**Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (HEF) Announcement – Oltalom Charity Society 1% donation from tax returns**

At its annual general meeting, the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (HEF) discussed the financial and operational situation of the church and the institutions it maintains.

All ecclesiastical institutions are run by the state with normative subsidies and are financed by state funds. The HEF is not asking for anything other than the payment of the basic normative subsidy. The Hungarian Tax Authority and the Ministry of the Interior have completely ignored the crisis budget submitted in the spring, which they expected, proving that if the basic subsidy were transferred, we would not only be able to run our institutions, but would also stop further debts from arising. And by submitting reorganisation and detailed debt settlement plans broken down by institution, we have also made clear our willingness to pay and the timetable for debt settlement. Despite all this, in addition to the fact that we are still not receiving the basic normative payment due by law, the Hungarian State Treasury has suspended the payment of the normative payment for all our public education institutions, including those with operating licences, as of 1 September, and the nearly HUF 150 million will not be collected for debt repayment. We received less than 15% of the legally due normative aid, which should have been used to ensure operations, pay salaries and settle debts. Absurdly, the reason given for suspending the transfer of the subsidy (although they know exactly why and what the consequences are) is that we are not using the money for the purpose of the allocation, namely to run the business, but to settle our debts, although the decision to do so is taken by the Hungarian Tax Authority without us being asked: the allocation does not even reach our financial office. We have lodged an appeal against the decision of the Hungarian Tax Authority (HTA), but we have not yet been informed of the outcome.

We have met the conditions of the HTA, filed the applications and the Strasbourg action to obtain a stay of execution. Contrary to the promise of the head of the HTA to suspend the collection in this case, we were informed that they had appealed to the Minister of Justice, Bence Tuzson, to take a decision on our case. We have initiated discussions with the tax authorities, but have not yet received a reply. We want to continue to consult in order to avoid further reprisals against innocent people, to protect our students, our staff and our colleagues, our institutions that do excellent professional work.

It is assumed that the merits of our Strasbourg action to regain our ecclesiastical status may have triggered the full-court financial crackdown that the government has launched against us. It is completely discredited that Hungary, as the EU's rotating president, is holding a conference on religious freedom, has been persecuting churches for 14 years and - according to the legal protection decisions and the clear legal position of the Civil Coalition for the Protection of Children - has broken up the lives of nearly 500 disadvantaged children and families and hundreds of teachers with unlawful school closures, purely for political revenge, causing irreversible damage. According to a Publicus poll published in Népszava (a Hungarian newspaper), public opinion is also on our side, with two-thirds of society suspecting political retaliation behind the senseless school closures. <https://nepszava.hu/3251552_ivanyi-gabor-iskolabezarasok-wesley-met-felmeres-bosszu>

We are convinced that no one benefits from these measures, including the government, and the social damage is incalculable.

Our only source of income is the selfless support of civilians. We cannot thank you enough for your social solidarity and for the material and material donations you have given us. We are infinitely grateful to you for giving us a chance to survive, for keeping hope alive! That is why we feel it is unacceptable that the 1% tax donations to the Oltalom Charity Society were collected by the Tax Authority, so that not a single penny was credited to our account, even though the donors received a notification from the Tax Authority that their 1% had been received by us. We request the Tax Authority to ensure that the donations of 107 843 432 HUF from the 9921 taxpayers who donated to us are sent to us in any case, respecting the will of our supporters. This is not a normative state subsidy, but a donation from citizens.

Since July, our colleagues have been receiving a fraction of their salaries, which is barely enough to live on. We want to use this money to reduce our wage arrears. We cannot continue to do without the support of our donors, even the smallest donation can save lives.

In the foreseeable future, we do not foresee a financial source that will provide us with the reassurance we need to operate. The 1% from the church tax donations is expected by the end of January, but it will not be enough to do much more than settle the debts that have accumulated up to that point.

We are not giving up hope, we will take all legal and human steps to resolve our situation, but we will have to make difficult and painful decisions in the near future to avoid more human tragedies and to secure the future of our students, staff and colleagues. We remain open to negotiation, to consultation, to finding solutions together rather than aimless destruction.