

UNITARIAN ACADEMY ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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1. ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITARIAN ACADEMY

1.1. UA STARTS ITS SECOND CYCLE IN PANDEMIC CONDITIONS.

The aim of this evaluative report is to present a brief description and recapitulation of the past and present activities of the Unitarian Academy (UA), an educative institution of the NSČU, in the 2020 i.e., at the beginning of the second educative cycle. Due to generally extraordinary conditions of the year 2020, affected by the pandemic, it is not surprising, that this year was unusual for the UA as well. Despite this, we achieved to fulfill main part of our goals, set by our institution for that year.

UA started 2020 in partially renewed structure and with a good awareness about its goals for the upcoming year. In 2019, the three-years cycle was completed, consisting of six main study modules (2017 – spring: *Traditions*, autumn: *Leadership*; 2018 – spring: *Service*, autumn: *Education*; 2019 – spring: *Public service*, autumn: *Theology*) and 5 extra modules for candidates of ministry were completed as well (2017 – autumn: *Ethos of the Unitarian ministry*; 2018 – spring: *Worship in context*, autumn: *Speech and work with text*; 2019 – spring: *Pastoral work*, autumn: *Functioning of the community and how to care for it*), two interesting spiritual colloquia (2019) and newly the first term of spiritual exercises in Na Bělidle u Krásné Lípy (summer 2019). All these events brought us many organizational experiences, and opportunities to gather in person and listen to distinguished Unitarian personalities from various parts of the world. Especially worthwhile was renewal or new reinforcement of our contacts with three main centers of the world Unitarianism: USA, Great Britain, and Transylvania. Besides, promotion of Czech Unitarianism was developing successfully on the level of international Unitarian life. Around the UA, a stable circle of sympathizers and supporters was constituted, making new connections between individual Czech Unitarian communities. It seemed, that there are no clouds on the horizon for our new educational cycle in 2020. We expected our planned spring and autumn educational modules, including additional programs, to be realized with no obstacles. And we had even new plans: extend our educational activities with a summer camp for children, elaborate our system of spiritual exercises, continue our successful international activities, and follow in our publication and promoting activity.

Nevertheless, in spring all plans of the UA were significantly disturbed. Due to the government administrative measures following the upcoming pandemic, the UA was made to cancel both spring modules (*Traditions*, extra-module *Sharing of Hope* and prepared spiritual colloquium *Significance of Personality in Religion in European Unitarian Tradition*). Luckily, this unpleasant loss appeared later as the only disruption of the UA plans for this year.

Summer retreat dedicated to spiritual exercises in Veltrusy (June 18th – 21st) was successfully realized. Six lecturers and fifteen participants attended the event. The main lecturers were Ivana Noble, professor of the Ecumenic Theology at the Protestant Theological Faculty at the Charles University, who led spiritual exercises, based on the Christian tradition of Ignatian contemplations, and Lenka Krejčová, alumni of the same faculty, who prepared for our students a mini course of mindfulness. Shorter courses of spiritual work were led by members of the UA commission, Matyáš Müller (working with body as the base of spirituality), Jiří Motl (projective techniques), Petr Samojský (active experiencing of liturgic components and everyday spirituality) and Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová (morning creative warming up with help of creative techniques and work with natural materials).

Another successful event was the summer camp for children in Starý Mlýnec near Litoměřice, taking place on July 11th – 24th. At the preparations, members of several Unitarian communities took part – chief organizers Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová (Wider Fellowship) and Jana Rašková (OUT), Petr Samojský (Prague Unitarian Community), Dagmar Kmínková (LOU) and other members of the communities mentioned above. The event for fourteen children's participants was based on the principles of Young Scouts' camps, cultivating self-knowledge and self-improvement together with fostering of friendship, respect to the Nature and World. Main topic, connected with various activities, was the all-camp game Pilgrimage to the Rainbow.

Equipped with experiences of spring 2020, the UA achieved to prepare well the online form of lecturing part of the autumn educational module. In total, nineteen lectures were organized in five days, all of them working on the Zoom. Eight lecturers taught at the UA in autumn module, five of them coming from abroad (seven lectures were in English). Eric Cherry, former head of the International Office of the American Unitarians and Universalists, who had been already present at the very first module of the UA in Český Krumlov, talked this time about various forms of Unitarian gatherings worldwide. Other lecturers were: Fred Muir, longtime Unitarian minister from Annapolis, U.S., mentor of more than a dozen of young ministry candidates and author of books on Unitarian topics; Chris Hudson, Irish Unitarian minister and participant in the peace process in Northern Ireland; Gawin Howell, secretary for British Unitarian Youth and former head of the Unitarian congregation in Norwich. Highly interesting was the contribution of Inga Brandes, first lay president of the ICUU. Czech lecturers were Petr Samojský, Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová and Vlastík Krejčí. Workshops, seminars, and the social part of this module should be by in spring (25th – 26th April 2021) completed with a short weekend retreat. This way, UA students would not lose a whole study year.

Looking back at the year 2020, we can observe, that we did not achieve all what we originally planned – in first place, we had to do without the spring module *Traditions* – but despite all difficulties, we achieved to realize a lot.

The most important of all the new things in 2020 was the summer camp for children. It is a kind of a breakthrough event on the level of already established events like summer spiritual exercises retreat (2019) and spiritual colloquia (2018). After several attempts to follow the old Unitarian tradition of meaningful work with children and youth in individual communities, an inter-community initiative arose, including not only summer children camps, but promising regular meetings during the whole year.

The conclusion about the summer spiritual exercises in Veltrusy is, that after the initial term in last year we are finding a suitable format for this type of event. It has protentional influence on future cultivation of specifically Unitarian forms of spirituality.

Another success in 2020 was changing of the autumn module (or its lecturing part) in a new distance/online format, anyhow, still without interpreting – this we will be able to ensure in the following year. Using Zoom offers us possibility, to involve in the activities of the UA members of various communities in the extent of their own desire, interest, and time possibilities, without the necessity of participation in the whole modules. This way, the UA is fulfilling its intention to open its activities also for those NSČU members, who cannot for the lack of time or other reasons spend whole long weekend (in the case of standard modules) or even five days (with addition of the extra module) but are still interested in some specific topics. The virtual form, becoming more and more popular, helps us also approach non-members and those, who are interested to know Unitarianism. And it also means an important progress in the possibilities of the UA, to involve in its programs more lecturers from abroad, and especially students from various Unitarian centers throughout Europe and around the globe – those, whom we could until now meet only occasionally at the annual meetings of international Unitarian organizations.

Michal Kohout

1.2 OUTLOOK FOR THE COMING YEARS

Interruption of the programs and activities of the UA met with the effort to maintain the course of the UA and fulfilling its mission even in the limits given by the pandemic measures. Even now, at the time of deadline for this Annual report, it is hard to estimate, when and how we would be able to return to the full activity.

Therefore, any long-time goals are now conditioned by the very possibility of return to this full activity we experienced before pandemic. Nevertheless, these goals will be our guides in the nearest as well as more distant future:

- Return to the full operation of the UA when possible.
- Extend promotion at the social media Facebook and Instagram; motivate Czech ministers and lay members to a form of participation in the studies at the UA.
- Initiate the module of abroad stays.
- Continue the cooperation with the Peoples Church in Chicago, U.S. in preparations of the book dedicated to comparison of the heritage of N. F. Čapek and P. Bradley.
- In a long-time perspective think about another level of professionalization of the UA.
- Renew the cooperation with European Unitarians with the intention to invite them to the participation in our programs.

On the side of the UA board, there is no lack of determination to renew our activity as soon as possible, with a great interest on the side of students as well. The only thing we can do is to wait patiently for the time when the conditions both in our country and globally will become safe enough. Until then, we want to continue even in our limited conditions, to offer for each module at least two thirds of the basic educational topics and organize the program in terms already set, in the form of Zoom videoconferences. For these presentations, since spring 2021 we will also use professional function of simultaneous interpreting, enabled by the Zoom. This will make the lectures of foreign lecturers available to all Czech students and we also open the program to the foreign students in full.

Now we can use the classic phrase about “our future in the stars...” Anyhow, whatever may be written in stars, for the Unitarian academy we can and will declare – with a bit of pathos – that for it and for the Unitarian idea in general, we will do all what will be in our power.

Petr Samojský

2. SUMMARIES

2.1. ORGANIZATION, PERSONNEL, ECONOMICS

UNITARIAN ACADEMY MANAGEMENT:

In the year 2019, the board of the Unitarian Academy consisted of following persons:

Director:

- prof. Ing. arch. Michal Kohout, elected for the period 2020-2022 in a tender.

Unitarian Academy Working Committee:

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

Unitarian Academy Commission (study guarantors):

- PhDr. Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová
- Rev. Mgr. Vlastimil Krejčí
- Rev. Petr Samojský, D.Min.
- PhDr. Jana Tichá, Ph.D.
- Mgr. Jiří Motl, Ph. D.
- Mgr. Matyáš Müller, Ph. D.

STUDENTS

On December 31st, 2020, there are 31 enrolled, 20 in active study. During the year 2020, any student did not untimely finish his/her studies. There are students, taking part in the UA events with no ambition to graduate study, some partakers of the UA events do regularly attend with no ambition to become students.

ECONOMY

In 2020, total revenues of the Unitarian Academy were 472,863 CZK (including balance from 2019).

In 2019, total expenditures of the Unitarian Academy were 172,961 CZK.
On December 31st, 2020, the funds available to the Unitarian Academy amount to 299,902 CZK.

SUPPORTERS

In 2020, the Unitarian Academy was financially supported by:

- The Religious Society of Czech Unitarians – 300,000 CZK.
- Prague Unitarian Community – 50,000 CZK.
- Czech Unitarian community “Wider Fellowship” (*Obec širšího společenství*) – 40,000 CZK.
- The International Unitarian Church in Prague – 24,000 CZK.

We thank all our supporters for their contributions to our activities!

We thank all lecturers, for their great work and to those, who did not charge any fees and even their travel costs. We thank to those guarantors and members of our board, who work for the Unitarian Academy voluntary, and to those, who renounced any payments of their travel costs. The saved finances will be used for improvement of our activities.

Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová

2.2. TRAINING, PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS

MODULES STUDIED IN 2019

SPRING EDUCATIONAL RETREAT

Cancelled.

AUTUMN EDUCATIONAL RETREAT

Teachers:

Inga Brandes, ICUU president, Unitarier-Religionsgemeinschaft freien Glaubens, Germany.
Rev. Christian Hudson, All Souls Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Belfast, UK.
Rev. Eric Cherry, First Universalist Society in Franklin, Massachusetts, US.
Rev. Fred Muir, Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council, UUA, US.
Gavin Howell, Safeguarding Lead and Youth Coordinator, General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, UK.
Rev. Vlastimil Krejčí, Unitářská akademie, OUT, Czech Republic.
Rev. Petr Samojský, D.Min., UA, Pražská obec unitářů, OŠS, Czech Republic.
Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová, předsedkyně ÚSS NSČU, Czech Republic.

DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE UA ECONOMY IN 2020

UA budget 2020 and payments	Proposed	Payed
Expenses		
Accommodation and catering – Retreats	110,000	30,000

Accommodation and catering – Practical exercises	30,000	35,910
Interpreting – Educational retreats	90,000	0
Translations	40,000	26,530
Refreshments	10,000	3,000
Contract of work – Study guarantors	20,000	4,200
Travel costs - domestic	10,000	0
Travel costs – Foreign lecturers	120,000	41,254
Fees – Czech lecturers, obligate modules	5,000	0
Fees – Czech lecturers, practical spiritual exercises	8,000	5,000
Fees – Czech lecturers, colloquia	0	0
Publications, videos	30,000	3,800
Website, domain, service	0	298
Promotion abroad: printed materials, travel costs	30,000	0
Zoom Business licence	0	4500
Minor equipment	15,000	0
Contribution for children's summer camp	0	15,000
Total	518,000	172,961
Incomes		
From previous years	60,000	67,559
Subscriptions from the NSČU budget	350,000	300,000
Donations and contributions from NSČU communities and organizations	90,000	90,000
Donations, individual voluntary contributions	10,000	0
Financial participation of students	15,000	15,304
Total	525,000	472,863
Rest for the next year		299,902

MODULE N – PART ETHOS OF THE UNITARIAN MINISTRY

Started with educational retreat organized online with the videoconference program ZOOM, October 14th – 15th 2020.

Lectures:

- Spiritual leadership and its specifics / Fred Muir.
- Ministry and its changes in time, with emphasis on present time / Fred Muir.
- Ministry in the NSČU, its traditions and internal rules during 100 years of its existence / Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová.
- Ministry leadership and lay leadership in the community – two skew lines of totally different worlds, creative dynamics, or competition? / Chris Hudson.
- Personal role of the minister – how is the personality of minister (not) reflected in his/her work and impact on the community? / Petr Samojský.
- Ministry in the unitarian world (main aspects and examples of Unitarian gatherings throughout the world) / Eric Cherry.
- Is ministry a teamwork (team of ministers in a community, ethos and meaning of ministry bodies, inter-community projects) / Vlastík Krejčí.

LEADERSHIP

Started with educational retreat organized online with videoconference program Zoom, October 16th – 18th 2020.

Lectures:

- Education of people active in lay leadership (professionalism vs. voluntariness) and specifics of leadership in various groups or programs / Chris Hudson.
- Lay leadership of a spiritual community – general principles / Vlastík Krejčí.
- Congregational constitution and leading of Unitarian communities on various levels – what demands leading of a group, what demands leading of a congregation... / Petr Samojský.
- People in the community board / groups – hierarchy, function and role, competencies, preparation and actualization of the leading documents, feedback / Petr Samojský.
- Conflict as an opportunity – causes, principles of solutions, prevention of conflicts + some conflicts typical for Unitarian communities / Vlastík Krejčí.
- Leading in the NSČU – historic periods, their specifics and personalities, actual situation, outlook / Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová.
- Work with volunteers in Unitarian communities / Gavin Howell.
- Administration and economy: two dreaded aspects of leadership... or not? (What do we need to know for easy going of these issues. / Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová.
- Leading of Unitarian communities on international level: principles, trends, challenges / Inga Brandes.
- Unitarianism and leading documents – does a free religion need any rules? / Petr Samojský.
- NSČU – rules, organs, communication, common goals, shared activities / Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová.

OTHER EVENTS ORGANIZED BY THE UA

PRACTICAL SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, FACULTATIVE MODULE

Facultative module Practical Spiritual Exercises

Took place in the educational center at Chateau Veltrusy, Ostrov 59, 277 46 Veltrusy, June 18th-21st 2020.

Lectors:

prof. Ivana Noble, Ph.D., chief of the Ecumenic Institute of the Protestant Theological Faculty, Charles University, professor of ecumenic theology, Prague, Czech Republic.

Mgr. Lenka Krejčová, alumni of the Hussite Theologic Faculty, Charles University, lector of mindfulness, Prague, Czech Republic.

Mgr. Matyáš Müller, Ph.D., National Institute of Mental Health, Hussite Theological Faculty, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic.

Rev. Petr Samojský, Prague Unitarian Church, Community of Wider Fellowship, Executive board of the UA, Prague, Czech Republic.

PhDr. Jiří Motl, Ph.D., Prague, Czech Republic.

PhDr. Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová, NSČU Czech Republic.

Program:

Earth: Anchoring connection (creative workshop and introduction).

Sharing circles.

Fire: energy of change (morning creative workshop).

Typology of spiritual practice.

Using of the principles of the Gestalt therapy in reflection of own spirituality.

Introduction to the mindfulness.

Active experience of liturgic components – lighting and snuffing of the Chalice of Light, responsive reading, chants.

Sharing circles.

Air: Invisible dynamics of Life (morning creative workshop).

Metanoia-

I am my body too – using of Biosynthesis, exploring of relationship between soul and body.

Spiritual exercise aimed at calming down and self-recognition, based on the Ignatian tradition of contemplation: walking meditation, Psalms of pilgrimage, interiorization connected with a special place on the pilgrimage.

Non-theistic meditation.

Sharing circles.

Water: passing and returning (morning creative workshop).

Spiritual gathering: Blessing of waters.

Spirituality of everyday life.

Farewell ritual: Touching the nature of the world.

Common guided tour in the chateau.

PILGRIMAGE TO THE RAINBOW – CHILDREN’S SUMMER CAMP

Starý Mlýnec u Litoměřic, July 12th – 24th 2020, organized in cooperation with the Wider Fellowship and Unitarian Community Teplice.

Leading and organization:

PhDr. Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová, head of the ÚSS, member of the Executive board of the UA, Wider Fellowship.

Jana Rašková, Unitarian Community Teplice.

Preparations of programs:

Dagmar Kmínková, Unitarian Community Liberec.

Rev. M. Div. Petr Samojský, D. Min., UA, Prague Church of Unitarians, Wider Fellowship.

Rev. Vlastimil Krejčí, UA, Unitarian Community Teplice.

A children's retreat/ summer camp for fourteen days, acquainting children in a naturally creative and playful way with spirituality of everyday life, Unitarian, and ethical principles, and also with healthy functioning in an organized group or community. More at the website: [www.https://unitarska-akademie.cz/pm/konalo-se/putovani-za-duhou](https://unitarska-akademie.cz/pm/konalo-se/putovani-za-duhou)

PUBLICATIONS

Due to negative impacts of the pandemic measures, and following decision of the NSČU, to stop until further notice all non-periodic publication activities, no materials were published.

Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová

LECTURERS AT THE UA IN 2020

Inga Brandes

Inga was born in a German Unitarian family and was brought up as Unitarian. During past twenty years, she worked for the Unitarian movement at various positions, e.g., as vice-president of the International Unitarian Youth in ICUU. In January 2014, she was elected in the executive board of the ICUU and in 2018 was elected to become president of this organization. As such, she is the first lay person at the head of ICUU.

Rev. Eric Cherry

After graduating Meadville Lombard Theological School, he became minister at the Unitarian and Universalist Congregation in Burlington, US, where he worked until 2001. During this time, he worked every year as an English teacher for Unitarian students at Protestant Theological Seminary in Kolozsvár (Rumania). In years 2001-2007, he led the Unity Church of North Easton, and after he served eleven years as director of the international office of the UUA. Recently, he is minister of the First Universalist Society, Franklin, US.

Gavin Howell

After graduating high school in Grosvenor, he studied modern history and politics at Queen's University in Belfast and after he absolved MA program in the Development Studies at the University of East Anglia. He became a grammar school teacher and grounded Nurture Group at high school Framingham Earl in Norwich – a specialized institution for children with complex social, emotional issues and behavior disorders. Now he works as coordinator of youth for the British Unitarian General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. Since March 2017 till March 2020, he was also president of the Unitarian congregation Octagon Chapel in Norwich. History of this congregation roots in 1698.

Rev. Christopher Hudson

For eighteen years, he worked as Unions official in Dublin, Ireland. He was always interested in problems of developing countries and he traveled in India, Pakistan, Brazil, and Middle America. In the times of his unions work, he served as lay minister in the Dublin Unitarian congregation for many years. In the time of the conflict in Northern Ireland, he took part in the peace negotiations as an important mediator of direct talks between IRA representatives and Irish government in Dublin. His activity was essential for signature of the "Good Friday" peace agreement in Belfast between both sides of the conflict in 1998. In 1999, he was awarded with a State Prize by Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth II.

Now he serves as minister in Four Soul Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Belfast.

Mgr. Lenka Krejčová

Alumni of the Hussite Theological Faculty in Prague, lector of mindfulness courses.

Mgr. Jiří Motl, Ph.D.

He studies psychology of religion, his doctor program he absolved at the Philosophical Faculty of the Charles University. Part of his studies he spent at the Islamic Theological Faculty in Istanbul, and at the Jagellon University in Krakow. Now he teaches and at the Charles university and at the Technical University in Liberec, he is also active in scientific research. He works also in Gestalt therapy. He has been practicing Buddhistic meditation for ten years.

Rev. Fred Muir

Recently, he left active minister service, in that he had been active for forty-two years. He is minister emeritus in the Unitarian and Universalist Congregation in Annapolis, Maryland US. For nearly three decades, he served also in various positions in the American Unitarian Association. Since 1994, he works as an ambassador UUA to the Philippine Unitarians and now he studies roles, held by Universalists and Unitarians during the American occupation of Philippines in 1898-1946. Fred is the author of five books. In August 2020, he became an interim executive director of the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council.

Mgr. Matyáš Müller, Ph.D.

He studied anthropology at the Charles University and doctor program he absolved at the Faculty of Science of the same university. For two years, he studied Psychological and Psychiatrist Anthropology in London. Currently, he works in the National Institute for Mental Health and teaches at the Hussite Theological Faculty. He is specialized in destigmatization of mental diseases in society. He absolved psychotherapeutic training in somatically oriented method called Biosynthesis.

prof. Ivana Noble, Ph.D.

Head of the Ecumenic Institute of the Protestant Theological Faculty of the Charles University, professor of ecumenic theology. She studied theology at the Hussite Theological Faculty and at the Catholic Heythrop College at the University of London. She is the author of many papers on ecumenic theology, Eastern and Western spirituality, hermeneutic, fundamentalism and totalitarian thinking.

Rev. M. Div. Petr Samojský, D. Min.

A Unitarian minister. His MA diploma he received at the Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago and his doctor diploma at the Chicago Theological Seminary. For a long time, he has been active in systematic Unitarian education of ministers and lay leaders, and focuses in the practice of Unitarian spirituality.

Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová

3. CONCLUSIONS

At the end of the fifth year of the UA, we must express our thanks to all those, who participated in successful progress of our institution: Members of the Working Committee of the UA Commission – Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová and Petr Samojský and other members of

the UA Commission – non-Unitarian experts Jiří Motl and Matyáš Müller, Unitarian Jana Tichá and minister of the Unitarian Community in Teplice, Vlastimil Krejčí. We thank also to the Prague Church of Unitarians and its leaders for fulfilling all required conditions to be a community suitable for practical part of studies for future candidates of ministry.

We thank also to all abroad lecturers who mostly work voluntarily. For us, they serve as an example of generous approach, with an excellent combination of professionalism and frank effort to support the idea they believe in. We owe our thanks to all staff of the NSČU, for their perfect organization and preparations.

Of course, we thank to all institutions and private donors, who supported the UA project. At the first place, to our mother organization and main patron – NSČU – and also two of our communities: Prague Church of Unitarians and Wider Fellowship.

Finally, we thank to all the UA students for their lasting interest and study efforts, especially in this uneasy year 2020.

Michal Kohout

Annual Report about the activities of the Unitarian Academy for the year 2020.

Worked out by members of the Work Committee of the Unitarian Academy, 11. 3. 2021.

Photos: Ondřej Svatoš, Kristýna Ledererová Kolajová.

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