

Robin's Bird's-Eye View, September 2019

With 100,000 or so residents, Koloszvar is one of the largest cities in Transylvania, where a large population of ethnic-Hungarian Unitarians resides. A ministerial colleague of mine visited there many years ago for their General Assembly, with nearly 5,000 Transylvanian Unitarians in attendance! (Can you imagine?)

He tells me that during his strolls around the metropolis, he noticed something quite baffling and quirky. Many (most) shops had no signage whatsoever informing consumers what type of commerce took place inside. He could wipe a circle in the steamy shop windows and peer inside and figure out through deductive reasoning that Shop #1 was a butcher, Shop #2 sold candy, and Shop #3 showcased the famed local embroidery. But no signs!

Even more puzzling was the apparent dearth of cafes and restaurants. Where was that mouth-watering aroma of food coming from anyway? Playing the sleuth (and getting hungrier by the minute), he discovered a series of courtyards tucked away from the streets, also unmarked and only known to "insiders." Life was going on in those courtyards and shops – eating, drinking, laughing, vigorous conversation, connection – and he stumbled upon it all with a bit of perseverance, yet mostly by accident.

At times, I wonder if newcomers to our UU congregations might feel a bit like my colleague. Are they peering in "windows" attempting to figure out how to attend a potluck lunch or sign up for an adult faith development course? Do they wonder if they have to pay for nursery care? Is it okay if my child attends Sunday School and if so, where is it? Where are the restrooms? Do visitors sometimes find themselves wandering around trying to locate the appealing sounds and aromas wafting from the "courtyards" where church life takes place?

Those of us who have been regulars or "insiders" within our community can do so much to help visitors and newer members get their bearings and feel visible and known. Sometimes it's as simple as wearing a nametag (hint, hint), a brief chat with a new face at social hour, or introducing yourself to a visitor in the Sanctuary. Perhaps you might take the initiative to personally invite a newcomer to an event or activity you believe he or she would enjoy (or may not know about) such as the upcoming Circle Suppers! There is a chair at the table for you! (see the sign up sheet elsewhere in this newsletter)

Or, you could ask the ministers or membership chair, Carleton Sheppard, for a list of newer folks to involve in projects and committees. Or, join the Membership team itself. We might assess whether our signage is inviting and informative. Can folks passing by tell how we are different from the church down the street? In a real sense, we are all called to be greeters and guides at Beacon's front door. May the

folks who enter feel not only welcome and affirmed, but also actively *welcomed* and *informed*. *Hol van a kávézó?* (that's "Where is the café" in Hungarian)...just in case!

In faith, Rev. Robin

STARTING POINTS – AN INTRODUCTION TO THE UU JOURNEY FOR NEW AND RENEWED UUS. – With Rev. Robin , starting in October.

Whether you are new to Beacon or have been around a while, consider signing up for our engaging four- part Starting Points program (An Introduction to the UU Journey) that Rev. Robin will facilitate on Sundays, October 6, November 3, December 1, and January 5, from 11:15-12:45.

Session One: Your Journey - Sharing Our Stories and Spiritual Roadmaps

Session Two: The Unitarian Universalist Journey & The Journey of our Congregation

Session Three: Our Journey Together - The 3 Paths of Unitarian Universalism, Part I

Session Four: The 3 Paths of Unitarian Universalism, Part 2 & Finding Your Tribe

Lunch will be served at the first session. Bring your own brown bag lunch to the remaining sessions. Participants will be invited to sign the membership book after the fourth session. Please sign up through the office so we can plan for your attendance with materials and refreshments.