



Annual Report
of the Reformed Church in Hungary

2011

Year of
Volunteering

REFORMED CHURCH IN HUNGARY, 2011

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Welcome Message of the Presidium of the Synod

*“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God!”
(2Cor 5:20)*

Ambassadors for Christ



The Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary operates in six-year periods, on the basis of a jointly formulated work plan. The year 2011 marks the midpoint of the current period, providing our community with a good opportunity for reflection.

The motto of the Reformed Church in Hungary for 2011 is “Ambassadors for Christ.” This Biblical reference highlights the roles in the work the church is involved in: there is someone *who delegates*, the *delegate itself*, as well as *those being addressed*. The one *who delegates* is naturally God: He creates, completes and oversees the whole process. The *delegate*, the *ambassador*, is the church itself, and *those addressed* are the target demographic:

contemporary times, mankind, Hungarian society, the European community and a world facing global challenges.

In the church revision that we launched in 2011, we intended to find whether the process that originates from God and aims to reach people – revealed by the Biblical phrase “Ambassadors for Christ” – is working properly. Are the above-mentioned roles still clear, or is there some fault in communication? Because if any of these roles are misinterpreted, the whole process gets misguided. If the church does not serve the redeeming grace of God, manifested in Christ, to all men and to the whole creation, then His *delegation* is lost. If the church defines and represents ultimatums in its world-view, and its mission is no longer the quiet but determined presence that calls for reconciliation with God, then it misses the original meaning of the mission. Finally, if the church fails to understand the age in which it lives – *those addressed* –, it does not see the man behind social phenomena or take every opportunity to convey the message of the Gospel, and in turn, what matters most is lost. The service of the church has many pitfalls, and its existence is not at all inevitable. It is truly wonderful when all these actors experience and understand that it is the almighty God, who has reconciled with this lost world in the crucified and resurrected Christ, that acts through and with the church.

In 2011 our Reformed community was preoccupied with the issue of church identity, as well as the challenge of a better understanding of society. We deemed it important to, first and foremost, focus

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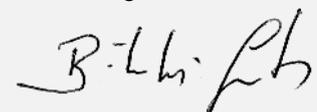
on ourselves, i.e. the questions of the self-definition of the church, and to promptly answer them in order to achieve success in our mission. Another equally significant task was to review the situation of our service in society, which is directly linked to those we address as ambassadors. This self-revision, however, was not a mere theoretical clarification for the Reformed Church in Hungary; it was also manifested in the themes of our church programmes. Our aim was to have the issue of the entire community's identity, as well as the idea of finding our way, appear in the micro-communities of congregations.

This year, the Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary found a new way to discuss the challenges our church has to face: it devoted a thematic, workshop-like session to finding practical answers to the questions these challenges raise. The sociological research studies that provided the background for this thematic session highlighted major social and economic challenges, which made it clear to all participants that our church needs strategic thinking in the areas of mission, church service, church governance and financing. What we can draw inspiration from, is the fact that in 2011 our church was again able to act as an ambassador of Christ in various strategically important areas, not only in Hungary but also around the world.

Several ongoing Reformed initiatives were strengthened in 2011, and a number of new opportunities also arose. One of these was *Csillagpont (Starpoint)*, the official youth festival of our church. The success of the event is evident from the steady rise in the number of participants as well as the increasingly professional festival organization. Through the years, it has become one of the pillars of our ambassadorship of Christ, with its contribution to the unity of our Reformed community not only in the Carpathian Basin, but all over the world, with the strengthening of our mission activities and the development of truly modern forms of youth education. The year 2011 also provided our church with opportunities to appear in new areas. One such area was the Hungarian EU presidency in the first half of the year, during which we – as an actor in the dialogue of churches and church institutions – were able to present our views and offers

regarding the contribution to the operation of the European Union at numerous international discussions and partner meetings. Another uplifting moment on an international level was the church partnership agreement, concluded during the autumn session of the Synod, with a distant Reformed community, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC). The enormous geographical distance will be countered by a close partnership resembling a unity, as the two churches mutually recognize each other's church membership, and enjoy a pulpit and table fellowship. A central issue of the work plan of the Hungarian EU presidency was the Roma strategy. With gratitude in my heart, let me mention a related event, which is also an example of our ambassadorship in Hungarian society, namely the launching of the Wáli István Roma Special College. This institution is a great example of Ecumenical cooperation, and a member of the Christian Roma Special College Network, aiming at educating the future Roma intelligentsia in general subject matters, social sciences and the realm of spirituality as well. This unique and carefully designed system could contribute to the slow but real improvement of the situation of the Roma community in Hungary.

I am convinced that our efforts in 2011, our self-revision and search for direction all stem from the sense of responsibility from a powerful living community. I believe it is good when a church is in constant motion. That it is not surrounded by well-guarded borders, but seeks to fulfill its faith-based mission among people. This is so because the final destination of our ambassadorship is man himself. Our church, as an ambassador of Christ, can provide a credible example to the whole of society, and show that in order to find reconciliation, to deal with the existing individual, social and economic tensions and challenges, to attain a livable future we need to "cross borders" and to create "border-crossing" communities. Communities that follow the will of the God who has crossed every known and unknown border, so that we could be His children. I wish and ask the Lord to enable us – both as individuals and as a community – to become ambassadors who can cross borders, and to lead all of us towards His own goals.



Gusztáv Bölcskei

Presiding Bishop of the RCH Synod

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)



My heart filled with true gratitude towards the Lord, I can gladly say that once more in the year 2011 we could feel the preserving grace and supporting presence of our Heavenly Father in all of our endeavours. We humbly asked Him yet again to guide our thoughts while we were planning our tasks and fulfilling our actions. I am thankful that we could constantly experience the fact that the Lord of the Church always keeps an eye on our work; He appreciates and supports what we do.

In our daily church governance duties we had to pay special attention to the situation of our church-run schools. Just like Martin Luther, we believe – looking back to the example of our forefathers – that schools are the allotments of the church. It follows that we would happily undertake the running of as many new schools as possible. Last

year, local governments felt – and not without good reason – that their schools were in danger. To save them and guarantee their high standard, several local governments expressed a wish to give up their schools to our church.

Regarding the issue of taking over schools, we found ourselves in a double bind. On the one hand, we would have been happy to see an increase in the number of Reformed elementary and secondary schools as well as the ensuing growth of our mission potential. On the other hand, we were anxious about whether we would still have the financial means to properly maintain both our existing institutions and the ones to be taken over.

The schools run by our church provide a variety of mission opportunities. I myself greatly enjoy participating in school events in fully packed churches – the opening and closing of a school year, graduation ceremonies and other occasions – and addressing those present. It would be a mistake, if not a sin, to overlook these gifts of mission opportunity: we would fail to follow Christ's mission command – which is relevant in the life of each one of us – if we gave up the chance to address our brothers and sisters who are still “on the outside.”

We hope that our schools will be able to provide pupils with eternal values on the basis of the Scripture, which will enable them to become Reformed Christian adults who are able to resist the gilded but fake worthlessness of today's globalization, and are willing to be fully committed to their homeland, Hungary. We expect our Reformed schools to equip the youth in their care with a Reformed Christian mentality, with a commitment to our Hungarian nation, and of course with sound subject matter knowledge. We can also expect that our institutions – apart from educating them in various subjects – make students aware of their

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responsibilities. As we can read on the wall of one of our renowned Reformed secondary schools: *"Talent is not a merit, but it obliges."*

The reason why I have mentioned our mission duties is that we must never forget that the mission command of our Lord – *"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, ..."* – is addressed to us who consider ourselves to be His 21st-century disciples. Our mission activities in big cities and small towns, in diaspora and at universities are equally important, because they could mean that with the help of God and the meek language of love, we can direct more and more of our fellow human beings toward the Lord of our Church, Jesus Christ. Naturally, we have different roles in this process. We who are lay church members – regardless of our office held – can be most successful in showing a personal example of how to lead a Christian life, a life that could seem desirable in the eyes of others as well.

Moving forward on the road that began on 22 May 2009, when the Constitution of the united Hungarian Reformed Church was signed in the Great Church of Debrecen, in May 2011 a meeting of Reformed lay presidents in the Carpathian Basin was held in Pápa. Although the list of participants was not complete, not only the current four lay presidents from Hungary attended the meeting, but also the Reformed lay presidents of Transylvania (Romania), Vojvodina (Serbia) and Transcarpathia (Ukraine). During the meeting, we could exchange experiences within our own church, and also gain a larger perspective. We experienced a moving inter-denominational gesture in the crypt of the Tihany Benedictine Abbey, where the Prior who was kind enough to be our guide surprised all of us by saying: *"Dear Brothers, this is a historic moment, as the Reformed lay presidents of the Carpathian Basin are standing around the tomb of our founding king. We must sing the first stanza of Psalm 90."* And we did so, following the Prior in singing our Reformed hymn, the solemnity of the moment making us all very emotional.

As an invited speaker at the Theology Department of Pázmány Péter Catholic University, I had the opportunity to talk about the activities of John

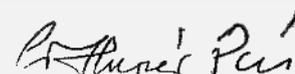
Calvin as a church reformer. A few months later a church history professor of the same institution analyzed Calvin from a Roman Catholic point of view at the Calvin Conference organized by the Reformed Theology Academy of Pápa in an excellent talk, which any Reformed pastor could learn a great deal from.

In 2011, our church – more specifically, our Synod – experienced a renewed need for the revelation of past events ("Facing the past"). The process has begun: a group of historians has been selected, who have undertaken to carry out scientific research and collect information from archives; the topic has become a part of church members' awareness. I believe – and this is strictly my personal view – that we can only expect a partial solution at best. Certain names might surface: the names of those who were blackmailed, threatened or cajoled into cooperating with the Communist regime, or of those who voluntarily did so against their best judgment. Many of them have since passed away, so any moral condemnation may only be addressed to their descendants. However, the names of those responsible for coercing the above people, will no doubt remain in oblivion.

As time progresses, the chances of achieving real results gradually diminishes. It is also obvious that since the fall of Communism, there have been certain political forces who have done everything they could to obscure the horrors of Communist dictatorship in public consciousness. We must accept that this hideous issue will never be fully resolved.

There are many in our Reformed community as well as in the whole of the Hungarian nation who feel that these unfortunate but also shameful stories should come to light. This is a valid desire, even if we are aware that due to historical reasons we can only expect a partial solution, as some of these issues cannot be uncovered because they are legally inaccessible.

This brief review of the year 2011 can be nothing more than a subjective "picking and choosing" from a variety of Reformed events, which is inevitably influenced by the perspective of the reviewer, no matter how objective he tries to be.



Pál Huszár
Lay President of the Synod

The Synod's Activities in 2011

May Session

Taking Stock, Undergoing Self-Revision

During the May session of the Synod, there were important personnel issues on the agenda: János Jákob was elected as the new Protestant Military Bishop, and Péter Balla as Rector of Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary.

In terms of legislation, the church laws regarding election and the legal status of pastors were discussed. In case of the former issue – in preparation for the election of elders in the second half of the year – the Synod adopted the resolution that ordained persons who are engaged in pastoral work may not be elected as elders of a local church. The latter church law was formulated throughout the rest of the year's Synod sessions.

The most important decision of the 7th Session of the 13th Synod stemmed from the opening speech of Presiding Bishop Gusztáv Bölcskei: he called the Synod's attention to the fact that in 2011 the Synod had arrived at its midpoint, and he suggested that the Synod devote an autumn session to taking stock and undergoing self-revision regarding its activities and tasks. Attila Szűcs, a Transdanubian member of the Synod made a proposal to hold an extraordinary session in the autumn, where the main facts, duties and ideas concerning the present and the future of the Reformed Church could be reviewed. The proposal was adopted as a Synod resolution, summoning the extraordinary thematic session of the Synod on 28-29 September.

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Members of the Synod voting

Thematic Synod Session
Balatonszárszó
**Not Only Problems,
but also Alternatives**

The extraordinary, or rather, thematic Synod session took place in the 'Soli Deo Gloria' Conference Centre in Balatonszárszó. The preparations for this session were different from those of the "general" ones: the Synod made the drafting of the agenda open to all. The Presidium of the Synod then arranged the suggestions received into five topics, which provided the starting points of the discussion.

First, the situation of church and Hungarian society was presented by sociologists and then discussed by the members of the Synod.

The description of this starting point was supplemented by the issues of mission strategy, the role of lay officials in the church, and the theme of pastoral work. Questions of church organisation were also raised during the session, with the mention of possibly transforming church governance. Finally, the agenda also featured the future of church financing, as well as the self-sustaining potential of congregations.



A recurring theme of the two-day event was a German example brought up in the presidential opening speech. The reason for this is that the Church of Rhine – a partner church of the RCH – has tried to react to similar challenges in an effective way. Our German brothers and sisters, after years of preliminary work, adopted a new church strategy in 2009, on the basis of which they developed a set of guidelines for congregations. The aim of the reforms was to place more emphasis on people than on structures within the church.



Kobus Gerber, Gusztáv Bölcskei and Pál Huszár signing the church partnership agreement

November Session
**Setting up the Church
Revision Committee
and Church Partnership
Agreement**

An important task for the "regular" November session of the Synod was to summarize the suggestions and outcomes of the Balatonszárszó session, and take them one step further. The Synod decided that its Theology Committee should develop theological guidelines that could enhance the renewal. The Synod also adopted a resolution about setting up the Church Revision Committee.

During the autumn session, the Presidium of the Synod signed a church partnership agreement with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC). According to the agreement between the RCH and the DRC, the two churches mutually recognize each other's church membership, and enjoy a pulpit and table fellowship. It also contains the mutual recognition of ordination and the possibility to invite the other church's pastors. Furthermore, the cooperation involves pastoral care among Hungarians in South Africa, as well as among refugees and minorities, common service in Malawi, and also joint mission initiatives. Further joint tasks include the support of congregations to become mission oriented communities, cooperation in terms of theology training and research, the pursuit of justice, and the enhancement of social reconciliation and the "healing of memories."

Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of Reformation Together

In November, the Synod also adopted a resolution to initiate a joint Synod session with the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the beginnings of Reformation, coming up in 2017.



Bishops József Csomós, József Steinbach, János Jákob and István Szabó at the Synod

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Synod Council

Cautious Institutional Takeovers

At its first 2011 meeting in February, the Synod Council paid special attention to the increasing number of institutions being taken over by the church. The ultimate financial decision-making body of the RCH adopted a resolution in which it asked the congregations and presbyteries to refrain from taking over educational and social institutions. The resolution warned that all such takeovers should be previously consulted with superior church bodies, and it should be pointed out that those who take over an institution are both morally and financially responsible for its operation.

Increasing Budget

The December meeting was devoted to the adoption of the 2012 budget of the RCH. According to the final church budget, the RCH has 14.16 billion HUF for 2012, which is a 1.3 billion HUF, i.e. 10.5%, increase compared to the budget of the previous year. This difference is almost exclusively due to the increased state support, which has been granted to the RCH in exchange for the state duties performed by the church.

Main Activities in 2011

Debrecen Meeting of Doctors' College

Doctors' College (DC), the scientific body of the Reformed Church, held its 2011 annual meeting in Debrecen, with approximately 250 participants not only from Hungary, but also from other areas of the Carpathian Basin. The speakers included Tamás Lukácsi, constitutional lawyer; Miklós Réthelyi, Minister of National Resources; Professor Zsolt Kozma and László Koncsor, writer and literary historian. During the meeting, the members voted on the winner of the title "Golden Ring Doctor of Theology," which was awarded to Gábor Vladár, Rector of Pápa Reformed Theological Academy. Fourteen new doctors were accepted as DC members, and a vote was taken on the Book of the Year, won by Zoltán Kustár for his book entitled *The Text of the Hebrew Old Testament*. A new award – DC-Book 2011 – was also introduced, with Kálvin Publishing House selected as the winner. The meeting included a presentation of Dr. Klára Semsey Dr. Lenkeyné's book entitled *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, the statue of Áron Hegymegi Kiss, former Transtibiscan Bishop, was unveiled in the yard of the Debrecen-Széchenyi kert congregation.

The First Common Ordination Exam



In its previous cycle, the Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary had expressed a wish to have a unified qualification process for pastors and a common ordination exam that reaches beyond individual higher education institutions and seminaries. The first unified qualification exams took place on 20-21 September in the Synod Building of the RCH. There were altogether thirty-nine applicants, mostly from Pápa Reformed Theological Academy and Károli Gáspár University in Budapest. Ultimately, 33 of them actually took the exam – due to withdrawals and unsuccessful written exams. For the time being, the unified exam only encompasses Hungary, but the aim is to have it extend to the entire Carpathian Basin, to the complete area of the Hungarian Reformed Church.

"White Crows"

The working group "White Crows" – consisting of historians, researchers, and archivists – launched a research study entitled "Memories of the 20th – Century Persecution of the Church" with the Danubian Reformed Church District, the National Lutheran Museum and the Catholic weekly *Új Ember*. White Crows is engaged in several research studies, and its primary aim is to collect public data from various locations where persecution occurred in the last century.



Bishops Péter Gáncs and Gusztáv Bölcskei, with Győző Szenci, Director of the national Gene Bank Council of Hungary

“Fruit Trees in the Parish”

“It is our moral duty to conserve our natural heritage, to safeguard and spread the treasures of nature,” states the agreement entitled, “Fruit Trees in the Parish,” signed on 5 September by Gusztáv Bölcskei, Presiding Bishop of the Reformed Church in Hungary; Péter Gáncs, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary; and Sándor Fülöp, Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations, who had initiated the cooperation. Further signatories included József Ángyán, Minister of State for the Ministry of Rural Development; Director Győző Szenci, representing the national Gene Bank Council of Hungary; Mayor Tamás Lantos, representing the Fruit-growing Network of the Carpathian Basin; and Gábor Ónodi, associate professor at Szent István University. The conservation and spreading of fruit trees and bushes that have developed in the Carpathian Basin is a vital part of our heritage. It is for this reason that the “Fruit Trees in the Parish” agreement has been brought forth: to conserve the well-adapted fruit species that have been grown for ages in the Carpathian Basin. The signatories undertake to receive local fruit tree saplings from the species collections of the gene bank and plant them in parishes. The churches, apart from planting the trees, are responsible for encouraging congregation members to join the initiative and get involved in finding further locations where the saplings can be planted. The institutions that participate in the programme pledge to take care of plants put in their care.

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Radio Europe on Air in Debrecen

Radio Europe has been officially launched in Debrecen. The Reformed radio station has been operating for six years, run by the Cistibiscan and Transtibiscan Reformed Church Districts. The radio is available for a growing audience.

Our Ecumenical Community

In 2011, Lutheran, Catholic and Reformed Bishops met several times to discuss various issues



The first meeting – with the participation of the members of the Standing Committee of the Hungarian Episcopal Conference, as well as the Reformed and Lutheran bishops – took place on 5 February, where those present evaluated the church-related activities of the new government, and discussed the details of their ongoing and envisioned joint actions. The bishops of the three large Christian denominations recalled with gratitude the communal experiences of the recent Ecumenical Week of Prayer, reinforcing their commitment to continue their common work.

The meeting gave the church leaders an opportunity to share their views on religious education in schools. They discussed certain issues of church media as well, and they agreed that a consultation would be desirable with lay leaders of the media, regarding the question of religious programmes on national television. The participants listened to a report on the decision to make 2017 the Year of Reformation, and the preliminary work concerning the celebration of the 500th anniversary of Reformation.

In their 11 October meeting, the church leaders talked about the common tasks of church service, as well as current social issues. The church law adopted in July, and its impact on the life and service of churches, was also among the topics discussed. While reviewing the data of the 1% Individual Income Tax Donations, the church leaders were surprised by the fact that, despite the rising number of donors, the overall sum of donations had significantly dropped. In their view, this raised a question about the need for transforming the system of church financing, and therefore feel prompt negotiations should be initiated with state officials. The bishops expressed their pleasure that the 2006 inter-church agreement on religious education seems to be working, and there are fewer and fewer church-run institutions encountering problems with the religious education of students from different denominations. Regarding the national census, the church leaders had ambivalent experiences, mostly regarding the answers on denominational affiliation. In their view, the lack of clarity could undermine the reliability of the results. The churches initiated a meeting with the Hungarian Central Statistical Office to interpret the questionnaires.

Elections Held at the Council of Christians and Jews in Hungary

At the Council's March assembly, János Székely, Auxiliary Bishop of Esztergom-Budapest was elected as chairman, while Gusztáv Bölskei, Presiding Bishop of the Synod became one of the vice-chairmen. The Council of Christians and Jews in Hungary was founded in 1990. It consists of representatives of the Jewish community and Christian denominations, officially delegated to the council by their churches. The main aim of the Council is to enhance mutual understanding, and to overcome centuries-long prejudices. It strives to build cooperation between Christians and Jews, contributing to the shaping of both denominational and lay public opinion. The Council is open to any denomination that wishes to become involved in its work. A recent challenge has been to maintain a dialogue with Islam.



Since its foundation, the organisation has been a member of the Germany-based International Council of Christians and Jews, which has its office in Heppenheim, in the house where Martin Buber, Jewish philosopher was born.

New President and General Secretary at the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary

10/11

At the elections during the annual general meeting of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary (ECCH), held on 8 December 2011, Lutheran pastor Dr. Vilmos Fischl was elected as General Secretary, replacing Zoltán Bóna, and Reformed Bishop József Steinbach became the new President, replacing Imre Szebik. The Terms of Reference was amended to have officials elected for six years instead of three. At the meeting, the Hungarian Pentecostal Church became a full member, while the Hungarian Evangelical Alliance and the Association of Christian Railway Employees became cooperative members.



József Steinbach, President of ECCH



Vilmos Fischl, General Secretary of ECCH

Church-State Relations

Foundation of Christian Roma Special College Network



A Christian Roma Special College Network has been founded with the aim of supporting the higher education of Roma. The initiative was welcomed by the government. The document of cooperation was signed on 17 March by Reformed Bishop Gusztáv Bölcskéi; Greek Catholic Bishop Fülöp Kocsis; Lutheran Bishop Tamás Fabinyi; Tamás Forrai, Provincial of the Jesuit Order; and Zoltán Balog, Minister of State for Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice. The network was launched in September, and is present in four locations in Hungary. It wishes to raise awareness regarding social and national issues, support Roma students in their education and personal development, increase the sense of responsibility towards the community and strengthen the Christian Roma intelligentsia. The Reformed, Greek Catholic and Lutheran Churches as well as the Jesuit Order launched such special colleges in four cities: Debrecen, Miskolc, Nyíregyháza and Budapest.

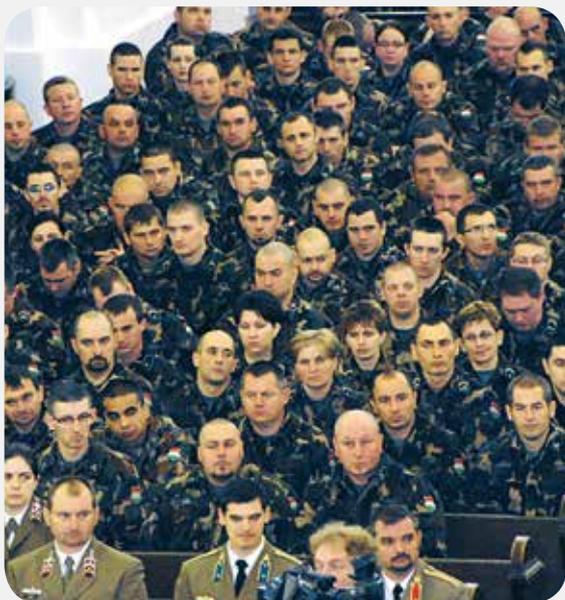
Decision on Wage Compensation at Church Institutions Performing Public Duties

On 16 February, leaders of the Hungarian historical churches entered into negotiations with the leaders of the Office of the Minister of State for Church, Civil Society and Nationality Affairs (Ministry of Public Administration and Justice) about wage compensation for employees of church-run institutions that perform public duties. The lengthy negotiations were finally completed in August 2011, and the agreement on wage compensation was signed on 9 November. As a consequence, churches and church maintainers advanced the wage compensation for their employees, 71.2% of which the government settled on 11 November 2011. The full payment of the wage compensation could follow when the 2011 financial statements of the state budget are approved.

“Soldier-School” Programme at the Reformed Schools of Debrecen

“Freedom comes at a price,” emphasized both Reformed Bishop Gusztáv Bölcskei and Minister of Defence Csaba Hende at the opening ceremony of the series of events called “Soldiers, Heroes – Tradition and Renewal” in the Great Church of Debrecen. The programme was organized to commemorate the spring campaign of the 1848-49 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence.

In the Oratory of the Reformed College, Gusztáv Bölcskei and Brigadier General Gábor Böröndi, General of the 5th Bocskai István’ Infantry Brigade signed a cooperation agreement on military education at Reformed Schools. Minister Hende Csaba also attended the event. The agreement states that military education will be a special area of cooperation, and students of the Reformed Schools of Debrecen will be offered an extra-curricular activity where they can learn military basics. The aim of the “Soldier-School” programme is to acquaint our youth with the modern, voluntary Hungarian Army, its duties, challenges and role in Hungary.



Reformed Contribution to Reducing Hungarian State Debt

In light of the bad state of the Hungarian economy and the situation of the central state budget, as well as to support the government’s initiative to reduce state debt, the Presidium of the Reformed Church in Hungary – having consulted with the leaders of church districts – adopted a resolution on 27 April not to request state support for the renovation and preservation of its estates and churches. In its 2011 budget, the government – as opposed to previous years – allocated a huge amount, 1.2 billion HUF, for the use of the “reconstruction of the treasures of church cultural heritage and other investments.” With this extensive support, the renovation or preservation of several highly valuable church estates – ones that feature prominently in our church heritage – would become possible. The Reformed Church in Hungary has decided to give up its share of the support, amounting to roughly 200 million HUF (based on its denominational percentage), and postpone its renovation activities. Consequently, neither the RCH itself, nor its congregations and institutions will apply to receive financial support from these allocated funds. The RCH suggested that the government invest these unused funds to reduce state debt.

The Presidium of the RCH received a letter in July from Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén, saying that the government was in no position to accept the fact that the Reformed church has given up the right to receive the state support of nearly 200 million HUF.

Reformed Representatives in the National Economic and Social Council

As a new national forum to negotiate interests, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) was established in 2011, replacing the National Council for the Reconciliation of Interests. The first meeting of the council was held on 11 October in Parliament. The Hungarian historical churches were among those invited to the Council. The RCH was represented by Gábor Kovács I, elder of Budahegyvidék Reformed Congregation, Head of Department at Eötvös Loránd University. While the former Council only had three types of members – representatives of the government, trade unions and employers – the new organization has been extended to include representatives of NGOs, sciences and churches.

Reformed Legislators' Forum



László Kövér, Speaker of Parliament Welcoming Members of the General Convent and the Reformed Legislators' Forum

The Reformed Legislators' Forum (RLF) invited the Presidium of the General Convent to a meeting in Parliament on 13 September. The aim of RLF is to put more emphasis on Reformed values in the public activities of its members, and to build a stronger relationship with the Hungarian Reformed Church. During the meeting, leaders of the member churches and church districts of the Hungarian Reformed Church outlined opportunities for cooperation. There are nearly 40 Reformed MPs participating in the work of the forum.



Participants of the conference listening to President Pál Schmitt at the Assembly Hall of the Synod Building

Discussion on the New Constitution at the Synod Building

14/15

On 18 February, a conference was organized at the Synod Building entitled "Dilemmas of Making a Constitution," where the guest of honour was President Pál Schmitt. In his opening remarks, Presiding Bishop Gusztáv Bölskei highlighted: it is indeed important that the new Constitution mentions God, but this should not happen without consequences. "There certainly are dilemmas when it comes to making a new constitution... What is at stake is what gets included in the basic law that provides the foundation of the self-esteem of a nation. Therefore, regardless of the circumstances – even in a religious setting – we should never oversimplify the debate over the constitution," said the bishop. The meeting was jointly organized by the Faculty of Law of Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary and the Reformed Centre of Public Life and Culture. Pál Schmitt pointed out in his speech that legislators had done the professional work of codification with the aim of achieving precision and balance, and while they could not incorporate every need that arose, they could not ignore communal requests altogether either. Additional speakers included József Szájer, Member of the European Parliament, Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee set up by Fidesz-KDNP; Professor Béla Pokol from Károli University; Csaba Cservák, associate professor at Károli University, head of the Office for Legal, Constitutional and Public Administration Affairs within the Office of the President of the Republic; and István Kukorelli, Professor at Eötvös Loránd University and former constitutional judge.

The RCH and the New Church Law



Minister of State László Szászfalvi

Scientific Conference on New Church Law

A meeting was held on 16 March in order to discuss religious freedom and the regulations of the legal state of churches. The former Dutch Prime Minister, Jan Peter Balkenende was among those who attended the conference, which was organized by the Faculty of Law of Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church, the Reformed Centre of Public Life and Culture and the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs. Consultations regarding the amendment began at the end of March between the government and churches. The aim of the conference was to provide a platform for opinions that might differ from the official government position, with the hope of these being taken into consideration in the future dialogue leading to the final version of the law. For this reason, invited speakers of the conference included not only Reformed, but also Catholic representatives.

New Church Law Adopted

On 12 June, the Act on the Right to Freedom of Conscience and Religion, and the Legal Status of Churches, Religious Denominations and Religious Communities was adopted as a cardinal law by the Hungarian Parliament with two-thirds majority. The new law was due to come into force on 1 January 2012. As opposed to the draft, the originally adopted version only listed fourteen churches – including the Catholic, Reformed and Lutheran churches as well as three Jewish, five Orthodox denominations, the Unitarian and the Baptist Churches, and Faith Church – that did not have to re-apply to be recognized as a church. As for the rest of the communities, Parliament would have the right to decide whether to recognize them as churches, after they have submitted a petition. The law reinforced the separation of state and church, but added that, “the state shall cooperate with churches in order to achieve community goals.”

On 16 December, the law was repealed for “legal technicalities,” and three days later was annulled by the Constitutional Court. At the end of December, Parliament adopted the church law once more in an essentially unchanged form.

The Reformed Church in Hungary, in compliance with the new law, petitioned to be registered, and the registration was granted in the first half of 2012, in line with the provisions of the law.

The RCH Participating in the Preliminary Work of the new Church Law

On 30 March, leaders of the Hungarian historical churches and the Office of the Minister of State for Church, Civil Society and Nationality Affairs (Ministry of Public Administration and Justice) held a meeting on a new church law to be drafted. The act on legal status of churches was presented to Parliament after the adoption of the Constitution, preceded by a consultation on the draft with experts delegated by the churches.

Relations Within and Outside the Carpathian Basin

Elections in Croatia

After six years, the Reformed Christian (Calvinist) Church in Croatia held a Synod on 9 April in Laskó (Lug). The pastor of Laskó, Lajos Csáti Szabó – former dean in Baranya – was elected as bishop, while József Kel, an elder in Kórógy (Korođ), was elected as lay president. Two members of the Church Constitution Committee of the General Convent attended the Synod as observers. The inauguration of the church leaders took place on 29 October with the service of the Presidium of the General Convent.



Bishop Lajos Csáti Szabó



Preparing for Inauguration at the Reformed Church of Laskó

The Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia Joins the Hungarian Reformed Church

The Synod of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia (RCCS) was held between 12-14 May, during which the resolution to join the Hungarian Reformed Church was adopted. The member church in Slovakia had been participating in the cooperation, but in order to respect its Slovak members, it did not sign the common constitution. Over the past years, they had constantly sought to find a solution in which they could join without harming the interests of their Slovak church members (13-14%). During its Synod session, RCCS decided to “join the regional, transnational church community that is based on a common Calvinist faith and confession, a shared historical past and liturgical language with legal reservation, with a full warranty of the rights of Slovak Reformed church members.”

While the representatives of the two Slovak-speaking presbyteries of the church did not support the decision – claiming that there was no justification for the accession to the Hungarian Reformed Church, whose foundation, in their view, excessively highlighted Hungarian identity –, the Presidium of RCCS – after a series of statements and negotiations – decided to uphold the Synod resolution.

The Temesvár (Timișoara, Romania) meeting of the General Convent unanimously supported the accession, and the ratification enclosure was signed by the Slovakian church leaders at the same time. “In 2009 we did not end, but rather began a process, so that there would still be opportunities to join at a later time,” said Bishop Gusztáv Bölcskei. According to the June statement of the Presidium of the General Convent, the accession of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia means that one of the aims of the unified church could come true: “we, as Hungarian and Slovak Reformed people, can look into the future together, following Christ as members of one body.” The statement goes on to say that, “it is a special responsibility of the Reformed community of the Carpathian Basin to strive to achieve dialogue and reconciliation among the nations of the region.”



Vince Fekete, lay president and László Fazekas, Bishop of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia



Members of the General Convent in front of the Temesvár State Opera

Closing Statement of the Plenary Session of the General Convent in Temesvár

The annual meeting of the General Convent, the consultative assembly of the Reformed presbyteries and church districts of the Carpathian Basin, was held in Temesvár between 21-22 June 2011, at the invitation of the Királyhágómellék Church District (Romania).

The assembly, now held for the sixth time, provided opportunities to experience and deepen the feeling of unity, as well as to share what has been learned in the community so far. The two-day meeting enabled us to discuss what it means on an everyday basis for congregations, presbyteries, church districts and institutions, that unity was made flesh on 22 May 2009 – when the common constitution was signed.

A special and uplifting moment of the event was when – after two years of preparation – the leaders of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia signed the Constitution of the Hungarian Reformed Church, thus strengthening its activities already done within the General Convent. For the first time, representatives of overseas and Western European Hungarian Reformed communities reported on the joys and struggles of their mission. These reports further invigorated our Hungarian Reformed community, and provided an opportunity to examine new ways of experiencing the mutual feeling of responsibility in the field of pastoral care.

The budget adopted by the assembly, which is based on a proportional allocation of costs, emphasises the support of the communities living in diaspora, as well as the events expressing our unity. The newly elected bishop of the Reformed Christian (Calvinist) Church in Croatia was also invited to the Convent, and talked about the life of their community. The General Convent expressed a wish to be constructive participants in the development of the national policy with the help of our successful initiatives of unity and our work of pastoral care in the Hungarian community.

The General Convent commemorated the 1881 establishment of the Christian Evangelical Reformed Church in Hungary. It was decided that, on the occasion of the 450th anniversary, a new translation of our common catechism, the Heidelberg Catechism shall be completed. The representatives of the Hungarian Reformed community of the Carpathian Basin consider the upcoming census to be of particular significance, and call upon all members of our church to profess both their Hungarian and Reformed identities.

Decision was made that the next session of the General Convent shall be held between 19-20 June 2012 in Körmen, when the Transdanubian Reformed Church District will celebrate the 400th anniversary of its foundation.

Fourth Reformed Charity Ball

All revenues of the 4th Reformed Charity Ball were offered by the Presidium of the Transstibiscan Reformed Church District to "Napsugár" ("Sunray") Reformed kindergarten in Vojvodina (Serbia). Every year, the revenues of the charity event are offered to an institution outside the borders of Hungary. In 2011, over 2 million HUF was raised during the ball held on 18 February in Debrecen, which was attended by over 360 people.



Kindergartners in Vojvodina (Serbia) – Revenues of the 4th Charity Ball were offered to the "Napsugár" ("Sunray") Reformed Kindergarten in Bácskossuthfalva (Stara Moravica)

Reformed Public Education Fund of the Carpathian Basin

For the first time, the Presidium of the General Convent announced a call for proposals for church legal persons and educational institutions located outside the borders of Hungary. The fund is aimed at helping struggling Reformed educational institutions outside Hungary or to facilitate the foundation of new ones. Its revenues are primarily from donations: Reformed students raise money for their peers, which is supplemented from the common budget of the Hungarian Reformed Church. Within the so-called "Border Fortress" programme, applicants could receive one-off grants for the establishment of a Reformed kindergarten, the "Perseverance" programme provides financial support for the operational costs of Reformed educational institutions, while the "Bible" programme is about sending copies of the new translation of the full Bible to the 9th-graders of the Reformed institutions in the Carpathian Basin. During the school fundraising in 2010, nearly 11 million HUF was collected for supporting Reformed secondary grammar schools in Transcarpathia (Ukraine) and the kindergarten of Bácskossuthfalva (Stara Moravica). The amount raised in 2011 exceeded 14 million HUF, therefore – together with the budget supplementation – over 26 million HUF was available for the programmes announced.

Partner Church Relations

Partner Churches

Partnership Agreement with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa

After years of preparations, a partnership agreement was concluded between two long-standing Reformed communities: the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC) and the Reformed Church in Hungary. Back in 2005, it was the South African church that initiated that the partnership should take the form of an agreement. Due to DRC's supporting role played during the apartheid – which it later publicly repented for, denouncing it as being against the Gospel – the Synod of the RCH carefully examined the situation and took part in international consultations before authorizing the Presidium in November 2007 to draft an agreement that set forth the details of the two churches' partnership. This work was done with the contribution of the Ecumenical Office of the Synod. The negotiations were accelerated by the fact that the Constitution of the World Communion of Reformed Churches – a new organization established in Grand Rapids, USA – was signed by both churches in the summer of 2010, declaring the full communion described therein. During the October Synod session of DRC, the attendees reinforced the decision

of the leadership to sign a partnership agreement with the Reformed Church in Hungary, which declares a full Ecumenical relationship of the two churches. Balázs Ódor, Head of the Ecumenical Office of the RCH Synod was an invited guest of the event. The partnership agreement includes the mutual recognition of each other's pastors, which is linked to the issue of the planned pastoral care of the Hungarian community in South Africa. Pursuant to preliminary negotiations, the two churches, apart from their theological activities, pay special attention to the knowledge exchange regarding their social teachings and responsibilities. Beside youth initiatives, they wish to cooperate in a number of other issues, such as a mission-oriented renewal of congregations, revealing the past, actions aiming at social reconciliation – with an emphasis on overcoming racial prejudices –, theological training and global disaster relief activities. In order to sign the agreement, two representatives of the church, Moderator Nelus Niemandt and Secretary General Kobus Gerber came to Hungary and attended the November Synod session of the RCH.

Westphalian Delegation in Hungary

On 21 October, an eight-person delegation of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia visited Hungary. During their five-day stay, members of the delegation met with representatives of the Hungarian Lutheran and Reformed churches, as well as Reformed bishops from outside of Hungary. They also travelled to Debrecen and served in worship occasions. On 23 October the leader of the delegation, Alfred Buss, gave a lecture on "Reformation and Freedom" at the Hold Street church of the German-speaking Reformed Congregation in Budapest.

The Westphalian Church is a so-called united church, i.e. it has both an Evangelical and a Reformed identity, and is one of the largest provincial churches of the Evangelical Church of Germany, with some 2.5 million tax-paying members in 31 presbyteries and 530 congregations.

Hungarian Visit of the Delegation of the Evangelical Church in Rhineland



Thomas Kraft, Klaus Eberl and Hartmut Rahn

Between 12-16 May, a delegation of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland visited Hungary. The aim of their visit was to strengthen and put into practice the partnership agreement concluded between the two churches in 2009.

While visiting the Scottish mission in Budapest, they had the chance to get an insight into refugee mission, which could be one of the core areas of cooperation between the two churches, besides Roma mission, knowledge exchange on church reforms, youth mission, alternative approaches to pedagogy and charity activities. The delegation experienced every level of church life, as they visited various local communities as well as the congregations of Buda and Pilis. They also paid a short visit to Transcarpathia (Ukraine), where they support several mission and diaconal initiatives through the mediation of the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid in the spirit of the partnership agreement signed in 2009, which sets forth that joint service of the two churches encompasses the whole of the Carpathian Basin.

Kirchentag

The Kirchentag – Evangelical Church Days – was organized in Dresden on 1-5 June, with the attendance of a large number of Hungarian youth, Reformed pastors and congregation members. Nearly 300,000 participants gathered in the German city, and were offered alternative worship events, concerts, lectures and discussion forums. One of the most exciting programmes was the "Market of Opportunities," where hundreds of church services operating inside and outside Germany could present themselves.

PC USA Mission Workers in Hungary

Staff members of the world mission office of the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PC USA) spent a few days in Hungary and Transcarpathia (Ukraine) between 12-23 May, making these locations the first stations of their European tour. During their visit, they met Sándor Zán Fábián, Bishop of the Transcarpathian Reformed Church, as well as lay president Béla Nagy, head of the Diaconal Centre in Beregszász (Beregovo). They talked, among other things, about the areas of service for Nadia Ayoub, who is a mission worker of PC USA in Transcarpathia (Ukraine) and had been working there for a few months in Roma mission. They paid a visit to several project locations of their church, such as schools and Roma mission centres. They also went to Nagydobrony (Velika Dobrony) and Gát (Gáty) to meet the Roma women who craft the baskets which are later sold by PC USA church members, thus supporting the mission in Ukraine. Additionally, they inspected the water cleansing devices and wells that had been installed in Fornós (Fornos) by PC USA mission co-workers.

Synods of Our Partner Churches

The partner relations of the Reformed Church in Hungary with Reformed churches in Europe, North-America and Asia date back decades, at times even centuries. An important and traditional way for experiencing our Reformed community and sharing in one another's life is participating in the Synod sessions of individual churches.

22/23

Our Czech Brothers and Sisters

The Synod of the Protestant Church of the Czech Brethren, which came into being in 1918 by the unification of the Reformed and Evangelical Churches, discussed various issues, such as the future coordination of the currently sporadic Roma mission initiatives, the efficient running of the church's conference centres in a unified system, the development of a uniform training of pastors, the future of church financing, as well as the adoption of the statement on ordination.



The Reformed Church of France (ERF)

The June Synod session of ERF – which has 250,000 active members – was their last one, as they are soon to be merged with the French Lutherans. The main topic of the event was the renewal of evangelisation and testimony, with special regard to the overall reform of youth mission. Naturally, the issue of the unification process also featured prominently among the diverse items of the agenda.

Church of Scotland



The May Synod session of the Church of Scotland attracted a lot of media attention. The Synod assembles once a year, with the participation of 850 delegates from 48 presbyteries. The Church and Society Council has called for action against human trafficking, for the challenge of sectarianism and for social justice to be at the heart of the constitutional debate in Scotland. At the invitation of the World Mission Council, the delegate of the RCH had the chance to address the Assembly referring to the renewed commitment of the partnership, especially in the fields of the Eco-Congregation programme, refugee ministry and twinning projects. The General Assembly also elected Right Rev. Albert Bogle as moderator.

United Church of Christ (UCC)

“Imagine What’s Possible,” goes the motto of the Synod of UCC. The event was organized in Tampa, Florida and felt more like a festival. Balázs Ódor, who attended the Synod, represented not only the RCH as Head of its Synod’s Ecumenical Office, but also the European partner churches as the European Vice-President of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. UCC, which was founded in 1957, is one of the most progressive, colourful and tolerant church communities in the USA.



Evangelical Church in the Rhineland



The 2.8 million-member church underwent a radical change in terms of church structure, and this move still dominates the work of the Synod. During the Synod of our partner church – which puts a strong emphasis on its Reformed identity –, we had the opportunity to engage in talks about a variety of issues: specific aspects of cooperation, such as the facilitation of congregation and school partnerships, Roma and refugee mission, support for Hungarians outside the borders of Hungary. The future of the Hungarian congregations in Germany was also discussed.

24/25

Nikolaus Schneider,
President of EKD

Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC)

DRC – the community of 10 regional Synods operating in South-Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Namibia – held its General Synod session in 2011, which is organized every four years. Reformed identity, the Biblical image of the mission church, unification of the four churches belonging to the Reformed community – these were the main topics of discussion. The attendees approved the decision of the church leadership to sign a partnership agreement with the Reformed Church in Hungary, creating full Ecumenical relationship between the two churches.

Jerry Pillay's Visit – How to Preserve and Strengthen our Reformed Identity



Jerry Pillay, President of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, was a guest of the Reformed Church in Hungary between 6-8 March. During his visit, he met with Bishops Gusztáv Bölcskei, István Csúry and Sándor Zán Fábián. He gave a lecture at Debrecen Reformed Theological University with the title "Facing the Past and Community Building – Reconciliation Processes in South Africa." After his visit in the Synod Office of RCH in Budapest, he met Lutheran Bishop Tamás Fabiny, Vice President for the Central Eastern European region of the Lutheran World Federation, Imre D. Szebik, President of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary (ECCH), and Zoltán Bóna, General Secretary of ECCH. His last meeting was with Reformed pastor Zoltán Balog, Minister of State for Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice.



European Reformed Meeting in Prague

The European member churches of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) assembled in Prague on 3-4 March. The European Area Council, WCRC Europe renewed its By-Laws and elected a new five-member executive board. The 45 attendants – representing 24 churches – expressed their gratitude to Gusztáv Bölcskei, Presiding Bishop of the Synod of the RCH, who held the office of Area president for four years. The amendment of the By-Laws was necessary because this was the first meeting of WCRC Europe since the General Council last year in Grand Rapids, USA, during which the two former world organizations (the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council) were united to become the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The participants evaluated the outcomes of the Grand Rapids council, as well as the operations of the region over the past four years. Opinions on the recently completed term were mostly positive. With the guidance of the president, the community proceeded in a positive direction, and important steps were taken concerning all four fundamental aims. The community of and the relationships between the churches have been strengthened, the presence in Europe is more organized, and WCRC's global influence has increased. From among three candidates, Balázs Ódor – nominated by the Presidium of the General Convent – was elected as Vice-President of WCRC Europe. The tasks of the new Vice-President include contributing to the strategic goals of the European Reformed community and the management of the region, as well as representing the President and the region in certain Ecumenical organizations.

Budapest Next Location for CEC General Meeting

The central committee meeting of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) was held in Prague between 21-24 September. The committee reached an important decision regarding the 2013 CEC Assembly. Approving the proposal of Rev. Dr. Leslie Nathaniel, Anglican priest and moderator of the Assembly Planning Committee responsible for the assembly preparations, the Central Committee decided to accept the invitation of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, making Budapest the venue of this important event coming up in 2013. The motto of the assembly is a question: "And now what are you waiting for?" What lends special significance to the event is the potential adoption of the constitution of the renewed organization prepared by the Revision Working Group. The central topic will be the mission role of CEC among the many social and cultural changes in Europe. During the assembly, the member churches and partner organizations will be represented by a total of 400 delegates.

International Mission Conference in Budapest

On 29-31 August, a mission consultation was held by the Churches in Dialogue (CID) committee of CEC in Budapest, at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary. The host of the event was István Szabó, Bishop of the Danubian Reformed Church District, and participants included members of the CEC Central Committee, the mission partners of the organisation as well as other experts.

Diaspora

26/27

Jubilee Assembly of the Hungarian-Speaking Communities in Western Europe

The Federation of Hungarian Protestant Congregations in Western Europe held a jubilee assembly in Vienna between 2-4 September. The event was attended by representatives of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary and the Reformed Church in Hungary, Klára Tarr and Balázs Ódor, as well as Rev. Johannes Wittich, responsible for the foreign-language congregations of the Reformed Church in Austria. For the first time ever, the Hungarian government also sent a representative, Attila Kocsis, who works for the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice in the Secretariat of Hungarians Abroad as Head of the Diaspora Unit. There were some 50 delegates from nearly every

foreign, but Hungarian-speaking, Protestant congregation on the continent, and they discussed the endangered future of communities with the government representatives present. The dialogue between churches and diaspora communities has intensified: the Reformed community in the Carpathian Basin has reached out to support the Western-European diaspora communities by sending pastors from the Carpathian Basin for worship services and engaging in active discussions with partner churches about maintaining community life in Hungarian language. Representatives of some 30 communities closed their assembly with an Ecumenical church service.

The Hungarian EU Presidency – From a Reformed Perspective

The Reformed Church in Hungary had resolved to make considerable contributions to the work of Hungary's rotating EU presidency with an emphatic presence and the organisation of events related to the themes of the presidency.



Asking and Offering – The RCH and the Six-Month Hungarian Presidency

“The Reformed Church in Hungary is among those who eagerly await what the country's EU presidency, lasting six months from 1 January, shall bring for Hungarians,” said Gusztáv Bölcskei. In the view of the Presiding Bishop of the Synod, although the Gospel does not bring about Europe, it can still provide some help, and it is this help that Reformed people need to offer. The RCH, with its own special perspective, wished to contribute to the work and success of the Hungarian EU presidency. The first solemn occasion of such a contribution was the opening worship of the Ecumenical Week of Prayer in the Fásor Reformed church in mid-January, which was, at the same time, the opening worship of the Hungarian EU presidency.



Speakers of the conference entitled “The Role of Churches in Social Reconciliation in East-Central Europe” in the headquarters of ECCH



Brochure, Website, Journal

The Reformed Church deemed it important to support the visibility of the Hungarian EU presidency as well as the related church contribution with the help of several publications. The RCH – as a significant member of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary (ECCH) – participated in the drafting of a publication that provided the members of the ECCH with an opportunity to introduce themselves and their areas of work. The brochure, entitled *In Community for Europe*, was also published in English. The extent of the Reformed contribution is apparent from the fact that a separate website – devoted to the events related to the EU presidency – was set up, with not only news and reports, but also studies on various topics. Furthermore, the quarterly journal of the HRC, *Confessio*, had a thematic issue on the present-day European Union.

28/29

Bishop Bölcskei's foreword to the Brochure "In Community for Europe"

The words of King Stephen in the Hungarian rock opera *István, a Király* are appropriate in reference to the European Union, too: "You're so far away, but still close." For the outsider, the network of the European Institutions seems to be a complicated, Kafkaesque system in which competing bodies, institutions and communities lobby for their own interests – only comprehensible to those who are actively involved in it. However, the European community is much more than that, having an ever-growing influence on our everyday lives. It is closer to us than we think. The EU's community of values is based on the Christian vision of its founders about peace and prosperity through justice, and about a continent that has a mission in our world.

In this double reality of Europe, the EU Presidency is a great opportunity for Hungary to start new dossiers to complement the ones inherited, and, with the original vision in perspective, to bring the Union closer to the people by recognising the community aspects. As a global network of local communities committed to a unity in reconciled diversity, the churches wish to become partners in every good initiative that aims to achieve this.

Therefore the Reformed Church in Hungary has been engaging in an active dialogue with international church partners, the representatives of EU institutions and the Hungarian government to contribute with its own particular approach to the assertion of Christian values defining Europe during the Hungarian EU Presidency, and later on, too.

Dialogue, Meetings – Expressing our Own Values



Rüdiger Noll in Budapest

A significant proportion of the Reformed activities during the Hungarian EU presidency consisted of a variety of international meetings, discussions and consultations. These began already in 2010, when Rüdiger Noll, Director of the Church and Society Commission of CEC, came to Budapest in October. Upon his invitation, a group of experts travelled to Brussels in December.

PM Viktor Orbán Meets Hungarian and European Church Representatives

The 17 January meeting revolved around the topics of family policy, the situation of Roma communities in Europe, the situation of religious freedom, as well as the Danube Strategy. The participants also discussed the social policy of the EU, especially the implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán reacted to the concerns expressed by the churches, and welcomed their intention to actively cooperate with the Hungarian government in the six months term of the Presidency and beyond. He asked for the churches' assistance in the government's endeavour to make European governments and societies concede that Roma integration is not only a national issue but also a European one. The identification and presentation of good practices is one of the priorities of the Hungarian EU presidency, which the churches – with their experience and relationships with Roma communities – could greatly contribute. Regarding the debates expected within the European Parliament and the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union, the PM offered his support in urging the EU to find an effective solution to the global persecution of Christians and the growing number of attacks on Christian communities. This could be facilitated by the presidency itself, as well as the recently founded European External Action Service. On the first implementation phase of the EU's Danube Strategy, both the PM and the church representatives agreed that reconciliation and the dialogue between cultures should be strengthened in the Danube region, as two crucial elements of the cooperation between governments and civil society.



Annual Partnership Meeting in Budapest

Invited by the RCH, two European organizations, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and Eurodiaconia held their annual partnership meeting in Budapest in February, with the participation of the representatives of their partner churches and member organizations. During the meeting, proposals were formulated concerning the Roma strategy that was in its preparation phase at the time.



Participants of the partnership meeting in discussion

Bishop Bölcskei Meets EU Leaders

The end of the Hungarian EU presidency's six months, also provided good opportunities for discussion: in May Gusztáv Bölcskei was invited to Brussels as one of 25 European church leaders to meet José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, and Herman van Rompuy, President of the European Council.

30/31

Evaluation of the Hungarian EU Presidency

The final days of the rotating EU presidency were eventful as well, as Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held another consultation with Hungarian and other European church leaders. The PM reported on the results of the EU presidency, including the Danube Strategy – which aims to enhance the peaceful coexistence of nations within the region – and the Roma strategy, which requires intensive church cooperation. While regulations of church policy are a national matter, Mr Orbán emphasized that the Hungarian EU presidency had strengthened the dialogue with churches on a European level. The PM went on to talk about the demographic challenges that the continent faces, and underlined: what is needed is not mass immigration but a strong family policy and the mobilisation of labour reserves. The international church representatives congratulated the government on its achievements during the presidency, the fight against religious discrimination, the strengthening of the Christian-Islamic-Jewish dialogue and the facilitation of good relations between various denominations.

Also in June, the European Commission and the Brussels-based church organizations (Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches and Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community) held their annual dialogue-seminar. The topic of this year's meeting was the role of churches in Roma integration.

2011 – Year of Volunteering

Exemplary Congregation Models

In the conference *Calling*, held between 27-29 January, about 120 participants discussed the role and place of volunteering in the Reformed Church. This was the first event within the programme series organized by the RCH, related to the Year of Volunteering. There were 30 submissions for the call for proposals entitled “Good practices of volunteering in our congregation,” which had been announced earlier, and the best ones were collected by HRCA in a publication: “Congregation Models, Programmes in the Spirit of Volunteering”. The Diaconal Office of the RCH announced another call for proposals at the end of 2011 with the title “Appreciate it...”, with the aim of collecting well-functioning models in the area of elderly care.

Volunteer Mobilisation Branch Launched

In line with the Synod Council’s decision and the endeavours relating to the Hungarian EU presidency, the time came to create a coordinating “umbrella” for programmes of the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (HRCA) and other volunteer programmes of the church (such as Diaconal Year in Hungary). Consequently, the church commissioned HRCA to launch a volunteer mobilisation branch. The volunteer coordination aims to develop a unified database, i.e. keeping track of all HRCA volunteers in a single system and to offer trainings for them. A website for volunteering is to be generated, the “Web of Love,” to serve the needs of Reformed institutions, missions, associations, organizations and the volunteers themselves.

Volunteers Trained in the Mécses Centre

On 15-16 July, a volunteer recruitment and training event was held in Mályi, at the Mécses Reformed Conference Centre. Some 60 participants – pastors, elders and members of the general public – could listen to talks given by experts from various fields (disaster relief, police, paramedics, the so-called “civil defence” and the fire department). The programme also included hands-on activities.

Bridge of Love



The “Bridge of Love,” an event of Reformed volunteering in the Carpathian Basin, was organized this year again, with more than ten thousand volunteers helping in one way or another in the area where they live. In the name of social responsibility, groups of varying sizes carried out volunteer work all around the Carpathian Basin to better the lives of towns and villages, institutions or congregations through social, development or ecological activities.



Mission Activities of the Reformed Church in Hungary

Christian World Day of Prayer 2011

Every year since 1887, the World Day of Prayer – originally initiated by women – has been held on the first Friday of March in nearly 200 countries. This day has been observed in Hungary and among the Hungarian Christians in the Carpathian Basin for 26 years. “How many loaves have you?” was the motto of the organized prayer chosen by the women in Chile, South America. On 4 March, men and women, young and old celebrated together through prayer, song, Bible study and worship services in Spanish, as well as other languages.

5th Anniversary of Reformed Mission Centre

The Reformed Church in Hungary launched its Reformed Mission Centre (RMC) in 2006 in order to coordinate the so-called social mission activities of the church. At the time of the foundation, the aim was to provide an institutional framework to individual ministries with central representation and office. The November 2011 Synod session re-elected Erzsébet Magyarné Balogh as the pastor-director of RMC. Her term will last until the second Synod session of 2015.



Erzsébet Magyarné Balog, Head of RMC

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Mission to Alcoholics

There are several alcoholics who seek out a hospital located in Dömös – run by the Reformed Mission to Alcoholics, together with the Hungarian Blue Cross Association –, having failed several times to overcome their addiction. In 2011, the majority of services were about providing a background for healing and a more active participation in services; 1,270 people attended the events. Thirty patients decided to attend the programme for nicotine addicts. Also this year, a book was published by Kálvin Publishing House, entitled Truly Free, featuring stories of recovery and testimony of former addicts; the way they realized their own misery, the love of God, and how their life has been turned around.

Prison Mission

In Hungary there are 17,000 prison inmates living in incarceration. Those who undergo a change are able to lead a life based on faith not only among the prison walls but also after their release. Also, the inmates who have found God are characterized by good behaviour. For this reason, it is important that a national day of prayer for inmates was held for the first time. One hundred twenty prisoners from all over the country gathered in Baracska National Prison. The inmates also took part in charity work: they offered 3,000 food tins, over 6,000 items of clothing (coats, shirts, trousers) to the poor in Hungary and Transcarpathia (Ukraine), which were delivered to those in need by the staff of RMC. The eleven Reformed pastors working in Hungarian prisons are in contact with some 8,000 prison inmates.

Mission to the Visually Impaired and Blind

Those who are visually impaired or blind are reluctant to go out, they are reserved and rarely seek the company of others. The mission for the blind wishes to change all that through its training called Basic Rehabilitation Group of the Blind, where they teach non-blind people the best ways to accompany a blind person. In 2011, "Wednesday night talks" was launched, during which visually impaired people are visited so that they can participate in worship and pastoral care. The mission for the blind holds weekly worship services in the Nursing Home of the National Institution for Blind People, and provides religious education in the Elementary School of the Blind. A great emphasis is put on involving our Reformed communities in the activities of the mission for the blind. A good opportunity for this was 15 October, the official White Cane Day, which was celebrated in Boldva, where the mission could demonstrate the services in which they are engaged.

Marriage and Family Counselling Service

Over the course of 2011, workers of the Marriage and Family Counselling Service participated in 1,100 pastoral care discussions, where participants could experience the love of God through the guidance of Scripture. These discussions were led by a nurse and two pastors trained in pastoral care. Their professional work was supported by three volunteers trained in family therapy. As families sought out the help of the service, the mental hygiene treatment of children, if needed, was conducted by the psychologists and psychiatrists of Bethesda Children's Hospital. Apart from crisis management, the service also focused on prevention: they visited 27 places in Budapest and 35 other locations around the country, accepting the invitation of not only congregations but also non-church groups. These occasions were mostly presentations on family, love relationships and parenting. Thanks to various forms of cooperation, large events also played a central role in the life of the service in 2011, which was present at Starpoint, the Week of Marriage, the National Pastoral Care Network Building, Contrasts Exhibition and Divorce Aid.

Airport Chaplaincy

Many travellers arrive at the airport filled with anxiety, in an upset state of mind, as they are forced to give up control over their lives. In an altitude of ten thousand metres, somewhere between the earth and the sky, they have no choice but to rely on their fellow human beings. Rev. Andrea Krasznai is available at the airport to have pastoral counselling with travellers and employees, and she also meets various foreign and Hungarian groups and delegations. She prays and blesses those who embark on a journey.

Week of Marriage 2011



Endre Szabó and his wife, Krisztina Szabóné Nemesy, at the Press Briefing of the Week of Marriage in Parliament

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“Giving marriage some positive publicity,” this is what the event is all about, say the 2011 “faces” of the Week of Marriage: Endre Szabó, physician, former president of the National Association of Large Families and his wife, Krisztina Szabóné Nemesy, who have been raising four children together. In the husband’s view, currently it is basically only churches that are concerned with the protection of marriage, but the wider society should also hear this message. “The Hungarian nation has no future if the number of children born is not high enough or if the families are not healthy. Having children is primarily a question of attitude and not one of money. The fate of the nation is in the hands of mothers.”

Homeless Mission

There are more and more people in need who turn to the Reformed Homeless Mission for help. Three years ago there were about 400 homeless people who sought out the mission; now this number has risen to 1,500. While the mission is a part of the network of service providers in Budapest, its capacity has not changed. Despite the growing number of homeless people in the mission’s care, the amount of state support has not increased. The mission is able to provide accommodation to 25 people in the summer and 42 in the winter, while its daytime shelter – where there are worship services every day – can accommodate up to 80 people a day. The Pure Spring Foundation – within the activities of the Homeless Mission of the Reformed Church in Hungary – maintains both a daytime and a nighttime shelter in Pestszentlőrinc. The foundation has ten full-time employees – two less than the previous year – and 25 volunteers to assist.

Mission to the Hearing Impaired

Workers of the Reformed Deaf Mission reach out to hearing impaired Reformed people all around the country, cooperating with local congregations to integrate these disabled people into the life of the community. In Budapest and Debrecen, there are regular worship services for the hearing impaired. Pastoral services are carried out in schools for them in Budapest, Eger, Debrecen, Vác and Szeged, with special preparatory classes for confirmation, with a religion camp organized at the end of every school year. It is a great achievement that out of four schools for the hearing impaired over 500 students joined the activities of the Bridge of Love – Reformed Volunteering Days in the Carpathian Basin.

Hospital Mission

Amid all the changes in the health care system, the hospital pastoral service has been a constant point for nearly two decades. In Hungary there are 31 Reformed hospital pastors, and together with the Hungarian areas outside the borders of Hungary, there are nearly 50 pastors who work with patients and health care workers. The hospitals, despite their growing financial concerns, continued to support the sustenance of hospital pastoral service, and no hospital pastors were terminated. In several hospitals, the pastoral service was integrated into the actual medical treatment. This year, the service was extended to four new locations: South-Budapest Reformed Presbytery, Esztergom, Eger and Pécs. In several places the number of those who take Communion has risen, and certain congregations gave financial support for the service on a regular basis. In January, two books were published: *School of Pain – Stories for Patients*, and *Scripture for Ordinary Days – Hospital Devotions* by Lajos Nagy.



Gyula Rideg, hospital pastor, baptising a baby in Bethesda. The godmother is gastroenterologist Katalin Szigeti



The Refugee Mission organizes a sports afternoon on Sundays for young refugees in Budapest's Margaret Island. The photo features social worker Sándor Frigyes Horváth with the children after a game of football

Refugee Mission

Families with refugee or subsidiary protection status participated in the housing programme of the Refugee Mission – altogether 57 people from Iraq, Kosovo, Congo, Guinea or Georgia. The school programme targeted youth who came to Hungary mostly without their parents or any immediate adult family members (unaccompanied minors). What makes this programme special is that the mission sends Hungarian teachers to schools in Budapest, who provide these young refugees with special remedial classes within the schools. For the first time in 2011, the school programme – in the absence of EU funds – had to rely on the financial support of the RCH, American and German partner churches to maintain its activities, until the 2012 EU funding was received. In the programmes of the Refugee Mission, teachers and social workers held Hungarian language classes, using individualized teaching and development methods. They also advised refugees regarding employment and Hungarian culture, in order to minimize the tensions that arise from social integration.

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Learning by Playing

Within the programme “Learn by playing, play by learning,” the project of RMC helped 300 hearing impaired and deaf children in the Transtibiscan and Cistibiscan regions. For the organization of skills and creativity development sessions, RMC earned over 23 million HUF. During the opening of the programme, there were eight brand new bicycles – purchased by the Reformed Church – to be tried out by hearing impaired youngsters from Debrecen. With the help of professionals, they could learn about traffic rules. Participants of the skills and creativity development events came from special schools of Debrecen, Szeged and Eger. The aim of these courses, competitions and contests was to develop visual, self-expression, problem solving, and conflict management skills of hearing impaired children, and consequently, make it easier for them to understand school material. Their dexterity is also developed, and their perception is sharpened. The children participating in the project are not taught in integrated schools, therefore, it is crucial for them to gain experience in extracurricular activities without discrimination; experience that comes naturally to their unimpaired peers.

Telephone and Skype Counselling

The aim of telephone counselling is to deal with crises immediately – anyone who needs support or guidance can call over the phone. The service, available every day between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m., is more accessible to the older generations. It seems that there is a growing need for a free, night time service. Many people have no time to think about their worries during the day, but in the evening or at night they are overwhelmed by doubts and anxieties. They need someone to turn to, and this is why the idea of Internet counselling came about. This service is a resting place in the virtual world, where professionally experienced and committed volunteers await people's calls. Skype counselling is available from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. There are 13 trained volunteers in telephone counselling and 18 more conducting Skype counselling. The slogan of the service is: "love is attentive."



JeruVille – Virtual City

A grand youth project of the refugee mission was JeruVille in September. The virtual city, built from containers, tells the story of a world without borders, where there are no racial, national or religious prejudices, where it does not matter where you come from, the colour of your skin or what your family is like. In JeruVille, youngsters from various countries are encouraged to participate in a creative process, expressing their dreams, desires and opinions regarding certain themes. During the first performance of JeruVille in Germany, there were Christian, Muslim and Jewish youth on stage together. Workers of the refugee mission decided to invite the play to Hungary. The container city was constructed in the Park of University Students in Budapest, and for six nights, nearly 30 third-world young refugees living in Hungary, together with Hungarian youth, acted out their views on the Internet freedom, the digital revolution of our age, the generation gap and other issues.

Mission among the Roma



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Afternoon Group Session in the after School of Vilmány called "We give a chance"

Reformed Roma Mission Council

The Synod, in order to clarify the aims and methods of our service among the Roma and also to develop the Roma mission strategy of the church, established the Reformed Roma Mission Council in 2009. The council works with a bottom-up approach: opinions should be shared with the decision-making bodies and leaders of the church regarding the strategy for working among the Roma.

Ten Days of Prayer for the Roma in Europe

Between 30 March and 8 April, the Mission Council of the Presbyterian Church USA and the Presbyterian Women devoted ten days of prayer to the Roma in Europe. An English-language booklet was also published for this occasion. During each of the ten days, a different country was presented – Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Albania, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine – with its history and present situation along with some statistics and specific problems. Workers of the Roma Christian Mission also sent a prayer from every area. Authors of the booklet remind readers that it is through prayer that we can open our hearts towards the Roma, to fight for the improvement of their situation and against the prejudices that surround them.

Foundation of the Roma Coordination Council

On 26 September, the Roma Coordination Council was founded, consisting of 27 members, with Deputy Prime Minister Tibor Navracsics as Chairman, and Zoltán Balog, Minister of the State for Social Inclusion and László Szászfalvi, Minister of State for Church, Civil Society and Nationality Affairs as Vice-Chairmen. The Co-Chairman of the council is Flórián Farkas, head of the Hungarian Roma Self Government. The council wishes to gather everyone who is involved in the Roma issue in one way or another, and they would like to involve as many people as possible in the formulation, dissemination and implementation of the strategy. The first task of the council is to discuss the strategy, which will be put to social debate through monthly meetings. The council will also have an international aspect: they would like to create a uniform concept with other countries, primarily those of the Western Balkans: Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The founding meeting was attended by scientists, businessmen, as well as representatives from churches. The Reformed



Eszter Dani, Roma Ministry Pastor

Church in Hungary is represented by Eszter Dani, who is the Roma mission pastor of the Danubian Reformed Church District.

Wáli István Reformed Roma Special College Launched

The Debrecen-based Wáli István Reformed Roma Special College – an educational institution of great significance from the point of view of Reformed Roma mission – was launched for the 2011/2012 academic year. The institution is a member of the Christian Roma Special College Network (CRSCN), providing accommodation, scholarship and training (in general and spiritual subject matters, as well as social sciences) to sixteen Roma youth who are currently studying in higher education institutions. The Wáli István Special College is unique in two ways among the members of the CRSCN. On one hand, it is the only special college that has taken on exclusively Roma or partly Roma students. On the other hand, the entire institutional leadership (Director Anikó Uhrin, College Secretary Erzsébet Rafael, and Rev. József Tóth) has a Roma background. Teachers at the institution include not only church workers but also several researchers and experts who, both with their expertise and values, fit into the long-term Roma mission ideas of our church.

Way for Life

Another important Roma mission activity was the Way for Life – the annual medical screening and health care check “roadshow” organized by the Reformed Mission Centre (RMC) and Bethesda Children’s Hospital. The primary target group is the Roma community, and the medical tests included the examination of vision, hearing, blood pressure, blood sugar levels, breathing capacity and social health sociology surveys conducted by doctors and health care workers of the church. Between 16 September and 16 October, the roadshow visited fourteen locations in all four Reformed church districts.



Brother and sister in Vilmány

Mission among the Roma in Congregations

40/41

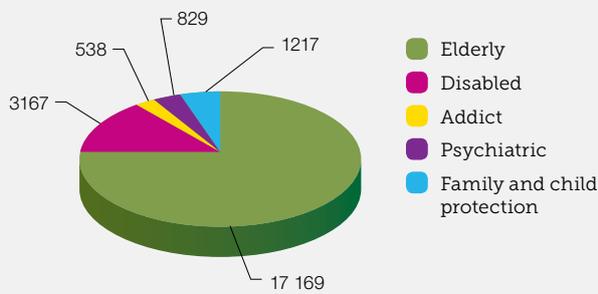
Although when it comes to the service among the Roma, there is mostly talk of shortcomings, within the Reformed Church in Hungary there are extensive, although “quiet,” activities among the Roma in many places and areas. With the contribution of mission consultants from church districts and presbyteries, a short overview was presented about the situation of our service among the Roma. This overview shows that generally speaking there are a lot of congregations where it is natural that Roma members are involved in church services in some way, without any formal strategy or programme. The most common encounter and service among the Roma is during religion lessons, as Roma and Hungarian children attend these lessons together. Beyond that, it is public education that connects congregations and Roma families. In places where there are large Roma communities, some congregations try to reach out to them through “street mission” and family visits. There are several good examples of congregations where, thanks to years of persistent community building efforts, Roma and non-Roma participate together in church services. Out of the roughly 1,200 Reformed congregations in Hungary, 70-80 are involved in regular Roma mission activities. The majority of these are located in the Transtibiscan Reformed Church District, which corresponds to the distribution of the Roma in Hungary. The detailed survey of the Roma mission activities that involve Roma individuals and communities within the four districts of the Reformed Church in Hungary is currently under way. There are two locations of particular significance from the perspective of Reformed Roma mission: the “Give a Chance” After-School in Vilmány and the “Apple Yard” Children’s House and After-School in Dencsháza. A third such institution is about to be established in Baranya county (Southern part of the country).

Main Activities of the Church Aid

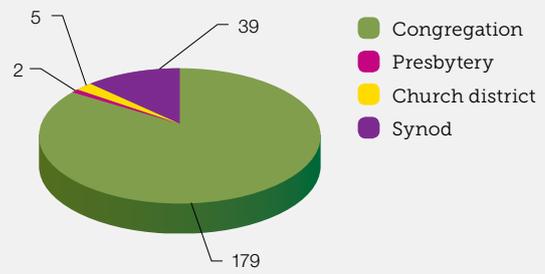
Institutional Diaconia

In 2011, about 23,000 thousand people in need were provided with various forms of care in the 225 Reformed diaconal institutions of the Reformed Church in Hungary.

Type of Institution:



Type of Operating Body:



Diaconal Year in Hungary Programme Office

The Diaconal Year in Hungary (DYH) Programme Office was launched in 1997 by the Presidium of the Reformed Church in Hungary with the aim of addressing the 18-30 year-old age group. The Programme Office wishes to offer young adults with the opportunity of long-term volunteering both in Hungary and abroad.

Activities of the DYH Programme Office in 2011

DYH recruited volunteers in various Reformed secondary grammar schools and programmes, and they were also invited to participate in the events of Mobility Youth Service, such as the Day of Europe and the opening of the European Year of Volunteering. They are accredited within the European Voluntary Service (EVS), and have successfully renewed their accreditation in several locations. In 2011, the Programme Office was granted 170,000 EUR funding for the implementation of volunteering projects within the framework of the Youth in Action Programme.

During 2011, the Diaconal Year in Hungary Programme Office sent 71 volunteers abroad and hosted 32 in Hungary. They primarily addressed graduates from Reformed secondary grammar schools, as well as disadvantaged and Roma youth. Youth exchange programmes were organized in various locations and countries. They participated in exchange programmes in Portugal, Yardly Hastings, England with the United Reformed church, and finally in Uzonkafördő (Ozunca-Băi, Romania). Altogether, they worked with 45 participants.

Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (HRCA)

The Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (HRCA), thanks to its supporters, was able to contribute 50 million HUF to its diverse programming and was able to help people in desperate situations. It also provided in-kind donations worth 116 million HUF to those in need. The most important relief project of the year was in the area of the Hungarian red sludge disaster. HRCA undertook the replacement of the movable property of 40 families, worth 35 million HUF.

Main Elements of General Aid

The food aid programme of HRCA is called “Broken Bread.” This year, the organization provided food to about 6,800 homes in 220 villages and towns.

“Help me Heal” is HRCA’s health programme in the Carpathian Basin, which provides funding for medical treatments, surgeries, medical equipment and medicine. In 2011, 4 million HUF was spent on medical treatments.



Within the “Lifebelt” programme, the RCH and HRCA created a “lifebelt” fund that raises donations to provide temporary help to families that have been evicted. The unique initiative was launched with 17 families in December. The Aid provides families with an apartment for six months, as well as with life coaching and financial advice. It is expected that by the end of this supporting period, the family will be able to manage on their own.

Aid schemes are not the answer for the long-term fundamental problems of society, so HRCA launched an efficient “Rural Development” programme, which contributes to the welfare and independence of both individuals and communities. At the moment, the programme provides the needy with seeds and chickens.

HRCA also sends in-kind donations to educational institutions both inside and outside the borders of Hungary. In 2011, nine institutions received such help, resulting in the complete furnishing or renovation of classrooms. Additionally, 5,000 students were sent textbooks, literary works as well as IT learning packages.

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International Aid

HRCA put together a medical team consisting of 15 volunteer doctors. The team is able to leave within six hours, fully equipped, to any location in the world a disaster occurs, be it natural, industrial or health-related, such as epidemic. Following the earthquake that hit Japan in March, the Reformed Aid contributed to the food provided for catastrophe survivors totalling 3 million HUF, and also supported the purchase of radiation detecting devices. HRCA launched a long-term health development programme in Afghanistan, sending medical equipment to health institutions, where locals will learn about the equipment from the medical team.

Health Care Activities

Dizseri Tamás Charity Award

In 2011, the Dizseri Award was given to Sándor Németh, who works at Bethesda Children's Hospital. The aim of the award, which was established in 2004, is to honour those with outstanding achievements in the physical-mental healing of people. The award ceremony took place on 29 January in the church of the German-speaking Reformed Congregation.

"Day of Fun" for Sick Children

Since 2007, two subsidiaries of Hungarian Electricity Ltd. – MVM Trade Ltd. and MVM Partner Ltd. – have organized several "days of fun" for children undergoing long-term medical treatment or recovering from an illness. On this year's "day of fun," the two companies donated 50 million HUF to ten health-care institutions and child-care organizations – including Bethesda Children's Hospital, which received 10 million HUF to be spent on haematology laboratory equipment.

Charity Tennis Competition

On 4 June, "Iris" Association organized a charity tennis competition to raise money for Bethesda. The patron of the event was MP Lajos Szűcs, President of the Hungarian Tennis Association, and the guest of honour was Pál Szekeres, Deputy State Secretary for Sports.

Intraosseous Infusion System for Bethesda

On 24 May, Éva Gesztes, President of the Hungarian Foundation for Paediatric Emergency Care, donated an EZ-IO Vidacare Intraosseous Infusion System to the Paediatric Anaesthesiology and Intensive Therapy Ward of Bethesda Children's Hospital. General Director György Velkey received the donation on behalf of the institution. The device provides immediate vascular access in emergency situations involving children, when the vein would not be accessible otherwise.

Scottish Children's Donation to Bethesda

Initiated by the Church of Scotland World Mission, hundreds of Scottish children participated in an action to raise money for a good cause. This year's beneficiary was Bethesda, and the collected sum – nearly 2 million HUF – was donated to the hospital's intensive care unit.

Hungarian Ice Hockey Team's Visit in Bethesda

On 2 May, the Hungarian Men's National Ice Hockey Team arrived at Bethesda, hands full, with hundreds of stuffed toys. When the team gained its first point in the world championship, the audience showed its appreciation by throwing stuffed toys on the ice. The team, following years of tradition, decided to donate these toys to sick children.

Church of Youth

Csillagpont (Starpoint) Youth Festival 2011

Starpoint Reformed Youth Festival is the official youth festival of the Reformed Church in Hungary, gaining popularity over the years not only in Hungary, but all over the Carpathian Basin. The biennial event is a great youth mission opportunity, organized in the area of a different church district every time. The fifth *Starpoint* was hosted by the Transdanubian Reformed Church District between 19-23 July: nearly 3,200 youth gathered in the "city of waters," Tata, experiencing the meaning of true values and what it feels like to be part of a community united by God.



44/45



Even rain could not wash away the young people's joy



Speakers and participants of *Starpoint* 2011

A Festival with a Face

The motto “a festival with a face” suggests that the most important aim of the event is to remain personal, even in a festival environment. This is facilitated by small-group discussions on the central theme of each festival. The central theme of 2011 was “Touches.” In the mornings Emőke Bagdy, professor at the Psychology Institute of Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, gave talks on how essential the human touch is in order to have healthy relationships both with our loved ones and God. Participants had the chance to turn their impressions of these morning talks into individualized questions that they could discuss in nearly 120 small, intimate groups. This year’s festival put even more emphasis than in previous years on these personal discussions, small-group sessions and the building of relationships.

Strengthening Unity within the Carpathian Basin

It was deemed important to involve communities outside the borders of Hungary into the formulation of the programme. For this reason, a preliminary event in May was organized for the first time: the Carpathian Basin Youth Community Weekend, and the Youth Community Rally during *Starpoint*. At the 2011 *Starpoint*, 17 programmes were realized with the contribution or participation of Hungarians from outside Hungary.



Contribution to Youth Service in Congregations

Apart from providing quality programmes that bring people closer to God while having a good time, the festival previously modelled into a “youth education event” in 2009, took an even more organized form in 2011. Altogether, 565 volunteers contributed to the success of the festival, and had the chance to learn what it means to work in a team or community, to act in the interests of others and to take responsibility.

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Programmes of *Starpoint*

Just like in previous years, the 2011 festival was filled with colourful programmes. Actor Zoltán Rajkai gave a talk on the relationship of faith and art; participants could meet István Bibó Jr.; while Judit Ágnes Kiss, poet and writer, lead a discussion and art performance about the current situation of literature. Mountaineer, Zsolt Eróss, gave a talk illustrated with photos entitled “With Faith on the Summit;” Gábor Gundel Takács, journalist and TV presenter, took the stage to share experiences about his life and career. There was a “Kitsch” Party as well, where foreign guests presented the most typical examples of kitsch characteristic of their country. “Viptivity” proved to be one of the most popular programmes, where Bishop Gusztáv Bölcskei was among the contestants. Not only did the band *Nemadomfel* [“I never give up”] give a traditional concert, but it also surprised campers with a special encore at night. In the evenings, concerts and dance events awaited the festival-goers. The performances of *Non Stop*, *Bolyki Brothers*, *Pannonia Allstars Ska Orchestra* and *Csik* were all extremely memorable.



Hungarian folk band *Csik* gave a fantastic concert

More than 20 young delegates came from different partner churches of the RCH from all over the world - USA, UK, Canada, South - Korea, Germany, Lithuania, Italy and France. *Starpoint* was design to create a community for young Christians that went beyond borders. There were several programs that facilitated intercultural dialogue. The delegates were able to share the culture of their church and country with Hungarians, lectures, small group discussions, games and concerts allowed them to share in fellowship together and build relationships.

Youth Work in the Church

In the Danubian Reformed Church District, the foundation was unified for all county meetings targeting the confirmation age group. The same programme materialized in each county, the framework being developed by Zoltán Surányi, an experiential educator, except for the sermons of the pastors. A confirmation camp was also organized within the church district.

Apart from performing the duties of hosting (*Starpoint*) 2011, the Transdanubian Reformed Church District also organized county youth meetings. Youth days took place in several counties, where young people could experience how many of their peers near them have similar ways of thinking. These events were not only organized on the county level, but also in the secondary schools of Pápa, Csurgó, Kaposvár and Tata.

In the Cistibiscan Reformed Church District, a new youth office was established, with the name “Back to the World.” The office carries out youth peer support programmes. The travelling exhibition called “Contrasts Exhibition” was opened in Miskolc, and within weeks thousands of students from all around the church district saw it.

The Transtibiscan Reformed Church District launched a community-building programme called “Life is a Game – Life is Not a Game.” The aim of the programme is to get in touch with non-Christian youth. In Beregszász (Beregovo, Ukraine), a summer camp was held for the university congregations of the Carpathian Basin, while a spring meeting took place in Veszprém. In the autumn, over 120 young people from 50 congregations had the chance to meet at the Carpathian Basin Youth Rally. The aim of this event was to facilitate the formulation of partnerships between congregations of differing size and situation.

Ecumenical Youth Foundation – Common Point



In 2011, nearly seventy young volunteers, including pastors and priests, contributed to the work of the mission “KözösPont” (Common Point). They were present in the three largest music festivals in Hungary. The mission experienced a sort of renewal in 2011: several very young volunteers joined.

During the three festivals, some 1,200-1,400 young people were included in discussions and games in the tent of Common Point. The festival work was preceded by three compulsory, all-weekend training events, where the would-be volunteers gained an insight into the activities of Common Point and deepened their Ecumenical knowledge. They were also trained on how to enter into conversation with the festival-goers who would visit the mission tent. An important new development was the launching of a festival mission in Transcarpathia (Ukraine), with the guidance and active support of the six-member leadership of Common Point. The cost of the mission was covered by the three founding churches – Lutheran, Catholic and Reformed – and was supplemented by state funds received as a result of a successful grant proposal.

Study Visit in Scotland



Upon the invitation of the United Reformed Church in Scotland, a group of ten pastors – all engaged in youth work – participated in a week-long study visit. The pastors came from all over the country, representing all four Reformed church districts. During their stay, they visited congregations, organizations and programmes that have proved successful in church service among the youth.

Seventy-two Hours without Compromises

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The youth volunteering weekend called “72 Hours without Compromises” took place between 12-14 October, 2011. Yet again, the number of participants doubled compared to the previous year: 8,750 people registered on the event's website, and over 9,000 young people actually contributed to the work done. There was also a rise in the number of settlements involved (143) as well as the number of projects realized (354).



Education

Public Education

The Reformed education system, re-launched in 1990, held its first common national school year opening ceremony in Budapest's Kálvin Square Reformed church. Sixteen years later, the National Reformed Opening Ceremony returned to the same location.

Reformed Public Education in 2011 – in Numbers

	15 September 2010	15 September 2011
Early development	24	30
Kindergarten education	3 237	4 238
Elementary education (Grades 1-8)	18 427	20 931
Secondary education (Grades 9-12, 9-10)	8 745	9 241
Vocational training (theory)	454	427
Dormitory education	1 548	1 741
Elementary art education	2 109	2 493
Special development education (special needs care)	137	122
Total:	34 681	39 223

In the 2011/2012 school year, the Reformed public education system was responsible for 206 public duties within 129 institutions (the number of operating bodies is 81, while the number of multi-purpose institutions is 43). Our school system is made up of 47 kindergartens, 76 elementary schools, 28 secondary grammar schools, eight secondary vocational schools, three vocational schools, 14 art education and six special needs institutions, 21 student hostels, two educational service institutions and one professional education service provider.

During the National Reformed Opening Ceremony, three people received a Makkai Sándor Award for their outstanding teaching activities: Ákosné Csiszár, primary-school teacher in Kisvárdá, Tibor Karikó-Tóth, head teacher in Szentes and Edit Veres, teacher in Péterfalva (Pijterfolvo, Ukraine). The Imre Sándor Award was granted to Ildikó Szatmáriné Tóth-Pál, head teacher in Sárospatak, which she received During the Synod's 18 November session.

At the beginning of the school year, 12 institutions were taken over from the local council, but there were only two places (Fehérgyarmat and Magyarcsanak), where there had not been a Reformed institution previously. In the rest of the cases, the existing institutions were further developed strategically, and parental expectations were fulfilled. The takeovers resulted in seven new institutions and five new sites for existing institutions. Our church took over kindergarten duties in nine new places, five concerning elementary school education, and one secondary education.

There were five other institutions founded this year. In Püspökladány an old church estate that had been nationalized was given back to the church, and it became the site of a new Reformed elementary and art education school. The Reformed community of Miskolc-Felsőváros took over an institution from a foundation, which is now focused on art education, both on an elementary and a secondary school level. In Balmazújváros and Gödöllő it was local congregations that launched new institutions (in the former, a kindergarten and an elementary school, in the latter, a kindergarten), while in Kazincbarcika the presbytery founded a new elementary school. Therefore, apart from Fehérgyarmat and Magyarcsanak, there were two more additions on the map of Reformed public education in 2011: Kazincbarcika and Püspökladány.

The Sport of Community-Building

The Lónyai Football Cup was organized for the 15th time this year, with the participation of church-run secondary schools of Budapest. One and a half decades before, the event was launched to provide students with the opportunity to practice sports even in the winter, and to engage in a worthy competition. Gyula Grosics and Jenő Buzánszky – two living members of the “Magnificent Magyars” (the Hungarian national football team of the 1950s called Golden Team) – had attended the competition several times. Mr. Grosics came to see the final this year, which took place on 26 February in the Sports Hall of Pestszentlőrinc. In 2011, twelve Reformed secondary schools participated in the cup, and there are plans to extend the event to include schools outside the borders of Hungary.

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Gyula Grosics congratulating participants of Lónyai Football Cup

Cooperation of Reformed Education Institutions in the Carpathian Basin



In October 2011, Reformed public education institutions were able to raise 11,385,187 HUF to contribute to the Reformed Education Fund of the Carpathian Basin. A prominent event was the 16th Rally of Hungarian Reformed Secondary Schools, which took place on 6-9 July 2011. The opening ceremony of the 2011/2012 academic year for the Reformed educational institutions of the Carpathian Basin was held on 3 September 2011 in Rimaszombat (Rimavská Sobota, Slovakia). The Reformed institutions both inside and outside Hungary expressed their support for preserving the values of Hungarian Reformed education in Slovakia.

The 17th Talentum Camp, the talent cultivation camp for Reformed secondary school students, was organized in Balatonszárszó by the Reformed Talent Foundation. Thanks to the financial contribution of the foundation, altogether 64 students were able to attend the camp, representing nearly all Reformed secondary schools of Hungary and Transcarpathia (Ukraine), and one school in Slovakia. The central theme of the camp was "War and Peace – Violence, Peace, Reconciliation."

Higher Education

Reformed higher education in Hungary is represented by Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary and Debrecen Reformed Theological University, as well as two colleges: Pápa Reformed Theological Academy and Sárospatak Reformed Theological Academy. The student numbers compared to 2010 are the following:

Type of course	2010	2011
Full-time	3 662	3 756
Correspondence/Evening	1 509	1 465
Total:	5 171	5 221

Type of financing	2010	2011
State-financed	2 911	2 883
Tuition fee-based	2 260	2 338
Total:	5 171	5 221

Catechist-Pastor Assistant Course Launched in Beregszász

A joint training course was launched by Sárospatak Reformed Theological Academy and Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute (Beregovo, Ukraine). Thirty-nine students have taken up the new course, all of them in correspondence training form. The launching of the new course arose out of a congregational need: in Transcarpathia (Ukraine) there is a lack of so-called pastoral assistants who could play an important role in the areas of elderly care, diaconal training and youth mission.

New Era in Reformed Higher Education in Debrecen

In 2011, the Council of the Transtibiscan Reformed Church District, as the operating body of both Debrecen Reformed Theological University and Kölcsey Ferenc Reformed Teacher Training College, resolved to merge the two institutions.



The Hungarian Parliament, even before its summer break, adopted a resolution to acknowledge the integration and to recognize one Reformed higher education institution in Debrecen from 1 September 2011. The united institution is called Debrecen Reformed Theological University, and not only the traditional theological and religious courses will continue, but also the former college courses. The university will have four institutes: the Institute of Theology, the Institute of Applied Theology, the Kölcsey Ferenc Institute of Teacher Training and the Institute of Communication and Social Sciences. Károly Fekete, Rector of the institution, says that the integration process was carried out in line with state and church higher education laws, therefore students' rights were not infringed in any way.

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Cooperation Agreement between the Theological Institutions of Debrecen and Seoul

On 26 January, a delegation of the Debrecen Reformed Theological University – comprised of students and teachers, led by Vice-Rector Előd Hodossy-Takács – received the representatives of the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary in Seoul, Rector Young-Ihl Chang and In-Jong Hong, Head of the Public Relations Department. During the meeting, a Mutual Cooperation Agreement was signed by the two institutions, which opens the way for the exchange of lecturers, students and university courses, as well as the joint organization of educational projects and conferences.

Increase in the Number of Students and Courses at Károli Gáspár University of RCH



As a result of intense campaigning, the university's growing reputation and its significant position in the labour market, there was a 37% increase in first-year students enrolled in the Faculties of Law and Humanities in the autumn semester of the 2011/2012 academic year.

Responding to the needs of the market, the Faculty of Law launched postgraduate specialist training courses to train ICT legal experts and foreign affairs advisors. In the Faculty of Humanities, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee approved the launching of a Sociology BA course and a German Language, Literature and Culture MA course. In September 2011, students were able to enrol in a Terminology MA course – which had been miss-

ing from Hungarian higher education before – and a re-launched postgraduate specialist training course for pedagogical professional examination with a “mentor-teacher” specialisation. Furthermore, a new doctoral training school was founded, which focuses on the central issues of the 18th to 20th-century history of Hungary, as well as the history of social, political and military conflicts during this period. The organizers and lecturers of the Doctoral School of History are internationally renowned experts in Hungarian history. The Social Worker BA course and the Youth Worker advanced vocational training course at the Faculty of Teacher Training are now available not only in Nagykovács, but also in Budapest.

Research

Apart from education, the University is also engaged in research activities. Some of the research areas are connected to goals set by the Synod of the RCH, such as social inclusion, Roma integration, social mobility, church research, social surveys, the workings of church communication, the examination, dissemination and preservation of our Hungarian Reformed, Protestant theological and cultural heritage, as well as preparations for the 500th anniversary of Reformation coming up in 2017.

Prominent Places in Rankings

In 2011, the Law Faculty was 4th in the training areas of law and management in terms of the excellence of lecturers, while it was 3rd among the country's faculties of law. The Humanities Faculty was the 5th best in an absolute ranking of the 167 higher education faculties in Hungary, while it came 2nd among the faculties of humanities.

Life of the Reformed Church in Hungary in Numbers*

Demographic data 2011

	Presbytery	Christenings	Confirmations	Marriages			Funerals
		total	total	same-faith	interfaith	total	total
Danubian	Baranya	272	168	12	55	67	393
	Bács-Kiskunság	554	403	40	96	136	811
	Budapest-South	698	307	72	121	193	919
	Budapest-North	790	410	77	149	226	1 056
	Southern Pest	955	662	87	128	215	1 264
	Northern Pest	802	444	59	150	209	1 033
	Tolna	177	123	15	39	54	265
	Vértesalja	328	190	31	56	87	427
	<i>Total:</i>	<i>4 576</i>	<i>2 707</i>	<i>393</i>	<i>794</i>	<i>1 187</i>	<i>6 168</i>
Transdanubian	Mezőföld	266	124	21	41	62	361
	Őrség	109	78	10	23	33	176
	Pápa	336	208	19	87	106	401
	Somogy	219	183	11	57	68	425
	Tata	365	211	32	54	86	492
	Veszprém	249	178	27	59	86	305
	<i>Total:</i>	<i>1 544</i>	<i>982</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>321</i>	<i>441</i>	<i>2 160</i>
Cistibiscan	Abaúj	284	185	29	36	65	421
	Borsod-Gömör	888	553	90	120	210	1 445
	Egervölgy	165	168	27	28	55	335
	Zemplén	397	362	58	55	113	681
	<i>Total:</i>	<i>1 734</i>	<i>1 268</i>	<i>204</i>	<i>239</i>	<i>443</i>	<i>2 882</i>
Transtibiscan	Békés	421	243	29	23	52	811
	Bihar	220	120	20	7	27	464
	Csongrád	381	168	20	49	69	317
	Debrecen	930	572	153	64	217	1 012
	Hajdúvidék	855	459	73	41	114	801
	Nagykunság	733	389	42	19	61	674
	Nyírség	1 120	708	108	142	250	1 320
	Szabolcs-Bereg	556	689	91	42	133	803
	Szatmár	496	543	71	33	104	789
<i>Total:</i>	<i>5 712</i>	<i>3 891</i>	<i>607</i>	<i>420</i>	<i>1 027</i>	<i>6 991</i>	
<i>Overall:</i>	<i>13 566</i>	<i>8 848</i>	<i>1 324</i>	<i>1 354</i>	<i>3 098</i>	<i>18 201</i>	

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Employment Data of the RCH, 2011

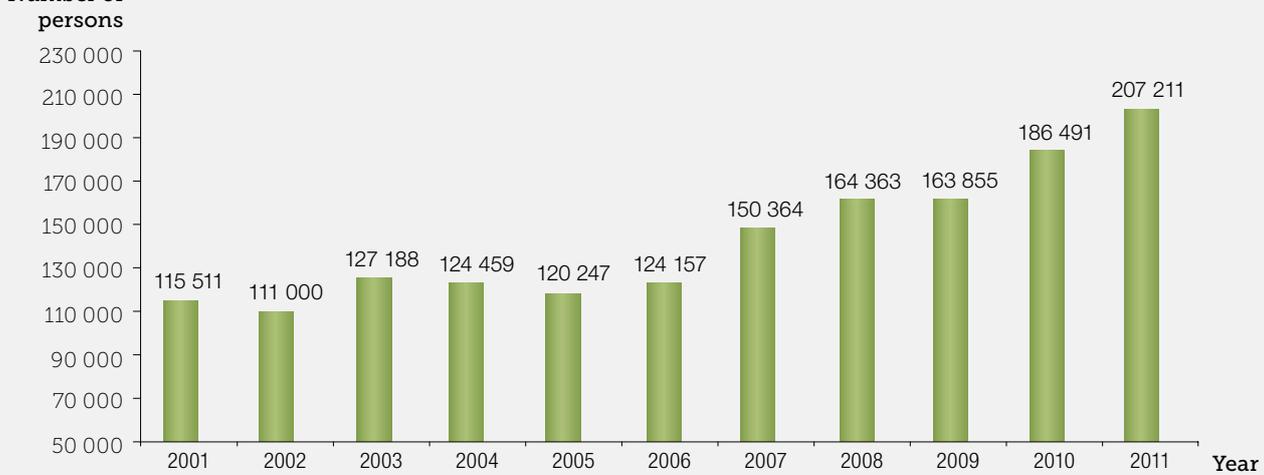
Number of persons in full-time employment:	10 144
Number of persons with a contract of services:	1 010

* The data is indicative

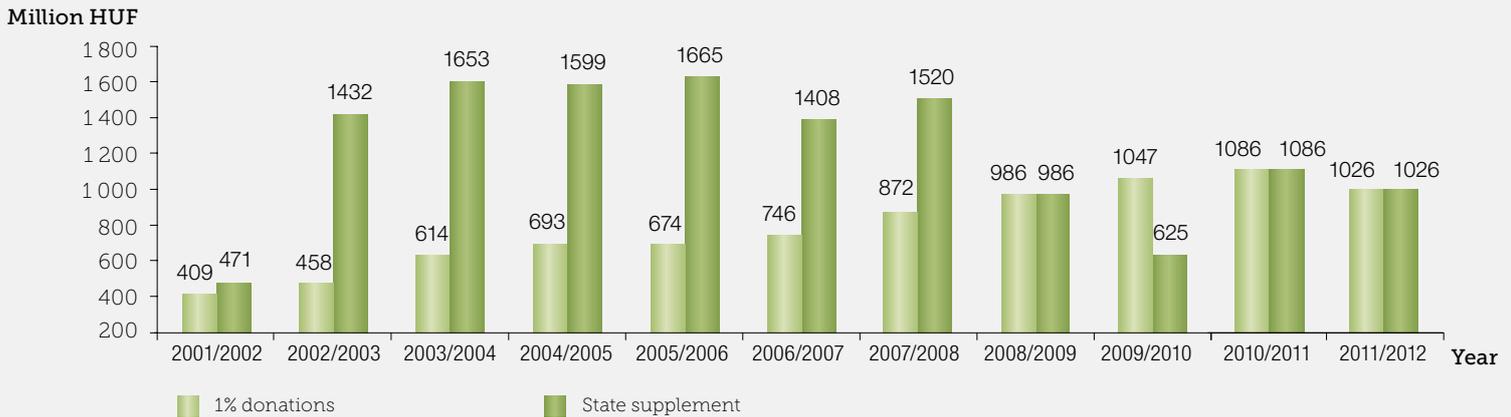
REFORMED CHURCH IN HUNGARY, 2011

Life of the Reformed Church
in Hungary in Number

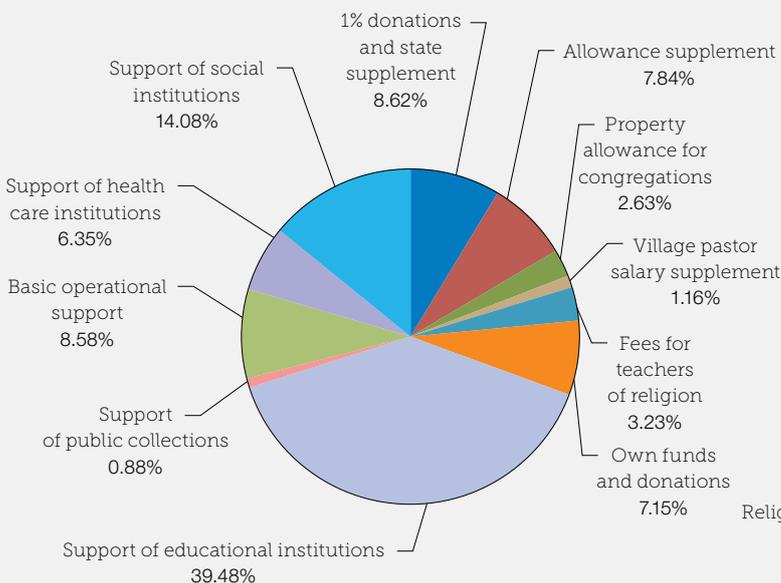
Number of Persons Donating their Individual Income Tax 1% to the RCH



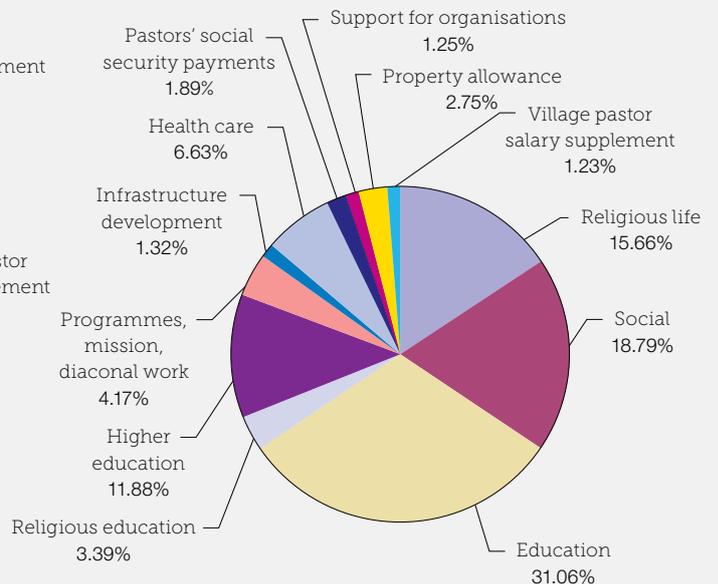
Individual Income Tax 1% Donated to the RCH and State Supplement Funds in the Budget Years 2002-2012



The RCH Central Funds in 2011



The RCH Expenses in 2011



Front Cover

Deaf children participating in Deaf Mission programme during the "Bridge of Love" volunteer project in Debrecen

Photo

Richárd Kalocsai

Back cover

Delegate from the Presbyterian Church in Korea at the Csillagpont (Starpoint) youth festival

Young student in the "Tanoda" of the Cistibiscan Reformed Church District

Young patient in the Bethesda Children's Hospital of the Reformed Church in Hungary

Students of Kölcsey Ferenc Reformed Elementary School during the first Reformation church service of the school

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