body and the soul.



On our final day, we gathered in the church for a group photo. It was bittersweet to leave our newfound friends. But the trip would long be remembered, for we had experienced so much, from cosmopolitan cities to quaint villages. The memories of the places visited, the unique history of the country, the friendships formed and the partnership being forged made the ride back pensive and memorable.