



Dear American Friends,
Last year has brought great changes in the life of the Unitarian Congregation from Szekelyszentmihaly.

About the new minister in short:

I was born in 1986 in Szovata, a town which is one of Szekelyfold's main tourist centres due to Europe's one of the oldest heliothermal lakes, namely the Bear-lake (Medve-tó). I studied in Szekelyudvarhely and after graduating successfully the Theology University I was appointed assistant minister in Szekelyudvarhely at the Unitarian Congregation Nr. 1. Three years later, I was a youth minister for one year. At present I am trying to get used to both the blessings and the difficulties of life in the country. I do not have a family yet but I am sure it will come in time.

About the Congregation's current state:

After my appointment my primary goal was to put down the foundations of a good community. Major progress has been done in this area during this half year. We organized a number of public work (on which 48 people attended), we fixed the vicarage and the church surroundings, cleaned the cemetery and we renovated and modernized the kitchen of the cultural center as well.

There is an increase in the number of visitors of the church as well (usually 40 to 60 people participate in worship), we re-launched the Women's Association (25-30 people on each occasion), the youth association of 12 members started the active work again. We are trying to organize community-building programs that bring people closer to each other, and enrich the cultural life of our village.

Plans for the future:

Unfortunately, the parish's buildings are in very poor condition, so in the coming years, in addition to the internal construction they also require a lot of external construction.

Five days ago we started the full refurbishment of the vicarage, which according to calculations made by professionals will add up to the total value of 200,000 lei (\$ 62,000). This would be followed by the renovation of the exterior of the church, which will also cost a huge amount of money, so we only start that work if we manage to collect the money for it.

In addition, we are planning to purchase a new car as well. Currently, we have a car in a quite poor condition. Since the parish owns pastures and forests, this involves a lot of purview and driving around, thus we definitely need a new heavy-duty vehicle.

However, besides constructions and purchases, perhaps it is more important to maintain the currently developed good atmosphere in the congregation and to further strengthen the community, as well as to mobilize more and more people with a variety of activities and lead them into the church. Furthermore, we want to strengthen the relationship with the brothers and sisters overseas and by learning from each other, by drawing on each other's examples, our different cultures, yet similar perceptions and the encounter of brotherly love could become fruitful.

I attach some photos to the letter so that not only in words, but also through pictures we could get to know each other.

God bless you, each member of the congregation and I'm hopeful in the blessing of the fruitful common future and in strengthening our relationship.

Respectfully yours,
Tamás Tófalvi