

New Balázs Scholar at Starr King School for the Ministry

This year's Balázs Scholar, Transylvanian Unitarian minister Zoltán (Zoli) Kopáncsi-Benczédi, and his family have arrived in Berkeley, California to begin a year of study at Starr King School for the Ministry, and to preach at Unitarian Universalist churches in the San Francisco Bay Area and throughout the country.

Rev. Kopáncsi-Benczédi says,

I have been a Unitarian minister for the past 10 years in the diaspora of Hunyad County. I am ministering to four congregations, including Déva, where our founder, Dávid Ferenc died in prison. I became minister in an area where the Unitarians are in double minority, both ethnically and religiously. Beside this, the congregations are living in a socially neglected area, so the day by day life of the people is not easy. I think that being a minister in this area it is a little bit different from others, it is quite a challenge to find the best ways of ministry in a multicultural environment.

I have a family: my wife Ildikó is a fashion and personal stylist, and my son Gusztáv is 11 years old, and a big soccer fan and player. I applied for the Balázs Ferenc scholarship for two reasons: first, I felt that in the US I will have the opportunity to study things I can "plant" back home in my congregations, and secondly I felt that after ten years, it is time to renew my theological and spiritual "backpack" in such an inspiring environment as Starr King School for the Ministry is. I would like to study the "art" of "making a church" in a multicultural environment. I'd like to understand more about the relationship between the majority and minority. I am interested to learn about the mission the UU's are making, the way people get attracted to the UUism, and become members of the church. There are courses offered at the Graduate Theological Union, [of which Starr King School is a member] and there is a possibility of field study.

Zoli's preaching schedule in the San Francisco Bay Area while school is in session is almost filled. During his winter break he will mostly visit his partner churches, and take a winter intensive course in Chicago at Meadville Lombard. But if your congregation would like the wonderful opportunity to host the family for a time in June 2012 before General Assembly in Phoenix and have Zoli preach, meet with your Partner Church Committee, and/or make a power point slide presentation on Transylvania and its Unitarian church life, please contact René Radusky reneradusky@gmail.com

The future of Unitarianism in Transylvania demands dynamic religious leadership. The Balázs Scholars Program at Starr King School for the Ministry, our UU seminary in Berkeley, California enhances the religious leadership of Transylvanian Unitarian ministers by each year supporting a minister chosen by the Transylvanian Unitarian Church to study at the school, and to preach in the San Francisco Bay Area and throughout the country. Your help is needed to sustain this tangible connection to our Unitarian heritage, now in its seventeenth year.

Balázs Scholars are the new young religious leaders in Transylvania. They serve on the Transylvanian Unitarian Church Consistory (Board of Trustees), president the ministers'

association, teach at the seminary, are Deans of the Districts, edit the Unitarian newspaper, as well as serve in the parish and as chaplain.

The program, which costs over \$40,000 each year, is funded by donations from individuals and churches, honoraria where the scholar speaks, and church collections. The Balázs Committee is especially grateful for the \$5,000 donation each year from the UU Partner Church Committee. Your financial help is needed to sustain this important program. Please encourage your congregation to take a collection for the Balázs Scholars Program, and please write a personal check to Starr King School, with the notation "Balázs." Send to Starr King School, 2441 Le Conte Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709. To donate on line see SKSM.edu/onlinegifts For more information on the Balázs Scholars Program see sksm.edu/graduates/balazs_scholars.php or contact Arliss Ungar at Balazs@ungar.us