

## Why do we have a partner Church in Transylvania?

One of the first questions people ask about our Partner Church is: Why is it located in Transylvania? As you may know, [Transylvania](#) is part of Romania today but historically it has been part of a number of European powers and the Ottoman Empire.

The [origins of the Unitarian Universalist religion](#) are in 1568 with the [Edict of Torda](#), a statement



of religious tolerance espoused by David Francis (picture left). In that year, David Francis (Hungarian writing designates the surname first and given name second. This website will follow American convention of given name followed by surname.), a self-declared Unitarian, convinced the king of Transylvania to declare an edict of religious tolerance, the first such proclamation anywhere in Europe. It proclaimed three important principles: (1.) In every place the preachers

shall preach and explain the Gospel each according to his understanding of it; (2.) If the congregation likes it that is fine. If not, no one shall compel them for their souls would not be satisfied, but they [congregations] shall be permitted to keep a preacher whose teaching they approve; and (3.) No one shall be reviled for his religion by anyone; it is not permitted that anyone should threaten anyone else by imprisonment, for faith is the gift of God.

2017 was the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Edict of Torda, establishing religious freedom 52 years before the Mayflower and almost 68 years before Roger Williams.

Our congregation's first effort to find a partner church was in the 1930's. Our Minister at the time, Rev. Lord, was corresponding with a church in Transylvania. As a result of this contact, we received the handmade communion cloth that is now hanging in the Parish House. This promising effort was interrupted by WW II. Efforts to revive connection were prevented by the fall of Romania to Communism.



Our current partnership efforts began in 2004 when a group of interested congregants met with the UU Partner Church Council to determine if we were interested in finding a partner church. After much discussion, we decided to adopt the Unitarian church in Szentgyhaza (Hungarian, Vlahita, in Romanian). Nine members of our congregation visited our Partner Church in 2006. After their minister, Rev. Szabolcs Kelemen and their president Racz, Sandor visited us in 2008; a congregational vote

was taken by the congregation to set up a formal relationship with the Unitarian Church in Szentgyhaza. Additional trips were taken in 2012 and 2015.

Everyone who has travelled to our sister church has experienced the powerful forces that bind us together. The Szentegyhaza congregation has expressed these forces in their generous, openhearted hospitality, their desire to show us their traditions, their willingness to learn who we are, and to teach us who they are.



The warm way we are welcomed by our sister congregation is an expression of our common Unitarian faith. In a 2018 letter from their minister, Rev. Szabolcs Kelemen stated everyone is welcome to visit the partner church.