

Eliot Chapel Renews Partner Friendships

Eliot Chapel members Klara Weis, Bill and Becky Coalson visited their partner church serving the towns of Csíkfalva and Nyárádszentmárton for the annual Transylvania Thanksgiving celebration in September.

By Bill Coalson, Eliot Partner Church Committee Chair



St. Martin river valley and villages. White steeple (far left) is Eliot's partner church.

Eager to renew our village friendships made during our previous visit in 2016. Prior to the village visit, we began our UUPCC Thanksgiving Pilgrimage in Kolozsvár by touring the Hungarian Unitarian church and headquarters, then moved on to other historic sites in central Transylvania, but our focus was on reaching our partner village. For Bill and Becky, it was wonderful to see all of our partner friends, and first-time traveler Klara fit right in as she speaks a little Hungarian.

During our village stay we went with the villagers to a big regional celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Edict of Torda, which is also the 450th anniversary of Francis David starting the Unitarian Church in Kolozsvár (Cluj), Transylvania. *(below)*



We also enjoyed attending a local baptism! *(right)*



Becky and Klara spent time with the village women doing craftwork and seeing a local wood carver, while Bill toured the workplaces of several village men.

During the visit, Bill helped set up and conduct the first Transatlantic ZOOM video conference between Eliot members in St. Louis and members of the Nyárádszentmárton church. Our partner minister, Sandor Kiss (*below left in red*), translated to the roomful of his congregants. All agreed there will be more of these calls! For more on how the call went, see the [October Zoom article](#).



There is always great food in the village. The pictures show our group meal on the last evening. We were happy that the villagers welcomed our help to prepare food, another step toward togetherness. When you're allowed in the kitchen, you're not company anymore!



Following our village visit, Klara traveled on to Budapest to visit her cousins that still live in Hungary. Bill and Becky continued on to the area of Romania north of Transylvania to see the tallest wooden churches in Europe, monasteries where the churches were painted with biblical stories inside and outside, the Merry Cemetery (bright painted grave markers with a picture and story of each deceased person), the Carpathian mountains and a Gulag where the Communists imprisoned the intellectual leaders that they thought might spark or lead revolts.

It was a wonderful trip, and we're happy to report that plans are being made for another trip in July 2019 and/or a sponsoring a visit from our partner youth!
