



12 February 2021

Dear Bishop István Szabó,

Greetings in the name of Christ, our Savior,

I write to you as President of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, on behalf of its 235 member churches representing over 100 million Christians around the globe; and as a pastor in the Middle East, who notes the important partnership between our churches despite the many challenges; and as a friend and sister in Christ.

On behalf of the World Communion of World Churches I want to express my thanks for your strong leadership in maintaining and strengthening ecumenical ties between your church, the Hungarian diaspora churches, and the greater Communion.

As a Communion called to justice, we thank God for your courage and commitment in reaching across national boundaries, to support sisters and brothers in Christ in these times of growing nationalisms and pandemic. It is certainly an act of love, demonstrating Christ's call to love our neighbors as ourselves—even if these neighbors are on the other side of the world.

We recognize your great efforts in receiving delegations, convening consultations on important topics, paying visits to and signing agreements with sister churches, and simply communicating with your sisters and brothers outside of Hungary, which has been a blessing for the Communion and encouraged a stronger Communion.

As a pastor in the Middle East, I am especially grateful for the commitment the Reformed Church in Hungary has made to the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon.

“Sharing resources and expertise in the fields of humanitarian assistance, diaconal service, community development, Christian education, and pastors' training, as well as encouraging congregational partnerships, solidarity visits of church officials, and exchange programs for pastors, experts, and young volunteers”—these commitments did bring hope for the church in the Middle East in the midst of struggle and many challenges to the Christian role and presence.

Meeting with you has always been a source of empowerment for the ministry of the church. Your hospitable attitude and joyful spirit created trust and made us assured of envisioning together as the one body of Jesus Christ. Your sincere commitment allowed fast growth in our partnership as churches over the last years, moving from formally meeting as leaders to coming to know you as a true brother in Christ. Your visit to our church in Lebanon and Syria with a delegation affirmed to us your willingness in expressing your love in presence, sacrifice, and honest feeling of solidarity.

I wish I could be present with you on your retirement, to thank you in person as you move to a new transition in your life. We hope that our relation will be continued with your successor, along with the Reformed Church in Hungary, to continue the important work done, especially ecumenically. Knowing you, we will be assured that we will continue to be in partnership, and your dreams of a better tomorrow will never stop. We trust that we will meet again.

Please receive our appreciation and blessings from the entire Communion and may the Lord who “began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns” (Philippians 1:6).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Najla Kassab', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left and right.

Rev. Najla Kassab
President
World Communion of Reformed Churches