

AMBASSADORS
FOR CHRIST

Reformed Church
in Hungary

Reformed Church in Hungary

Annual Report

2013

Bishop's Greeting



Photo by Richard Kalocsai

*“Then you will know
the truth, and the truth
will set you free”
(JOHN 8:32)*

Dear Friends,

We celebrated the year 2013 in our Church as the “Year of Confessing.” For us, this year was more than a simple opportunity to commemorate the 450th anniversary of one of our founding documents, the Heidelberg Catechism. Instead, it was a time to recall our basic gift and task as Christians, to communicate the Gospel in fresh ways and prepare, as it says in 1 Peter 3, to give an answer to all those who question the hope we have.

Looking back on the last year, I’m inclined to say that in a broader sense, we were challenged with communication in and outside the Reformed Church in Hungary. The Church Revision Committee began an expansive dialogue with congregations, confronting their ideas of mission and visions for the future. This then formed into a mission statement submitted to Synod that challenged the current identity of the Church, saying among other things that the organization of the Church “must be a tool and medium of the communication of the Gospel creating values, identity and community.”

Indeed, in our partnerships around the world, in our paid and received visits, and even in our cooperation with ecumenical organizations, communication has played an important role. This is explained in more detail in the Annual Report, but let me just highlight one example. For the first time in our life, we were able to contribute to the German Church Days (Kirchentag) with our own booth. We were able to invite visitors to participate in (self-) critical discussions concerning the role of Churches in today’s Europe and destabilizing

social and political tensions we face together. This thought provoking message is one we tried to carry with us and share throughout Kirchentag.

“It is our conviction that in an ever diverging Europe the responsibility of Churches, especially the communion of Protestant churches, in creating space for mutual, critical conversation and a promotion of exchange among equals is essential... Otherwise, the so often boasted ‘diversity’ coupled with the financial and economic crisis will turn into a ‘tension test’ for the old continent, and instead of solidarity, frustration and distrust will increase where unity in diversity should prevail – in Europe.”

Our motive for re-energized dialogue and exchange is best captured in the motto we adopted as our own some years ago: Ambassadors for Christ. The fact is, we see ourselves, and hope to be seen by the world as well, as ambassadors for our Lord. That is, we place not ourselves but Him in the focus and wish to communicate to the world His message as faithfully as possible – in words and deeds, through preaching and acting out of the liberating truth which God has shared with us in Christ.

I’d like to close with the words of a well-known Hungarian author, Peter Esterhazy, “it is bloody difficult to even lie without knowing the truth...” to which Eberhard Jüngel, my master for life, added that “to accuse another with inaccuracy, failure or even lies, is easier the less we know of truth.” Over the years I have learned that we cannot possess the entirety of truth, but let this serve as a moment of truth in the communication of cultures.

I invite you, as a first step, to take a journey with us through the life of the Reformed Church in

Hungary, highlighting some moments of our mission and service in 2013. Read our Annual Report as a look into our life that might inspire you to visit, again and again, our English website, developed to serve as our continuous communication with you.

And as I conclude, allow me a personal note. This is the last report in which I will have the opportunity to offer my words of greeting. In my 18 years of service as bishop and head of the RCH, I have learned that without this mutual, sometimes sobering, sometimes encouraging, but nevertheless challenging and directing communication with you, I would not have been able to fulfill my God given ministry as I have.

Trusting that in the future too our common pilgrimage for truth and freedom will continue,

Gusztáv Bölcskei
Presiding Bishop of the RCH

A Look

Into Our Life



Photo by András Hajdu

Through this annual report we hope to give a glimpse into our past year and an honest depiction of the ways in which the reformed people in Hungary strive to live out their faith.

ROMA MINISTRY: A Step Toward Reconciliation

The Synod of the RCH declared Roma ministry a church-wide priority for the years 2009-2014. From this decision, the Roma Council was founded in 2009 and functioned as the most important coordinating body of the RCH Roma ministry. It consisted of 12 members, three delegates from the four church districts, and was led by a national coordinator. The main focus of the Council was to create a Roma concept and action plan for the Church. This was accomplished in 2013, when the Synod accepted its Roma Strategy at the April session and the finalized Roma Action Plan during the Synod's November meeting.

Photo by András Hajdu



“Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Reformed Church in Hungary as a sign and agent of God’s Kingdom will be a church of personal and social transformation, a community where irrespectively of origin or race, people can experience the welcoming, reconciling and healing power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”



Mission Statement of the RCH Roma Concept

Photos by András Hejdu



The Mission Statement of the RCH’s Roma Concept highlights the Church’s work among Roma as a sign of God’s Kingdom and an important step toward reconciliation.

The action plan outlines concrete examples for implementing the theological statements and strategic objectives presented in the Roma Concept. The Council created three action plans, each working toward a different goal. The guidelines discussed in the plan were formed around sociological data in addition to information drawn from local RCH congregations. A nationwide survey was conducted from December 2012 to February 2013 to collect this congregational data. Seven hundred congregations responded to the survey describing their current practices in regards to Roma within their church communities.

The three main goals laid out in the Roma Action Plan serve as signposts to strive for when working to become “a church of personal and social transformation” as described in the Concept’s Mission Statement:

1. For congregations of the RHC to preach the Gospel’s life-shaping message to those living on the edge of society, including the large number of Roma.
2. By the service of the Church, Roma will experience God’s restorative and healing love in all dimensions of their life.
3. RCH congregational work serves for mutual reconciliation and repentance between Roma and the majority society.

Now that the Synod has accepted the Roma Concept and Roma Action Plan, the work of the Roma Mission Council has been completed and the Council disbanded.

Another step in the Church’s priority on Roma ministry comes in the form of a new project, known as the Country Program, which is mutually coordinated with the RCH and Swiss Interchurch Aid (HEKS). The project is scheduled to run from 2013-2016 and will place a main focus on the

education and life skill development of Roma youth. (See more about HEKS in the adjacent article.)

The heart and soul of Roma Ministry, however, lies in those whose day-to-day work and service in different projects, congregational initiatives or programs make the ministry possible. This year, Anikó Uhrin, Director of the István Wáli Reformed Roma Collegium in Debrecen, was publically recognized among the recipients of the annual Wallenberg Award, which is presented to individuals whose life and work is dedicated to helping those living in discrimination. The award ceremony was held in January at the Holocaust Memorial Center in Budapest. The Raoul Wallenberg Association, the Embassy of Sweden and the Hungarian Ministry of Human Resources worked together to organize the ceremony.

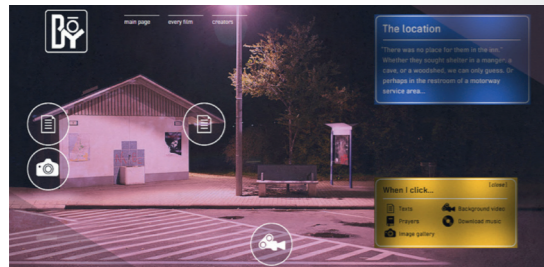
Working Together For A Brighter Future

It is an exciting time for the RCH and the Swiss Interchurch Aid (HEKS). On 5 September, the two organizations took another step together to strengthen their partnership with an agreement that focuses on Roma ministry in Hungary. The longstanding relationship between Swiss and Hungarian churches built the foundation for the current RCH and HEKS cooperation, and provides a stronghold for the roots of this new agreement to flourish. This next step in cooperation comes in the form of a new, mutually coordinated project known as the Country Program. The main objectives and priorities during this time, which is planned to run from 2013 to 2016, will be placed on the education and life skill development of Roma youth through training, improving the relationship between Roma and Hungarians as well as developing accessibility throughout the RCH.



Photo by Krisztian Sereg

The program will be coordinated through the collaborative work of the Mission Office of the RCH and HEKS, but will also involve the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid in the area of accessibility.



Photos by András Hajdu

We All Sit At One Table

Each year, taxpayers in Hungary have the ability to direct one percent of their income taxes to a Church of their choice. During this time the Church creates a campaign that communicates the identity of the RCH. This year's campaign for support showed a social montage of real people with real stories, because the RCH operates on the principle that *"the church exists in its congregations"* — it is a social network between lots of different people. Indeed, the church gains strength from the uniqueness of its members, a message that was reflected in the 1% campaign entitled, *"We all sit at one table."*

A Real Christmas

How do you retell the Nativity Story, which has been told millions of times? What is the best way to take a story steeped in so much meaning and share it with today's modern society? For the RCH communication team, the concept for *"The Boy"* started as a small idea of showing a modern and unique view of the Savior's birth and grew into a comprehensive campaign — a modern depiction for a modern, relevant message. As the campaign took shape,

the idea transformed into a bold visual message accompanied by an in-depth website that boasts behind-the-scenes information about the theological messages found in the film, interviews with the cast and controls to explore the film's world. These features allow the message to go beyond the video and show the parallels between modern society and historical times.

Caring for God's Creation

The Eco-Congregation project, which originally started in 2010 with support from the Church of Scotland, continues to grow, adding more *"eco-congregations"* to the program. Now, the initiative is completely self-sufficient and boasts eight congregations within the RCH committed to saving the created world. In April, the Eco-Congregation Committee organized a conference that posed the question: How natural are we? The special guest lecturer for the event was Professor Alan Werritty from Dundee University in Scotland. Also, in July winners of the first National Creation Care Competition participated in a six-day study visit to Scotland. During the eventful trip, students of the Fasar Lutheran Secondary School had the opportunity to see the Scottish eco-congregation program in action.



Photo by András Hajdu

There are four groups representing four of the RCH's ministries: (from left to right) drug and alcohol rehabilitation, handicapped mission, family counseling and service to the elderly.



Photos by András Hajdu

Dóra Kanizsai-Nagy,
Director of the Refugee Ministry

"...our work can be a good example of an extended hand for the new arrivals. Our mission is to give a home for them, to help them rebuild their lives in humanity, and give them Christ's love."



Photo by Zita Merényi

A Home Away From Home

On World Refugee Day, 20 June, refugees, program directors, social workers and volunteers of the RCH Refugee Ministry celebrated the opening of a brand new refugee community center in the heart of Budapest. The community center serves as a place for recognized refugees to meet for language lessons, tutoring, or simply a relaxed space to hangout and watch movies together. It also houses the main offices for the Ministry's social workers, who work with refugees to help them navigate Hungarian bureaucratic channels. In addition, the building provides a home for an afterschool program, a library with refugee and migration related material (mostly used by university students working on migration topics), and a library specifically for refugees, which is filled with Hungarian textbooks and reading materials in different languages.

This year the hard work and dedication evidenced in the Community Center was celebrated when the Eurodiaconia recognized the Refugee Ministry in Brussels for its excellent work in the refugee integration program. Likewise in Hungary, director of the Refugee Ministry, Dóra Kanizsai-Nagy, was commended for her work in this field. She was awarded the Equality Prize from Hungary's Ministry of Human Resources for her outstanding

work promoting equality in Hungary. During the ceremony, Minister of Human Resources Zoltán Balogh described it in this way, *"The job of social workers is to shake up the world from indifference, changing the belief that 'there is no way out of difficult situations.'"*

Crossing the Threshold

The Hungarian Reformed Church Aid organized an accessibility conference in March that served as a forum to examine the current accessibility of Reformed congregations and to consider new ways of facilitating handicap integration into church communities. Representatives from different congregations, individuals living with disabilities and those who work with the handicapped attended the conference. Aside from lectures and panel discussions, participants were also able to break into small workshops that each highlighted a different topic, for instance deaf, blind, mentally disabled or autistic. These conversations were designed to examine different churches' best practices and determine actual issues concerning accessibility, including ideas to combat them.

RE THINKING NEWING VISIONING

The Church Revision Committee (CRC) was created to examine the lives of local congregations and through dialogue determine a national strategy. After its approval in November 2012, the Revision Committee set about examining the best way to create meaningful discussion among the RCH's 1,249 congregations.





Photo by András Hajdu

“The Gospel is the church’s treasure, the church and its future is born from it. Practically speaking, Christ is our future. There are no models for building congregations that we can just unpack at home and have the congregation already developed. They are born from discipleship and from being followers of Jesus. People spread it among themselves. The community can represent, confirm or discredit the preaching. This is the work of the Word, the Holy Spirit and the reformed renewal process. The possibility for renewal is not above us or among us, but in us. If we do not dare look each other in the eye, then the Church cannot be reformed – not even if we preach. If we change inside, then the Word coming from us will sound different and our congregations will look different as well. This means a breakdown, a struggle, and in the end conversion. That is why this committee’s task is not putting a nice package of programs on the table, but striving to achieve this inner-renewal.”



While considering how to collect information on the life of the church, the committee, which is made up of 13 people, decided upon a program with a series of questions created to develop a forum for frank discussion concerning each congregation’s life, mission and vision for the future. A packet with discussion material and a short questionnaire was sent to every congregation in the RCH and outlined how best to conduct the meetings and complete the process. The committee suggested the material in the packet, entitled “Touch,” be covered in three separate meetings.

This format created a dialogue between the national church and local congregations instead of relying on information from third-party experts attempting to observe congregational life and structure from an outside perspective.

Considering the areas of concern outlined in the Committee’s second submission to the Synod, which was accepted in November, the CRC joined forces with the Synod Mission Committee. Together they re-launched the operation of the Mission Committee’s eight working groups, which were originally formed in September 2013 to develop a mission strategy for the Church at the first so-called “Mission Day.” The CRC determined that the groups’ strategic objectives for strategic planning were so closely related to the themes and issues dealt with in the revision process that it would serve both committees best to combine efforts.

The CRC invited the Mission Committee’s eight working groups to examine three crucial areas identified from the evaluation of responses:

missionary identity of congregations, mission oriented operation of church-run institutions and structural revision. These working groups were charged with drafting proposals for the next step of the revision process.

In their workshops, the working groups focus on deepening congregations’ mission identity, establishing stronger youth and child participation, as well as the topics of church-run institutions, church structure, the payment scheme of pastors and creating a better atmosphere of trust and solidarity. The groups are not only made up of pastors but professionals and experts from different fields as well.



Photo by Krisztián Sereg

*András Harmathy,
Convener of the Church Revision Committee*



Our Life Beyond the Borders

The Year Of Heidelberg Catechism

Alongside our reformed brothers and sisters around the world, we commemorated the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism in 2013, marking it a memorial year of remembrance and celebration for one of Protestantism's essential theological works and one of the RCH's two principle confessions. Our church observed the memorial year in several ways, most importantly through the new Hungarian translation of the Catechism, which the Synod accepted as the official translation.

Beyond the borders of Hungary, the Synod of the Hungarian Reformed Church, consisting of the RCH and its sister churches in the Carpathian Basin, also voted to adopt the new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism as the unified confession of the wider Hungarian reformed community. The Churches' mutual acceptance of the translation

signifies a huge step toward unified liturgical material throughout the Carpathian Basin.

The unity of the HRC and the importance of the Heidelberg Catechism to the Church are represented in the Declaration of the Common Synod of the Hungarian Reformed Church.

Celebrating Unity

The community of Hungarian-speaking Reformed churches from across the Carpathian Basin gathered in Debrecen on 28 June for the Common Synod of the Hungarian Reformed Church (HRC) with a special emphasis on the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism. This was the HRC's first Common Synod session since the Church's constituting Synod on 22 May 2009. In addition to the member churches, several guests from abroad came to share in the special meeting, including delegates from Poland, Lithuania as well as Rev. Dr. Guy Liagre, general secretary of the Conference

Declaration of the Common Synod of the Hungarian Reformed Church

We Hungarian Reformed people, in the community of our Common Synod, give thanks to God for our confession, the 450-year-old Heidelberg Catechism, in confirming the alliance with God and with one another. We received the new revised Hungarian text of the Catechism with this in mind. The Heidelberg Catechism is a confessional writing, which with the limitedness of human expression formulates our faith in God and gives account of Christian life. It does this in a form which has affected many different cultures in the same way: gathering together and preserving.

We are of Christ who comforts, guides and maintains His people. The Heidelberg Catechism is – still today – a valid and clear expression of this joyful certitude and steadfast faith, reminding us at the same time that the Hungarian Reformed people belong inseparably to a community of values beyond borders and continents. There is no language, cultural or historical barrier that can break our Christian fraternity, which is expressed in this confession. The Heidelberg Catechism reveals in each language and in each age the same: salvation by and reality of Christ in man's life and His sanctifying presence in the church. The fact that the Heidelberg Catechism has been published in the languages of the people in the Carpathian Basin is a message: in the reconciliation of nations, we are sisters and brothers belonging to the God of salvation.

Soli Deo Gloria!



of European Churches, and Rev. Jan-Gerd Heetderks, president of the European Area World Communion of Reformed Churches. The Synod voted to accept the accession of the Reformed Christian (Calvinist) Church in Croatia (RCCC) into the HRC as well as the subsequent constitutional modifications necessary for the membership. The presidency of the HRC's General Convent declared the RCCC and its leadership, Bishop Lajos Csáti Szabó and Lay President József Kel, whose elections were witnessed by General Convent legal representatives, as the lawful representation of the Hungarian reformed community in Croatia. With this addition, the total number of member churches in the HRC stands at seven. Member churches retain individual autonomy but rejoice in their shared history and culture.

A Bridge Of Love

The Bridge of Love event was a great opportunity for both young and old from across the Carpathian Basin to be part of a community and serve for a good cause. This year more applicants registered for the service project than ever before. Sixteen thousand volunteers worked in 340 locations over two days. Bridge of Love was started in 2009 following the Constituting Synod of the

Hungarian Reformed Church, to call the whole Reformed community together to act in terms of social responsibility and work across the entire region in small or large groups, giving real help to villages, institutions, congregations and communities.

Bishop Installations

Béla Kató: Visitors from around the Carpathian Basin and beyond gathered in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), Romania to celebrate the election and installation of Béla Kató as the 46th bishop of the Transylvanian district of the Reformed Church in Romania. Leaders from Reformed communities throughout the Carpathian Basin as well as politicians and ecumenical partners participated in the event, offering words of greeting to the newly installed bishop.

Béla Halász: It was a long, complicated road, but after delays, appeals and internal disputes, word finally arrived in March from the Reformed Christian Church in Serbia that Béla Halász was elected as the Church's new bishop. Following the tumultuous bishop election, which began at the end of 2012, the newly appointed bishop was installed on 13 April 2013.



Our
Contribution

to the
Global
Church

An important and exciting task for today's churches, as members of Christ's Universal Church, is creating and sustaining relationships with fellow church institutions...

"This Starpoint festival certainly has the potential to change a lot of lives, renew a lot of beliefs and change a lot of minds. I am certainly looking forward to seeing the "Places of epiphany" where human hearts and minds meet with our Triune God and something unexplainable (for our limited human languages) happens. I am sure that there is a special meeting awaiting every participant."

Photo by Krisztián Sereg



Frans du Plessis, Delegate from the Dutch Reformed Church in South African

Starpoint: Be Who You Are

July was the end to another Starpoint (Csillagpont) Reformed Youth Festival; this year in Mezőtúr. The festival was only possible thanks to the hard work of 900 volunteers.

After two years of planning, everything culminated in Mezőtúr with more than 3,700 participants registered for the week. Young people gathered from around the Carpathian Basin and from abroad as well, to come together in fellowship and discuss what it means to have a Christian identity. József Csomos Jr. led morning lectures followed by another service from Levente Horváth in the evenings where they gave examples from the Bible and from their personal lives to explain what it means to "Be Who You Are" – this year's festival motto.

Small group discussions allowed participants to meet all kinds of different people and really delve into the topics discussed during the lectures. Each day had a different set of programs, lectures

and concerts, and participants had the freedom to choose the events that interested them the most. Like other Starpoint Festivals in the past, it offered participants the opportunity to gather in fellowship and have fun without the use of drugs or alcohol. This year we welcomed 40 international participants from Canada, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Germany, South Korea, Taiwan, America, Scotland and England.

These international participants had a slightly different schedule than the other Hungarian participants, but there were specific programs designed to incorporate Hungarian youth so that they were able to meet and share in the excitement of Starpoint together.



Photo by Amy Lester

Philippines: Responding To The Call

A medical team from the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (HRCA) deployed to the Philippines on 13 November following the devastation of Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) in order to deliver 27,000 USD-worth of medical equipment and emergency supplies. The team of seven was able to provide free medical care to 250-400 local people on a daily basis in Tacloban. They also aided in the installation of mobile provision points in Tanuan and Dulag. The medical mission ended on the 22 November, while the team's coordination activity finished at the end of November.



Photo by Dániel Osgyán



Photo by Peter Kenny

14th CEC Assembly: "And now what are you waiting for?"

The RCH was honored to be one of the hosting churches that worked alongside the Conference of European Churches (CEC) Assembly Planning Committee to create a successful meeting, which was held in Budapest at the beginning of July under the theme "And now what are you waiting for?" The RCH, as a member church of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, was heavily involved in the planning and execution of the assembly's logistical details. Six full-time RCH staff members were offered to the assembly as co-opted staff. The RCH also coordinated a large group of Hungarian volunteers that provided local information throughout the week and worked in conjunction with the assembly stewards.

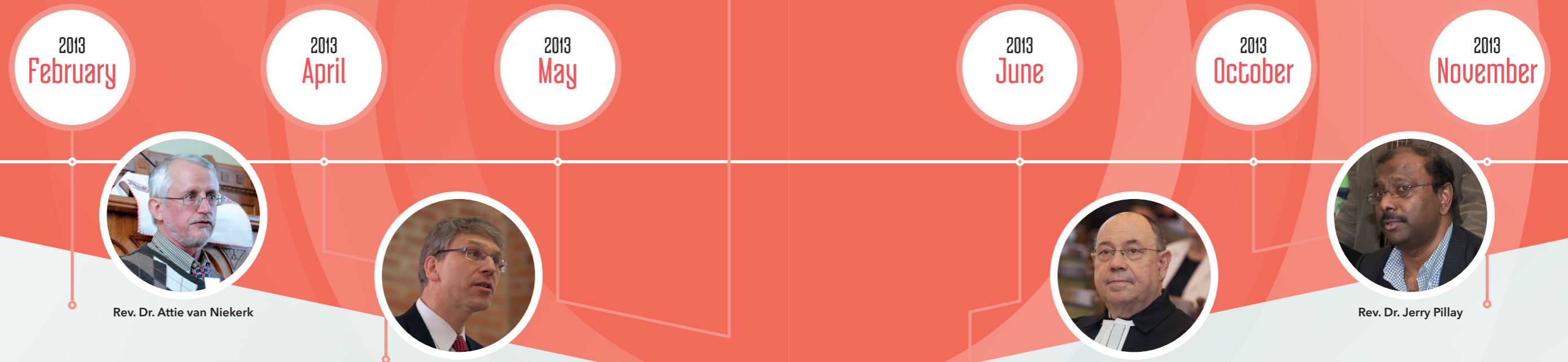


Living Out Partnership Through Visits

The RCH participates on an international level in several ways with global ecumenical organizations, but the most evident way is through its involvement and partnership with other Churches around the world.

The new ecumenical department executive secretary of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, Rev. Dr. Cheon Min Heui, visited the RCH to gain some more understanding about the RCH and its current context in Hungary as well as to discuss ways in which the partner churches can strengthen their ecumenical relationship and the placement of a new PROK mission co-worker in Hungary.

The relationship between the RCH and Global Ministries (GM) in the USA is unique, mainly because GM is not a single church, but is in fact the combined overseas ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. In October, Peter Makari, GM Area Executive for Europe and the Middle East, visited the RCH to sustain the relations of the RCH and UCC.



One of the first visits of 2013 from a partner institution occurred in February, when Dr. Attie van Niekerk, founding member and managing director of the NOVA Institute as well as a theological professor at the University of Pretoria, came to Budapest to present a series of lectures on poverty and the redefinition of mission.

The Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary (ECCH) welcomed the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Rev. Dr. Olav Tveit, to Budapest in April where he met with several church and political leaders, including Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Furthermore, Rev. Tveit presented a lecture on the challenges and opportunities of the ecumenical movement today.

Nikolaus Schneider, president of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), received an honorary doctorate in June from Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary. While in Hungary, Rev. Schneider met with bishops István Csúry (Oradea), Béla Kató (Cluj) and Sándor Zán Fábián (Berehove) from the Hungarian Reformed communities in the Carpathian Basin.

Toward the end of the year, Jerry Pillay, president of the World Council of Reformed Churches and general secretary of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in South Africa, made a trip to Hungary to receive an honorary doctorate from the Debrecen Reformed Theological University on one hand, but on the other to visit the RCH and bolster the sense of unity the Church feels within the WCRC and its member churches.

Photos from left to right, by:
Amy Lester, Krisztián Sereg (2), Vargosz



Honorary Doctors Named in Debrecen

Ten honorary doctorates were awarded in November at the Reformed College in Debrecen. The Reformed Theological University in Debrecen consecrated the honorary doctors on the occasion of the Reformed College's 475th anniversary. Among those honored were Dr. Ulrich Körtner, Professor of Social Ethics in Vienna, Dr. Gottfried Wilhelm Locher, President of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, Dr. Jerry Pillay, WCRC president and Professor Herman J. Selderhuis, Director of Refo500.

All Hearts And Minds Focused On Busan

The RCH was represented at the 10th WCC General Assembly in Busan, South Korea by the largest Hungarian delegation that has ever attended, including Bishop Gusztáv Bölcskei, General Secretary Zoltán Tarr, Ecumenical Officer Balázs Ódor, Head of Mission Eszter Dani and Orsolya Somosfalvi as a WCC steward. The assembly presented a unique opportunity and forum for open dialogue with several Churches and church leaders from around the world. This included a meeting with Armenian church leaders, His Holiness Karekin II, supreme patriarch and Catholicos of the Holy See of St. Echmiadzin and All Armenians, as well as Nareg Amezian, Archbishop and representative of the Cilician Catholicosate (Lebanon).

Social Inclusion in East and West

In October, political and religious leaders from Northrhine-Westphalia came to Hungary to participate in discussions with policymakers and see firsthand operating Roma programs. Migration within Europe is a complex issue that is affecting a number of countries in the EU. As the EU continues to expand toward the East, large numbers of Roma are arriving in Germany, especially Northrhine-



Photo by Balázs Ódor

Westphalia for asylum and poverty-related reasons. Several cities are facing major integration challenges. These meetings in Hungary allowed time to experience concrete examples and steps taken in integration. The Church of Westphalia, a partner of the RCH, initially suggested the trip to its local parliamentary representatives as an opportunity to learn from current practices in Hungary after extended dialogue with the RCH regarding Roma relations within the country and Church. The visiting politicians represent different German political parties and are involved with the committee for social inclusion.

20 Years Of Sharing the Gospel Through Education

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of its establishment, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary organized an international conference titled, "Confessionality and University in the Modern World" that in addition to celebrating the foundation of the University, focused on the role, challenges and opportunities of Christian universities in a contemporary landscape. Special guests include Prof. Jan Peter Balkenende, honorary doctorate of Károli Gáspár University and former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, and Dr. Mwenda Ntarangwi, Executive Director of the International Association



Photo by Amy Lester

for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education, and included a lecture from Dr. Jeff Bouman of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Teach Overseas

The RCH was happy to welcome a group of 10 U.S. teachers to Hungary from the Teach Overseas program. Teach Overseas is an interdenominational program that has been in operation since 1981 and has been working in Hungary for 20 years. It provides native-English-speaking individuals from the United States an opportunity to travel to different countries and teach conversational English. The teachers spent the summer teaching English at refugee camps in Debrecen, Bicske, Fót and at the Refugee Ministry's community center in Budapest. The team was made up of young and old. In fact, two were veterans of the Teach Overseas program, with both returning after previously serving in Hungary, but all were thankful for a memorable, faith-filled experience working with the refugees.





KIRCHENTAG

EAST IN WEST

For the first time ever, the RCH was able to represent itself at the German Protestant Kirchentag, this year held in Hamburg, with its own booth at the so-called, "Market of Opportunities" in the festival's exhibition hall. The RCH's international and ecumenical office, in coordination with the communication office, prepared the active contribution of 34 participants.



"It is our conviction that in an ever diverging Europe the responsibility of churches, especially the communion of Protestant churches, in creating space for mutual, critical conversation and a promotion of exchange among equals is essential... Otherwise, the so often boasted 'diversity' coupled with the financial and economic crisis will turn into a 'tension test' for the old continent, and instead of solidarity, frustration and distrust – if nothing else between East and West – will increase where unity in diversity should prevail – in Europe."

RCH Kirchentag website

Photos by Amy Lester



The Church's stand was designed to be interactive; from the touch screen visual of the 1% campaign, which inspired guests to explore a "virtual" background and website launched specifically for this memorable event, to the face-to-face contact received from the "living library," where members of the RCH team acted as living references and welcomed visitors with information about the different ministries of the RCH. Kirchentag proved to be an excellent way to share the work and passion of RCH missions and ministries. Representatives from several different areas of the Church were present, such as Refugee Ministry, Roma Ministry, Deaf Mission and the Eco-Congregation program.

There were also several round table conversations that provided a chance for visitors to get firsthand information on the life of the Church and the political situation in Hungary. RCH organizers were able to provide a space to address those sensitive

public and political issues that could be seen as endangering the democratic establishment in Hungary. Presiding bishop, Gusztáv Bölcskei, participated in several discussion panels, with Rev. Thomas Wipf, moderator of the European Council of Religious Leaders and CPCE president, Rev. Rafael Nikodemus, Church Councilor of the Evangelical Church in Rheinland, Rev. Jörg Schmidt President of the Reformed Alliance in Germany and Rev. Enno Haaks, General Secretary of Gustav Adolf Werk (GAW). In addition, Bishop Bölcskei was joined for a very interesting, central discussion panel on the importance of Roma ministry alongside the RCH's Head of Mission, Eszter Dani, General Secretary of CCME, Doris Peschke, regional liaison for Central and Eastern Europe, Burkhardt Paetzold and moderated by Ulrich Möller, Head of the Ecumenical Relation Department of the Evangelical Church in Westphalia.

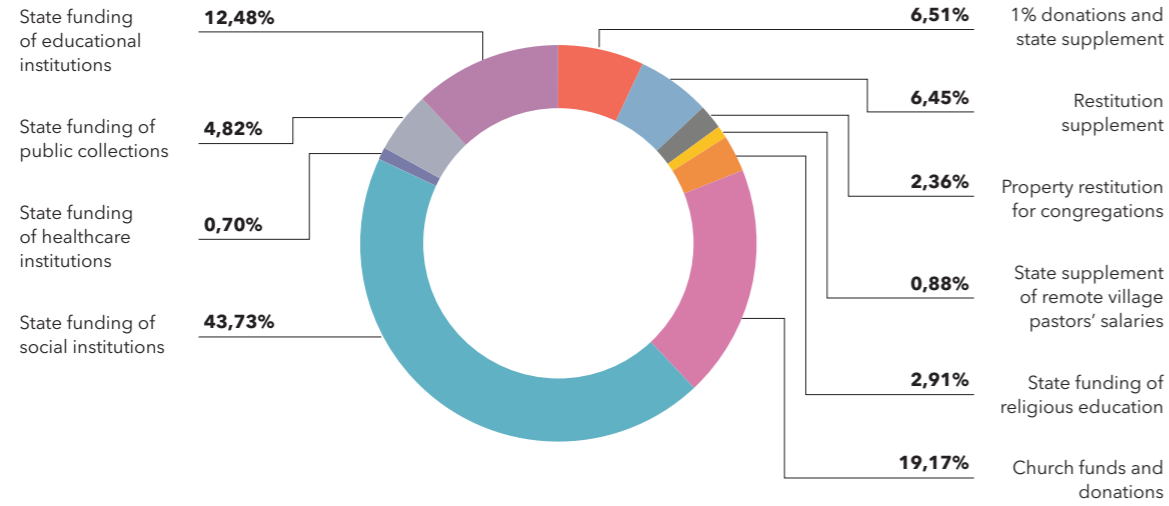
The Church's participation at Kirchentag was based on the voluntary contributions and passion of many, and was financially made possible by the Evangelical Church in Rheinland, an important German partner church of the RCH.



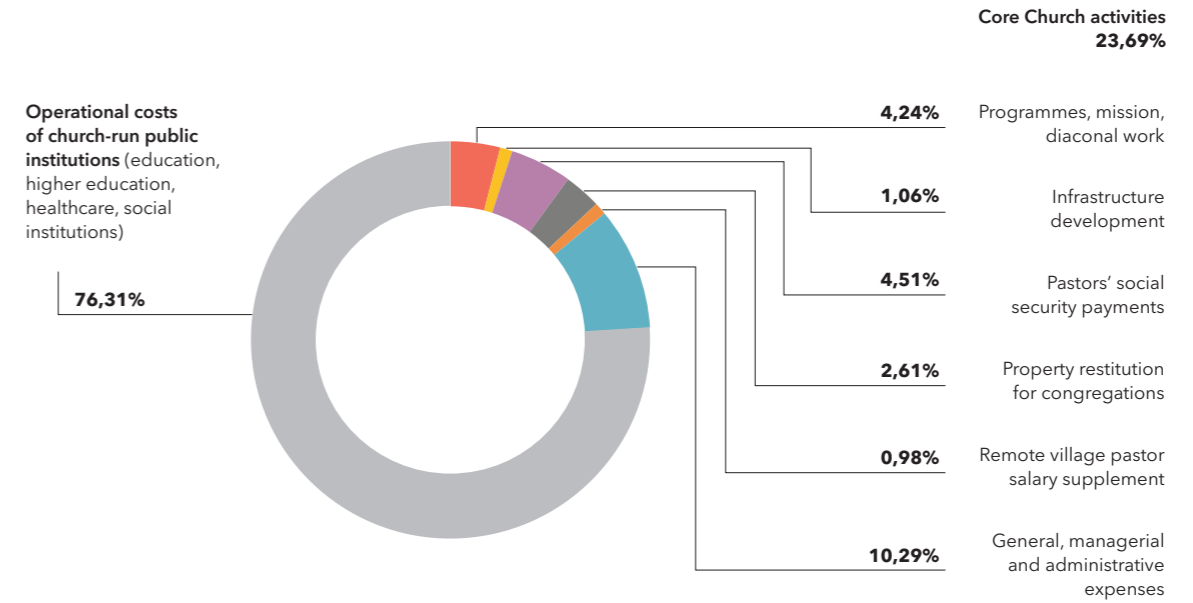
Photos by Amy Lester



The RCH Central Funds in 2013



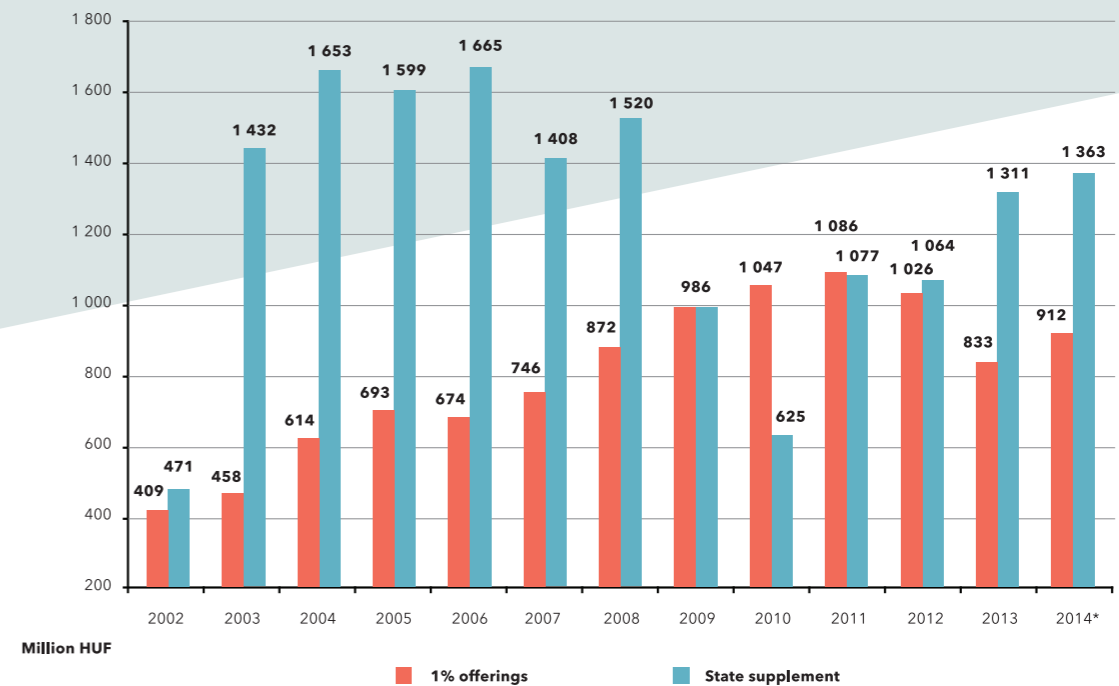
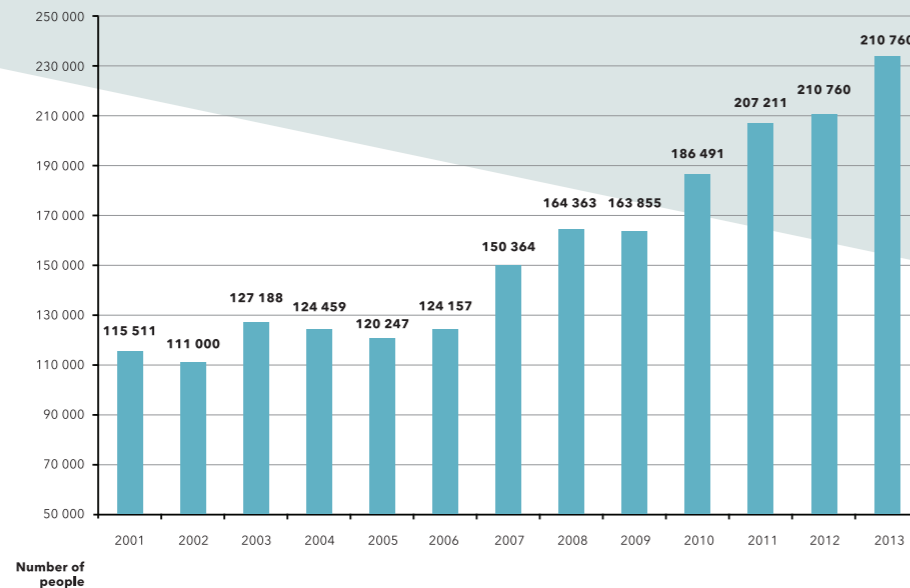
The RCH Central Expenses in 2013



Statistics

1% of Individual Income Taxes Donated to the RCH and its State Supplement Budget Years 2002-2014 (* preliminary data)

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



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