

Magyaroute



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I was going to start off my first newsletter with a plan: I was going to know exactly what to write about, because I've known this would be coming for a long time, haven't I? I knew that I'd be going to Central Europe for many months now. And even though I'll be living in a new country for a whole year, I had time to brace myself, prepare, expect the unexpected, blah blah blah. Yeah, that didn't happen. So much happened in the last month, and I have certainly been asked many times what I've been up to recently in these busy few weeks. Even so, I don't even know where to start with it except for the feeling of grief. Not exactly the grief of someone dying, but more like the grief of leaving so much behind.

This is certainly not unique to me; I'm sure many of my YAGM colleagues have felt something like this, related to the big transitional shifts of leaving behind life in the United States for an unknown. I just speak for myself here: it can be lonely, and it can also be freeing. I think this time of letting go has really emphasized that mindset is so much, and at the same time, mindset still can't solve everything. There's a trade-off that I felt with how close I felt to the individuals at all of the orientations I've been going through recently, whether in Chicago or Bratislava or Piliscsaba or Budapest. When it's over, everyone goes their separate ways, and I miss my cohort and friends and family with a fierceness that I don't know how to justify with words. I was a little skeptical about putting this in the newsletter, but I don't really know what the newsletter is for if not to actually be authentic about all of this. And despite the feeling of loss, we keep moving forward anyway.

The journey isn't mine alone, but I enjoy talking about it nonetheless, even if there is still a sense of grief that comes along as well. And certainly, the journey so far has been deeply rewarding, and balances the losses. My fellow participants in the YAGM program, and in particular my friends Sara, Madeline, Connor, and Lindsey, are very dear to me now. So is my country coordinator Kelly, along with her husband Aaron (and their canine-in-residence Winnie, of course). Although I have no clue what I'll be writing in each of the newsletters, and I don't have as much of a plan as I sometimes wish I had, I'm so excited to share the sights and stories that are encountered along the way.

*The word "Hungarian" in Hungarian is Magyar (sometimes Magyarul), hence the name of this newsletter!

Szia! (see-ya) = Hello!/Goodbye!

Köszönöm! (koh-soh-nohm) = Thank you!

Kérek _____. (keh-rek) = I would like _____ please

Bocsánat. (boh-chah-naht) = Sorry./Excuse me.

Igen (ee-gehn) = Yes
Nem = No

Kicsit beszélek magyarul*. (kee-cheet bes-eh-lehk mai-yah-rule) = I speak a little bit of Hungarian.



Chicago

Our first stop was in Chicago, where the YAGM participants met with each other once again after finding out our placements back in March at the DIP orientation weekend, where we all met each other for the first time. 28 of us attended the Chicago orientation, and we were setting ourselves up to go to Argentina/Uruguay, Central Europe, Jerusalem and the West Bank (JWB), Mexico, Senegal, and the United Kingdom.



Bratislava



The next stop on our journey, after a nine hour flight from Chicago to Vienna, was a week in Slovakia. Kelly, our country coordinator, and Aaron, her husband and the pastor of Bratislava International Church, picked us up from Vienna and drove us to Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. Over the next week, we got an introduction to Slovakian history and the abbreviated recent history of Central Europe; most notably, the introduction of fascism and the Nazis immediately followed by totalitarian communism from the Soviet Union.



Piliscsaba

After Bratislava, the group finally headed into Hungary, where we stayed at a Lutheran retreat center in Piliscsaba. Our goal: to study Hungarian under a fantastic teacher, who even took us into Budapest towards the end in order to practice using and recognizing our newfound Hungarian vocabulary. See the previous page for some of the basics!



Budapest



After the sending service in Piliscsaba, the cohort separated and I was taken to my new host city in Budapest. Currently, I am serving as both an English teacher assistant in the Lutheran school Déak Tér as well as working alongside refugees in the organizations Mandák Ház and Dévai Fogadó. Stay tuned for more updates to come on this part of my life soon!

Please consider supporting me financially! I have been asked to raise \$5000 to help cover the costs of this journey. If you are interested in contributing, you can make a check payable to "ELCA Global Mission" with "YAGM GCS2103" in the memo line and mail it to: ELCA Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.

