

## UNITARIAN ACADEMY ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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### 1. ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITARIAN ACADEMY

#### 1.1. UNITARIAN ACADEMY IN ITS FIRST YEAR OF EXISTENCE

Unitarian Academy (UA) has completed the first year of its existence. The presented annual report briefly describes and evaluates the Academy's current activities: what has happened and whether/how the initial expectations have been fulfilled.

Retreats under the first two training modules took place in 2017. Launched in the spring, the *Tradition* module was dedicated to the history of both national and international Unitarianism. The autumn module focused on the issues of *Leadership*, considering the ethical matters as well as the practical management of a community, especially at the level of individual congregations. The first retreat was held in Český Krumlov from 30 March to 2 April and was attended by twenty-one students, five teachers and four non-lecturing sponsors and members of the UA leadership. The autumn retreat took place at the baroque hospital of Kuks, East Bohemia from 26 to 29 October with twenty-two students and five teachers participating. The autumn term also saw the launching of our advanced module (focused on *Ethos of Unitarian Ministry*) intended for aspiring ministers (25-26 October).

To date, the UA has thirty registered students in total (eight in the advanced module). In connection with the commencement of the advanced module we have also published our Academy's first textbook - *Introduction to Unitarian Ministry* written by Peter Samojský. Both retreats featured prominent lecturers of the international Unitarian scene - Sara Ascher, ICUU executive director, Eric Cherry, director of the International Bureau of the American Association of Unitarians and Universalist, Sándor Kovács, professor at the Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj, Romania and also Lawrence Peers, Unitarian minister, coach and advisor previously of the Meadville Lombard Unitarian theological school. Spiritual classes at both retreats were conducted by the UA committee member Jiří Motl and both retreats also featured additional social and cultural activities. Participation in the Academy's individual modules was open to all RSCU members as well as to foreign and domestic guests. The number of attendants was mainly limited by the capacity of the venues used. However, most participants continued their studies in between the retreats taking the advantage of the guidance provided by study sponsors and UA committee members to work on short theses, complete their assignments and familiarize themselves with the recommended literature. One of the communication tools to keep in touch with the UA in between the retreats was the newly established Academy's website ([www.unitarska-akademie.cz](http://www.unitarska-akademie.cz)), including the Intranet.

In terms of the Academy's impact on our community, it is probably too early to draw a more elaborate conclusion regarding the benefits of the acquired skills and knowledge for the operation of the RSCU as a whole or of the individual congregations. We can, however, already say that the UA has made a significant contribution to build a good rapport among the members of the various congregations within our society (the courses were attended by members of six out of the eight RSCU's congregations). It is safe to say that the Academy's activities have contributed to mutual understanding and respect for the activities and specialisations of individual congregations and enhanced our ability to share our experiences and learn from them.

The Academy has also helped RSCU establish contacts with several important figures of the liberal religious scene in the Czech Republic - Filip Jaroš, Jiří Motl, Ruth Weininger, all of them giving a boost to and a new perspective on the activities of both RSCU and the individual congregations. Without the UA the space for mutual cooperation would be significantly reduced. The current negotiations on the takeover of the Global Ethic Foundation's library stock by the RSCU's library are just one of the multiple tangible results of this cooperation. The news section of the Czech liberal religious magazine *Dingir* has published a short article on the UA, thus bringing Unitarians on this stage after a long time. It seems that the project has the potential to spread awareness of Unitarianism at least within the domestic expert community and that this potential is being fulfilled faster than we originally hoped. Even the international response to the current activities of the UA gives hope that the project has a chance to significantly improve the operation and involvement of Czech Unitarians internationally. Lay Unitarians from neighbouring Central European countries have also taken interest in the programme and the opportunity to meet important figures of the American and European Unitarian scene. Featuring foreign teachers and members of our English-speaking community, the retreats are simultaneously translated into English which opens the door for foreign, mainly European guests, and the Academy is proud to announce to have welcomed our first foreign participants. This year's visit to the British Unitarians has also indicated that many churches know about the UA project and are showing a keen interest in it. Several members of European Unitarian Universalist congregations have expressed their interest in the UA courses and the Academy has been referred to in the *Unitarier* magazine.

In November, the UA leadership representatives P. Samojský and K. Ledererová Kolajová attended American Unitarian seminars at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago and Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley. The tour implied that the UA project opens a range of options and contacts at the international level for Czech Unitarians. We are currently discussing specific forms of official cooperation with both faculties.

Confronting the current UA activities with the initial objectives, we can say that the results have exceeded the expectations. We can be happy about the Academy becoming a reality and about the benefits it has brought, but also about the way the courses and other activities have taken place. The modules programme was intense, yet the atmosphere of both modules demonstrated the UA's potential to make the RSCU not only a better (i.e. more effectively operating) society but also a more lively (i.e. deeper and more authentic) community. The challenge now is to avoid falling for the illusion of easy success, to avoid setting overly high expectations of the future and especially to keep up the good work.

*Michal Kohout*

## **1.2 OUTLOOK FOR THE COMING YEARS**

It was not easy to set a course and determine all the details before starting the Unitarian Academy. Considering the future is always easier with experience and knowledge on hand. Considering the future today following the first year, we actually have a wealth of experience! New requirements and possibilities have emerged bringing about the following tasks for the coming period:

- organize two retreats under the regular study modules;
- organize two retreats under the N modules;
- launch foreign stay modules;
- define and launch practical spiritual exercises module;
- launch students' hands-on trainings under the N module and start preparing conditions in mentoring congregations;
- initiate cooperation with American seminars of Meadville Lombard Theological School and Starr King School for the Ministry
- discuss possibilities of cooperation with János Zsigmond Unitárius Kollégium in Cluj, Romania;
- consider further professionalization of the Unitarian Academy in the long term;

- use the experience gained to constructively select future venues;
- expand translation services during the modules to make foreign participants feel welcome;
- raise awareness of the programme especially among European Unitarians.

There is plenty to do and the list is not complete. Obviously, we will continue to monitor the opinions and impressions of the participants and lecturers and consider the advice provided by our informal pool of experts active in similar educational institutions.

*Petr Samojský*

## **2. SUMMARIES**

### **2.1. ORGANISATION, PERSONNEL, ECONOMY**

Unitarian Academy establishment: upon the decision of the Board of Trustees of 28 August 2016.

Commencement of operations: 1 January 2017

#### **UNITARIAN ACADEMY MANAGEMENT:**

##### ***Director:***

- prof. Ing. arch. Michal Kohout, elected for the period 2017-2019 on the basis of a tender

##### ***Unitarian Academy Working Committee:***

Established by the Unitarian Academy Commission's decision on 4 January 2017:

- prof. Ing. arch. Michal Kohout
- Rev. Petr Samojský, D.Min.
- PhDr. Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová

##### ***Unitarian Academy Commission (study sponsors):***

- Rev. ThDr. Sofia Pavala, elected for the period 2017-2018 on the basis of a tender, resigned due to excessive workload on 13 June 2017
- Rev. Mgr. Vlastimil Krejčí, elected for the period 2017-2018 after the resignation of S. Pavala
- Rev. Petr Samojský, D.Min., elected for the period 2017-2018 on the basis of a tender,
- Mgr. Štěpán Mairovský, elected for the period 2017-2018 on the basis of a tender,
- RNDr. Ladislav Pivec, CSc., elected on the basis of a tender, resigned due to health reasons in March 2017,
- PhDr. Jana Tichá, Ph.D., elected for the period 2017-2018 after the resignation of L. Pivec,
- Mgr. Jiří Motl, Ph. D., elected for the period 2017-2018 on the basis of a tender,
- Mgr. Filip Jaroš, Ph. D., elected for the period 2017-2018 on the basis of a tender.

#### **STUDENTS**

Enrolled in the first module: 21 students, 6 of them in the programme for ministerial candidates.

Enrolled in the second module: 30 students, 8 of them in the programme for ministerial candidates, 2 guests.

#### **ECONOMY**

In 2017, total revenues of the Unitarian Academy were 342,828 CZK.

In 2017, total expenditures of the Unitarian Academy were 320,971 CZK.

As of 31 December 2017 the funds available to the Unitarian Academy amount to 22,206 CZK.

#### **SUPPORTERS**

In 2017 the Unitarian Academy was financially supported by:

- Religious Society of Czech Unitarians – 230,000 CZK.
- Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council, under the Roots and Wings grant - 79,107 CZK.
- International Association for Religious Freedom, under the international grant programme - 22,721 CZK.
- Private donors – 11,000 CZK.

*Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová*

## **2.2. TRAINING, PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS**

### **MODULES STUDIED IN 2017**

#### TRADITION MODULE

Started at the retreat in Český Krumlov, 30 March – 2 April 2017

##### **Teachers:**

Rev. Sándor Kovács, Ph.D., Protestant Theology Institute of Cluj, Romania

Rev. Eric Cherry, director of the international office of the American Unitarians Universalist Association.

Rev. Petr Samojský, D.Min., Unitarian Academy

PhDr. Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová, head of the RSCU's Board of Trustees,

Rev. ThDr. Karolina Sofia Paval, Unitarian Academy

##### **Lectures:**

#### **Unitarian Roots and Formation of Unitarianism in the 20th Century**

The Earliest Roots (Poland, Transylvania, England, USA) / Sándor Kovács

Formation of an Organized Unitarian Church / Eric Cherry

Related Schools of Thought in Europe (Liberal Christianity) / Sándor Kovács

Related Schools of Thought in the USA (Universalism, Transcendentalism, Humanism) / Eric Cherry

#### **Czech Unitarianism**

Origins / Establishment of the Free Brotherhood / Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová

Origins / Čapek's synthesis; Czech Unitarianism as an Experiment? / Petr Samojský

Personalities, Locations and Relations / Karolina Sofia Paval

Post-war Development / Czech Unitarianism Between 1945 -1989 / Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová

Post-war Development / Search for Identity in the 1990s / Petr Samojský

#### **Current Unitarianism Worldwide**

Organizations (IARF, ICUU, CLF, EUU) / Eric Cherry

Trends / Current Trends in Unitarian Universalism in the US and Worldwide / Eric Cherry

Trends / Purpose and Goals of Transnational Unitarian Activities / Petr Samojský

#### LEADERSHIP MODULE

Launched at the retreat in Kuks, 25 - 29 October 2017

##### **Teachers:**

Rev. Dr. Lawrence Peers, coach and expert advisor

Rev. Sara Ascher, ICUU executive director

Rev. Petr Samojský, D.Min., Unitarian Academy

PhDr. Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová, head of the RSCU's Board of Trustees,

Rev. Mgr. Vlastimil Krejčí, Unitarian Academy

##### **Lectures:**

#### **Management, Management Personnel**

Management and Organization / lecture / Lawrence Peers

Management and Organization / workshop / Lawrence Peers  
Management of Unitarian Communities at Various Levels / Sara Ascher  
Management Personnel / hands-on training / Peter Samojský  
Management Personnel / education and self-education / Vlastimil Krejčí  
Management Personnel / workshop / Vlastimil Krejčí

#### **Dealing with Conflicts, Administration and Finance**

Conflict as an Opportunity / lecture / Lawrence Peers  
Administration and Finance / lecture / Sara Ascher  
Administration and Finance / workshop / Sara Ascher  
RSCU and its Funding / History, Present, Outlook / Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová  
RSCU and its Funding / Funding of the Congregations / Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová

#### **Volunteerism, RSCU management**

Working with Volunteers / lecture + workshop / Petr Samojský  
RSCU and its Management / mission, principles, objectives / Petr Samojský  
RSCU and its Management / regulations, institutions, congregations / Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová

### **N MODULE – CZECH UNITARIAN ETHICS**

Launched at the retreat in Kuks, 25 - 29 October 2017

#### **Teachers:**

Rev. Dr. Lawrence Peers, coach and expert advisor  
Rev. Sara Ascher, ICUU executive director  
Rev. Petr Samojský, D.Min., Unitarian Academy  
Rev. Mgr. Vlastimil Krejčí, Unitarian Academy

#### **Lectures:**

##### **Ministers and Their Role Today**

Ministry in Post-denomination Age / Sara Ascher  
Spiritual Leadership and its Role / lecture / Lawrence Peers  
Spiritual leadership and its Role / workshop / Lawrence Peers

##### **Spiritual Leadership of a Congregation**

Spiritual Leadership and Administration of a Congregation / lecture / Sara Ascher  
Spiritual Leadership and Administration of a Congregation / workshop / Sara Ascher  
Personal Role / lecture / Lawrence Peers  
Personal Role / workshop / Lawrence Peers  
Ministry in RSCU / tradition / Petr Samojský  
Ministry in RSCU / regulations / Vlastimil Krejčí  
Ministry in RSCU / sources of inspiration / Petr Samojský

### **UNITARIAN ACADEMY WEBSITE**

Website [www.unitarska-akademie.cz](http://www.unitarska-akademie.cz), launched 15 January 2017.

English version launched 1 April 2017.

Unitarian Academy Intranet, launched 4 September 2017.

### **PUBLISHING**

#### **Promotional materials:**

Leaflet The Unitarian Academy - Religious Education for the Open-minded.

#### **Publications:**

Samojský, Petr, *Úvod do práce unitářského duchovního. Podklady pro studium modulu N Unitářské akademie. (Introduction to Unitarian Ministry. Resources for the Unitarian Academy's N Module.)*  
Prague: Unitaria Publishing House 2017, 112 pp., ISBN 978-80-86105-77-2.

### ***Worksheets for students:***

Peers, Lawrence, Leadership Module. Worksheet. Unitarian Academy 2017.

Peers Lawrence N Module. Ethos of Unitarian Ministry. Worksheet. Unitarian Academy 2017.

*Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová*

### **3. CONCLUSION**

To conclude the first annual report, we would love to thank everyone who has helped to make the Unitarian Academy project possible. First and foremost, we have to mention minister Petr Samojský who was the one to come up with the UA idea and participated in its ideological and organizational preparation and implementation. Also, a well-deserved thank you goes to Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová for supporting the project as the head of the Board of Trustees and for the organisational work she has done along with the RSCU's management team - L. Hrabánková and R. Weininger. The UA is greatly indebted to them not only for their commitment in preparing the individual retreats, which in many respects surpassed the standards common for well-established institutions with a longer tradition and many times higher budgets, but also for the persistent organizational support in between the retreats, which included, to name but a few, organization, launching and operation of the UA website. We are also grateful to Kristýna and Petr for the often pioneering contributions they have made in exploring the history of the Czech Unitarian making the picture of our Unitarian history far more complete with its achievements and failures. We also greatly appreciate the work of other members of the committee of the Unitarian Academy – be it those who worked here only briefly at the very beginning, namely the head of the RSCU's Board of Ministers Karolina Sofia Paval and the lay members' representative and author of the UA's anthem Ladislav Pivec of the Prague Unitarian Congregation, or those who have worked for the Academy to date – non-Unitarian experts Jiří Motl and Filip Jaroš, lay Unitarians Štěpán Mairovský and Jana Tichá and minister Vlastimil Krejčí of the Teplice Unitarian Congregation. We are also thankful for our foreign teachers' academic work and contagious enthusiasm for the common Unitarian idea. Last but not least, we wish to thank our students for the interest they have expressed, effort they have made and the friendly atmosphere they created during the retreats.

Naturally, we must not forget our predecessors – the previous generations of Czech and foreign Unitarians. It is the awareness of and the confrontation with the often limited opportunities the Unitarians in neighbouring Poland, Austria and Germany have to develop their communities, that helps us better understand the benefit, both ideological and material, of the previous generations' actions and commitment for our Academy.

*Michal Kohout*

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