

## **THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH A.C. SIBIU/ HERMANNSTADT**

The Lutheran Church Sibiu (Stadtpfarrkirche Hermannstadt) has 1400 members in the central church and five outlying parishes. Construction of the church began in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and was completed in 1520. The congregation, along with all the other Saxon (German) churches in Transylvania, joined the Reformation in 1540 and became Lutheran. Each century has had an impact on the church with perhaps none so much as the 20<sup>th</sup> which brought the First World War, the inclusion of Transylvania in Romania, the post-war depression, World War II, deportations, emigration, communist party control, the implosion of the Communist government, further emigration. The Lutheran presence in Sibiu shrank from 14,000 in 1989 to 1,400 in 1990.

The congregation members remain determined to be a life-giving force for their families and community. In addition to weekly worship, Bible study and other regular features of parish life (i.e., Sunday School, youth group, women's circles), the congregation has a variety of other ministries including: visitation of over 200 shut-ins; a shelter for 30 at-risk children; a workshop for 16 handicapped persons; a "Meals on Wheels" program, and clothing and medicine distribution to those in need. The congregation hosts several young volunteers each year from Germany and Austria who serve in the above ministries. A facility for housing "Wandergesellen" (traveling craftsmen) and a 5-room guesthouse are part of the church complex. The congregation has a special emphasis on environmental stewardship and is committed to ecumenical relations.

The church contributes to the community's spiritual and cultural life with weekly organ concerts in the summer and Bach Choir concerts during the year. The church co-manages the Bruckenthal Art Museum and hosts tens of thousands of visitors who come every year to see and photograph the church. The three pastors are: Kilian Dörr, Hans-Georg Junesch and Klaus Untch.

The Lutheran Church of Sibiu is a member congregation of the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania. The ECACR is officed in Sibiu and has 14,500 members, down from 100,000 in 1989 and 200,000 in 1940. The ECACR has 254 congregations and 44 pastors. The ECACR is a member of the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical organizations. The Bishop of the ECACR is the Rev. Reinhart Guib.

There are several ECACR-related ministries in Sibiu, including a 106-bed nursing home and 14-bed hospice center; a boarding facility for 60 students; the Deutsch Haus (a complex including the St. John's Chapel and Ecumenical Center, the Erasmus Café/Bookstore, the Saxon museum, and the Ecumenical Research Institute) and a Protestant Seminary on the University campus.