

From Bözöd to Jacksonville

By Donna Janesky, UUC Jacksonville

Was it really going to happen this time? We thought it would be in 2016. Then we made plans for 2017. But each time unfortunate events prevented our Partner Church minister and his wife from traveling from Bözöd, Romania, to Jacksonville Florida. Imagine our excitement when we learned that 2018 would be a go! Yes, they were really coming!

Our relationship dates back to the early 90's when we were first assigned this beautiful 200 year old Unitarian church in the heart of Transylvania, in a small village in the Carpathian mountains. It wasn't until ten years later that people in our congregation began to visit, and experience the generous, warm and friendly hospitality of the people of Bözöd. Through the years we had sent them financial support through special collections, but it was all those Hungarian dinners at UUCJ that actually put some money in our budget, as well as a \$500.00 grant that we received from the UUPCC, for which we are very grateful. Yes, we could do it- and provide an all expenses paid trip for Levente and Angela Fazakas. Levente has 18 years experience in Bözöd, and is his first assignment. And so, they embarked on their very first ever airplane trip from Budapest to Jacksonville. We were fortunate to have one of our church members, Marta Zsemberovzky, travel with them. She speaks Hungarian and actually lives in Bözöd as our Ambassador. I am sure this made their travel experience a bit easier.

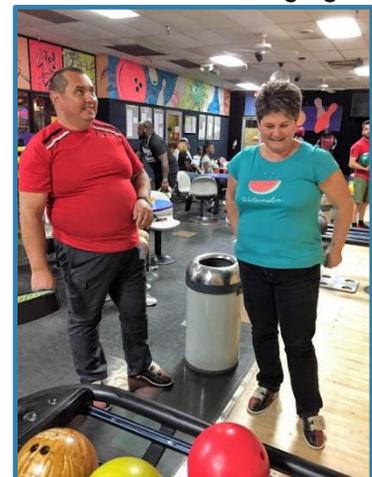


Levente & Angela Fazakas



We wanted to give them as many wonderful experiences as possible in their ten days here and return to them the hospitality and friendship we felt in Bözöd. First on the list was a place to stay, and the Shacters stepped up and provided them with wonderful lodgings in their home for the duration of their stay. Next, we developed a plan for all ten days, which included events, time frames, meals, and translators. Next, we recruited "hosts" for the various events. Host duties could include transportation, attending the event, meals, shopping, taking photos, and meeting any needs they might have. More than 30 members fulfilled this role. All hosts were given instructions,

taught how to use the Google translation AP, and given a "cheat sheet" of common phrases translated into Hungarian. Using Google translate, a description of each event was translated into Hungarian to keep them informed.



Their very first Sunday at our church included a warm welcome by our Pastor, Phillip Baber, and our teens welcoming them in Hungarian. We practiced phonetically for three weeks!

We kept them very busy with a tour of St. Augustine and the Alligator Farm, Tree Hill Nature Conservancy and our UUCJ community garden, bowling (their first time), a dinner theatre where they saw the musical "1776", a large shopping center, museums, a member's small organic farm, attending a Jaguar football game, and a symphony plus many more activities. Of special interest was a visit to Lutheran Social Services, whose mission is to resettle immigrants new to this country. In addition, they attended our city's Interfaith Thanksgiving service, started 100 years ago by a Unitarian minister and a Rabbi. Here they



got to see representatives of all faiths speak about their religion and greet many of them.



On their last Sunday, Levente presented the sermon, with the help of translator Marta, and spoke about the 450th anniversary of the Transylvanian Unitarian church this year. He spoke of his joy at being with us to

celebrate Thanksgiving. In his words, "Love. It is just a word, but to feel it is wonderful. When two people are meeting each other and say in their own native language "LOVE" or "SZERETET" they will probably feel the meaning of this word. Imagine, that now members of two congregations standing here side by side, and the mutual respect and love makes everybody feel happy and joyful." And that is what we all felt when we exchanged gifts and enjoyed our traditional Thanksgiving potluck after the church service.



What did this visit mean to our church community? It provided a unique opportunity to engage so many members in an activity that spoke of love, kindness, and genuine friendship. It gave us the privilege of getting to know our Partners in a more intimate way. And it educated newer members about our relationship with our Partner church, hopefully stimulating further inquiry and travel opportunities.

We are so happy that we persevered, and made this visit happen. You can too!
