

October 2023

Dear St. John's U.U. Church,

In this letter, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for the tremendous financial and spiritual support that the Nyárádszentlászló congregation and its pastor, Rev. Szilágyi Szilamér, have experienced over the past four years. We especially want to thank you for promptly responding to our call for financial assistance for the renovation of the school museum and the weaving house at the beginning of summer.

In this letter, we would like to extend our thanks for the financial support and the significant effort you have contributed from across the seas. You sent a total of \$3347.92, which, with the help of Tom and Mary, was converted into 15,036.54 Lei for the Nyárádszentlászló Unitarian Congregation. We want to express our gratitude to everyone involved, including the entire congregation and the leadership, for once again deciding to provide financial support to our Nyárádszentlászló brethren. I, Rev. Szilágyi Szilamér, also want to extend my personal gratitude.

Without your assistance, this building would not have survived the summer. There were several storms during the summer, causing leaks in the roof, endangering the walls, and even putting the weaving house at risk. Challenges persist even after the renovation. However, the current state of renovation offers hope for the next five to ten years, ensuring the building's preservation and usability.

I would like to provide a report to the entire congregation and leadership to clearly and transparently show how we spent the received funds. Below, I will answer three main questions:

The first question: Why was it important to renovate a 7-room building next to the 800-year-old Unitarian church?

The past four years, with the help of Kelemen Vera, involved lengthy discussions and negotiations that resulted in the creation of the Nyárádszentlászló Weaving House in this 7-room building. We chose the old Szentlászló School building because it belonged to the congregation and had stood empty for over ten to fifteen years, deteriorating without any intervention. We didn't want to lose this building. Vera and her team, who come to weave every Wednesday and



other days, worked hard to transform the school building into a functional weaving house. Within their abilities, talents, and modest financial means, they did everything they could. They even created an herb garden in the school yard next to the church.



After four years of work, Rev. Szilágyi Szilamér believed that the Weaving House had transformed into an excellent living community space. It is visited weekly and monthly by both a permanent community, composed of village and congregation members, and another community that gathers on Wednesdays solely for Vera's weaving lessons. The congregation also utilizes the weaving house for presentations, events, workshops, and more.

This year, the building faced critical issues in three areas: the roof, the walls, and the foundation. It was also problematic that the building lacked water and restroom facilities. This led to Vera and the congregation often accommodating a hundred or more participants during events. This year, we aimed to address these main issues: the roof, walls, and water supply.

The beginnings: We started with 7 rooms, of which 3 were used for the weaving house. The other 4 rooms were unusable and in poor condition. We didn't allow anyone in due to the safety concerns. Thankfully, there were no injuries, but in May, the porch of the building collapsed. Consequently, the Weaving House couldn't be used for two weeks. Vera posted this on the Weaving House's page on Facebook, which reads: Nyárádszentlászló Weaving House. Many people offered to help and



suggested various solutions. However, when we prepared the budget, we faced challenges. It wasn't feasible to renovate a 7-room, 4-meter-high building with just a few friends' assistance. This led to the decision to seek help from the sister congregation, which we are thankful for. This is how the idea of the Building Camp was born.

Skilled workers are costly, and we needed to contract one or two companies to handle tasks beyond our expertise. This included roof repair involving tile replacement, chimney cladding, gutter repair, and cleaning. Another company was tasked with installing plumbing for drinking and running water, as well as rerouting water to the toilet facilities and council room. This process is ongoing. While the company hasn't completed the work, the water supply has been extended to all three buildings. We ordered two wooden portable toilets from another company – the most cost-effective solution since there were no existing bathrooms in any of the buildings, and installing one would have been prohibitively expensive. We also tasked another company with renovating the entrance to the weaving house, repairing walls to ensure safety, and fixing three rooms while whitewashing them. This was a collaborative effort involving those who committed to joining and assisting the Building Camp for a week.



Additionally, we needed to purchase construction materials, fuel for machinery, tools, paint, cleaning supplies, a vacuum cleaner for the Weaving House, and food for those who participated for a week. The workers and materials they worked with constituted the majority of the costs. Currently, out of the 7 rooms, 6 have been renovated and are usable. (3 rooms – school museum, 4 rooms – Weaving House, comprising a rag and fabric storage room, a guest reception room, a gift shop, and a room with 12 looms). We take great pride in this achievement and thank Kelemen Vera, as everything in the Weaving House is her contribution.

The school museum: Gyarmathy János. I asked the leadership to search for Gyarmathy János on Google to see the statue located in front of the Nyárádszentlászló Unitarian church (Statue of King Saint László). It's a beautiful creation by sculptor Gyarmathy János, placed in front of the Unitarian church. His parents were teachers at the Nyárádszentlászló school. Those elderly ladies and gentlemen who are now members of our congregation were taught by the Gyarmathy couple fifty years ago in that very school, which we were able to restore and renovate in 2023 with your assistance. Thankfully, in one of these rooms, we found all the journals, supplementary materials for biology, chemistry, mathematics, geography, sports, reading, and writing from the early 1900s. This led to the idea of restoring and making usable three rooms that were previously unusable.

The Building Camp: June 19-25. Approximately 55-60 people participated in the camp, and everyone pitched in to renovate these 7 rooms. Many villagers also participated, bringing food and offering encouragement.





Life after renovation of the Weaving House and School Museum: As soon as the renovation was completed, 180 people visited the church, the weaving house, and the school museum. This filled every resident of Nyárádszentlászló with immense pride.

Since then, villagers continuously send guests to witness this miracle. Nyárádszentlászló has become one of those places in Nyárádmente with a cultural life. It's not just an "old" church to visit; it's a space that encompasses the Church, the Weaving House, the School Museum, and the herb garden. This place has become a source of pride for the village, and we thank the American sister congregation for this.

In the future, I will send you a detailed budget outlining the costs, what we spent and on what, along with before-and-after photographs.

Thank you very much, dear St. John's U.U. Church, dear Mary and Tom, dear leadership and congregation members!

With respect,

The Nyárádszentlászló Unitarian Congregation, Kelemen Vera, Rev. Szilágyi Szilamér