



Spring 2015

Inside This Issue

President's Message	1-2
The Heritage Society and Planned Giving	2
Obituary: Calder D. Ehrmann	3
2014 AFCU DONORS	4-5
The Berlin Connection	
A Note from Pastor Steve	6-7
ACB's First Woman Minister	7-8
The Paris Connection	
A Note from Pastor Scott	9-10
ACP-160	10
The Vienna Connection	
A Note from Pastor Troy	11
Music Update	12
One View of VCC	13

The American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU) is a US-based 501 (c) (3) organization that supports the American Church in Paris, the American Church in Berlin, and the Vienna Community Church. Focusing primarily on alumni and friends of these churches, the AFCU manages endowment funds to support these churches, stimulates donations to grow these funds, and offers consultation and direct support to assist these churches in their operations. Please visit www.afcubridge.org for more information.

President's Message

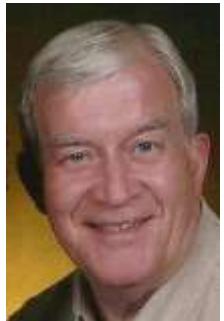
Each one of us has a story to tell about how we became involved in supporting the American and Foreign Christian Union. Several years ago, one of the presiding leaders asked each member of the AFCU Board of Directors to share their story. It seems that all of the board members first had an encounter with one of the partner churches in Europe, American Church in Paris, American Church in Berlin or Vienna Community Church. Some members and/or donors lived in Paris, Berlin or Vienna and attended the church there, some grew up in one of the churches, some served as a pastor of one of the congregations, and others visited the church while traveling or working in the city. Marcia and I attend ACB when we visit our son's family in Berlin, Germany. He is a member there. As a result of a recommendation from ACB, we became members of the Board of Directors.

I am sure that we are no different from others when we question the value of our volunteer time, expenses and

donations to continue to support the partner churches. Each time we look at the blessings that flow out of the congregations, into the communities and people. Occasionally, there is that "Aha" moment or event that lets us know we need to be there for our friends. One of those events happened January, 2015 in Paris. It happened not so far from ACP and left people of the world shocked to the depths of their hearts. The people of Paris and France were left frightened, angry, sickened, and, yes, even hateful. The American Church in Paris was able to stand as a refuge and a beacon, to the congregation and community that all can be reconciled.

I sent a message of condolence to Pastor Scott Herr and the congregation. A few days later, I received a transcript of the Sermon that was delivered to the congregation on Sunday January 11, 2015. It helps us to sort out our feelings by asking the questions, "What would Jesus do?", "What does He expect of us?", and "What should our response be?"

Continued on page 2...



Occasionally, there is that "Aha" moment or event that lets us know we need to be there for our friends.

President's Message, *continued from page 1*

Such events will not end as evidenced by Mid-East, Africa, Denmark, and yes, even close to us. I finally decided that the message to the people of ACP should be shared with all Bridge readers. The "Aha" event reminded me again that our support for the AFCU partners is critical!

Those of us attending the AFCU Annual Meeting in Berlin March 17-19 will witness, first-hand the value of our support as we meet in a "finally" warm facility with new sound provided by partnering with the congregation to raise the funds needed for heating and sound systems. At the meeting the Board will review a proposal from VCC to secure a facility for meetings and church activities more conducive to the needs of a growing congregation.

I believe that God is blessing the work of our members, donors, and friends by enhancing the message of our partner churches in their communities and through their witness and mission activities throughout the world.

The Heritage Society and Planned Giving



Philanthropy others have set up Life Insurance Policies. The future is a choice. beneficiary of these actions is the American Church in Philanthropy Paris. can also be a legacy.

We have covered One of the members of the AFCU Heritage Society many options for and other members of the AFCU Board have a planned giving over Charitable-Gift Fund, also known as a Donor Advised Fund. These accounts offer charitable-minded articles in the investors an easy tax-favored, low-cost way to "Bridge". The best manage their giving. Many people have mentioned part is that our that their donations have been many times what they efforts are reaping normally would have been without the use of a dividends. We have a Charitable-Gift Fund. These funds enable people to number of families specify funds for gifts and get an immediate tax that have included deduction. At a later time, decisions about grants to the AFCU in their specific recipients can be initiated. We encourage you

Estate Plans. This bodes well for the continuing to investigate whether this option is good for you. support of the ministries of our member churches.

Our ministries are an important extension of God's work and need your continued prayers. Please visit our web site to obtain more information at www.afcubridge.org. On behalf of the AFCU we thank you for your support.

stage of a Capital Campaign for the American Church

in Paris called ACP-160. The success of these campaigns is because alumni and friends have a Philanthropic Vision. A key part of the ACP-160 is that individuals and families can commit to future gifts that become a part of the success of the campaign.

Some former members have added funds to previously established Charitable Trusts and a few

The AFCU is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. If you would like to include one or more of our three churches in your estate planning, please contact us at our e-mail address: afcuheritage@afcubridge.org

Russell McNaughton
Heritage Society

Calder D. Ehrmann Obituary

Greenville

Calder DeBruler Ehrmann, 74, passed away on February 9, 2015 at the McCall Hospice House. He was born June 13, 1940 in St. Louis, Missouri and was the son of the late Carlos Royal Ehrmann and Ellen Thurman Ehrmann.

Calder graduated from Missouri Valley College with a degree in Economics and Business Administration. He worked at the Chevrolet Division of General Motors in St. Louis and White Truck in Cleveland before joining Michelin North America in 1977, and over the course of thirty years, held a wide variety of positions within the company.

Following Calder's retirement from Michelin, he worked as a Senior Associate in the Richard E. Riley Institute at Furman University, working with the Diversity Leaders Initiative in South Carolina.

Calder is a graduate of Leadership Greenville, was on The Greenville Technical College Area Commission, was a Deacon at First Baptist Greenville and was on the Board of the American Church in Paris. He served on the Greenville University Center Board of Visitors, the Board of the Camperdown Academy, the Clemson University Board for Distance Learning and Continuing Education, the South Carolina Research Authority Board, the Board of the Urban League of the Upstate and Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee.

His recognitions include: The Greenville Chamber of

Commerce's Buck Mickel Award for Community Leadership, The Furman University Upstate Diversity Leadership Award, The Urban League's Whitney M. Young Humanitarian Award and The South Carolina Research Authority's Knowledge Economist Award.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Glenda Cantrell Ehrmann; two sons, Calder Ehrmann III (Lisa) of Atlanta, Georgia, and Jacob Ehrmann (Debra) of Asheville, North Carolina; three grandsons, Atticus, Orson and Ryan; one sister, Karolyn Ehrmann Hume (Charles); one first cousin, Millicent Mason Westerfield; one brother-in-law, Kenneth Cantrell (Melanie); and nieces and nephews.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held at First Baptist Greenville on Monday, February 16, 2015 at 11:00am with the Reverend Dr. Baxter Wynn officiating. The family will receive friends from 9:30am - 11:00am prior to the service in the narthex of the church. A private family committal service will be held.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to First Baptist Greenville, 847 Cleveland Street, Greenville, SC 29601, for The Calder Ehrmann Diversity Fund; or to the McCall Hospice House, 1836 West Georgia Road, Simpsonville, SC 29680.



A Tribute to Calder Ehrmann, by Don Eppert

When I think of Calder, I can just see him in front of the AFCU board with a plan to help raise funds for the American Church in Paris. Calder had such interesting ideas, enthusiasm, optimism and great ways to express them. As a Human Resources Professional with Michelin, his interpersonal skills were honed to a fine edge. He possessed a quick wit and even a quicker smile. All of his gifts and talents helped support his love for the ACP and his fellow man. Calder had a keen interest in arts and he worked diligently in providing a musical bridge between his church in Greenville, SC and the ACP. We miss Calder and our hearts go out to his wife Glenda and family.

2014 AFCU DONORS

*The American & Foreign Christian Union would like to thank all of those who made donations
in support of our ministries during 2014. Your support is valuable to the ministries we serve:
The American Church in Paris, The American Church in Berlin, and the Vienna Community Church.*

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Continued on page 5

2014 AFCU DONORS, *continued from page 4*

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During January 2015, donor statements were mailed to all those for whom we have current addresses. If you made a donation during 2013 and your name does not appear on the above list and/or you have not received a year end giving statement, kindly contact the Financial Secretary, Russ McNaughton, at afcufinsec@afcubridge.org.

The Berlin Connection



www.americanchurchberlin.de

*Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you,
for the glory of God.* Romans 15:7

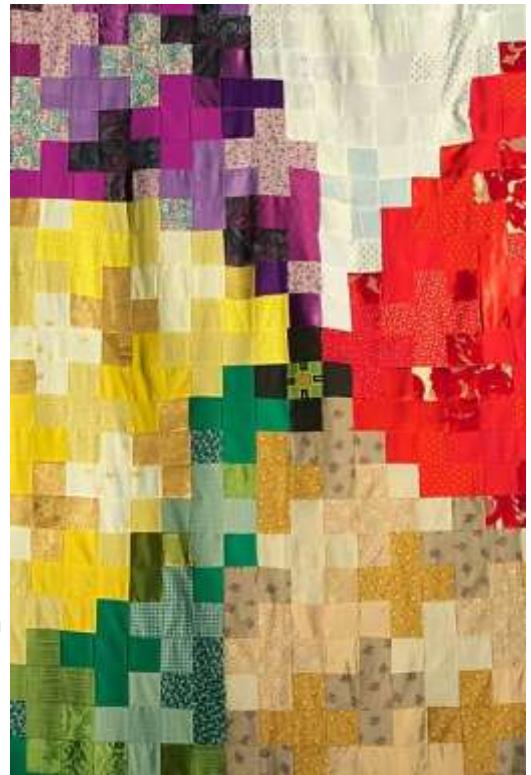
The Jahreslosung is a German tradition, whereby an ecumenical team (Ökumenische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Bibellesen-ÖAB) picks a biblical verse each year as a focal point for their work and for the Church. This year's biblical verse quoted above fits well with the beginning of our Mission Statement at ACB: *We welcome all people.* This is something that we take pride in, but also continue to improve upon.

I have been asked to write a little about congregational life in an international setting. Most friends and members of the AFCU have firsthand experience in international ministry. Perhaps you can better appreciate why we begin our mission statement with a mandate to be an open and welcoming congregation. As has been stated many times previously within the AFCU, when you come to

worship at one of our congregations, you really experience the world-wide church in your midst; the feeling of worshipping before God's throne with people "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, as John's Revelation describes it" (Rev. 7:9).

Of course, Paul's mandate to "welcome one another" is spoken in the context of the Church of Rome and the tension that existed between non-Jews and Jews, and I dare say, attended by some of the same cultural and language issues that we face in our congregations today. I was recently interviewed by a German colleague on my work at ACB. She asked me what it means to serve in such a mixed denominational setting as a Lutheran pastor. I tried to explain how I have had to become more flexible in my way of doing things. I cannot take for granted that the ACB membership shares the same jargon when I tout phrases that are commonplace in Lutheran circles, like "Law and Gospel" or "simul iustus et peccator" (simultaneously sinner and saint). We try to incorporate various liturgical forms to meet the diverse needs of our members. This is why on the first Sunday of each month we hold a somewhat "high Church" form for the Eucharist with sung liturgy. I do not wish to affront any tradition with the following designations, but the Episcopalian, Anglican, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic members recognize shared tradition in the sung Eucharists, whereas some of our non-denominational or pentecostal members may wonder if we are still a Protestant worshipping community. On the second and fourth Sundays of the month we use a Service of the Word setting with a more 'blended' liturgical form. Therein, the reformed, presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Christ, and pentecostal members feel at home. For the most part the later group also welcomes the third Sunday celebration of Holy Communion without a "high" liturgical form.

Continued on page 7



This is a banner that was done by Ruth Bakke using an American Quilting form to represent the Church as formed by the cross of Christ. The banner is ca. 1.5 meters long and 1 meter wide and hangs in the chancel area of the church. The colors reflect the seasons of the church year and they seem to expand beyond the black border surrounding the composition.

The Berlin Connection, continued from page 6

We also have to be clear about our expectations for giving as members from various parts of the world practice church support in different ways. The Europeans are by and large accustomed to having their giving collected through a state or national church agency by means of bank or salary transfers, and centrally distributed to their congregations. The taking of an offering may be practiced, but since one has already "given" or "tithed" the Sunday collection is usually viewed as an extra collection or for a designated purpose and is quite small. Many African members talk about a harvest or thanksgiving collection taken once a year or at specific times in the year. One may literally bring produce and goods to be sold at market to support the congregation and its budget. Usually Americans recognize the taking of the offering and the talk about tithing, whether they do it or not, and wonder what all the confusion is about.

With this wonderful mix of cultures and traditions the ACB leadership recognizes that clear communication is not something that can ever be assumed. We must constantly check in with one another that the intended message has been received. We must constantly ask for and practice giving forgiveness for unintended mis-communication. It is truly a practice in Christian discipleship.

Within this context it is my pleasure to welcome the AFCU Board to Berlin for its annual meeting. We are excited for you to see and experience the changes that have occurred since you last met in Berlin in 2011. Some significant improvements have been made, in which the AFCU has played a major role. We look forward to extending our heartfelt gratitude and sharing our dreams for the future with you.

Wishing you blessings and peace,

Pastor Steve



Marking the Centenary of ACB's First Woman Minister 1915-2015

In the summer 2014 issue of The Bridge, Pastor Steve's article referenced the centenary of the outbreak of World War I. For a brief period during this time an exceptional figure served the American Church in Berlin; a pioneer in the long struggle of women's equal rights, Rev. Dr. Gertrude von Petzold. Stewart Herman's History of the American Church in Berlin mentions that the pastor called to serve ACB in 1914 was not able to leave the United States (36). On page 37 the following is given:¹

As another winter approached, the reservoir of American graduate students tended to run dry but the Church Council, or what was left of it did not easily give up. . . . the next replacement appeared, namely, Dr. Gertrude von Petzold, the only German and the only woman ever to serve as pastor of the church.

The article below gives a very brief history of this amazing woman. We hope to mark the centenary of her service at ACB this year. My thanks to ACB historian, Charles Eypper, for extensive documentation and background research by Pastor Stephan Kienberger, February 2015.

It was a Copernican Revolution of sorts when on September 29, 1904 Gertrude von Petzold became the first woman minister in England. This was sensational for a woman at that time and made all the more so as she came from Germany. After a series of trial sermons—three in a row—in which she ran against several male candidates for the ministry at the Narborough Road Unitarian Church in Leicester, she was chosen unanimously.²

Gertrude von Petzold was born on January 9, 1876 in Thorn (which was then in West Prussia, and is now in Poland) as the daughter of a military officer. Thorn was not only the birth place of its most famous son, Nicolaus Copernicus, but it was also an influential trade center and belonged to the Hanseatic league. Gertrude grew up a Lutheran and in 1895 after passing her teacher's exam in Friedenshof (Stettin) left Germany to pursue higher education in England. She felt intellectually ill-prepared to begin teaching and commented that England "had long recommended itself to me as a land of freedom." She spent two years learning the language and teaching part-time, and then started to read for a degree in medicine at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. During this time, however, she felt a calling to enter the ministry, but was limited as only the free church traditions would consider a female for clergy status. So, Gertrude applied for entry as a ministry student to Manchester College in Oxford and was granted entry in the autumn of 1901. Although she had received classical honors at Edinburgh, she continued to face many prejudices against women in higher learning much less ministry. She was truly a pioneer and became an inspiration for many women who followed in her footsteps.³

During her very productive four years in the parish at Leicester, she was invited in 1906 to visit Berlin where she gave a series of well attended lectures. "Through the good offices of the American ambassador she also received permission to conduct a German service in the beautiful American church, the first ever conducted by a woman in Berlin."⁴

Continued on page 8

Marking the Centenary of ACB's First Woman Minister 1915-2015

Continued from page 7

In 1907 she received an invitation as the only European woman delegate to attend the Fourth International Congress of Religious Liberals in Boston. At this conference she gave a well received address on "The Service of Women in the Early Church." Through the many new connections she made at the conference, especially with the "Iowa Sisterhood," Gertrude returned to the states in November of 1908. She gave up her position in Leicester and in America served for short periods as pastor in Streator, Illinois and as interim pastor in Des Moines, Iowa. In November of 1910 she returned to England and held interim positions in Birmingham where she found herself in great demand as a speaker. After her address at the Congregational church in Macclesfield R.J. Campbell's estimate of her was noted as "one of the most brilliant women speakers of the day, a scholar of repute."⁵

She could not have known that with the outbreak of World War I her status in England would change. It seems that due to her travels and speaking appointments her application for naturalization ran into problems. In spite of support from civic leaders in Leicester and Birmingham her application was denied and she was forced to return to Germany. Even her attempts to gain entrance to the USA were denied.⁶

In Germany she settled in Berlin and matriculated at the Friedrich-Whilhelm-University (today, Humboldt University). Sometime before the close of 1915 she took the interim position at the American Church in Berlin. From our archives there is a hand written letter from the head of the Ladies' Union of the American Church, Mrs. A. MacElwee. Mrs. MacElwee records that Dr. von Petzold was pastor during the second year of World War I, calling her "an English lady" and comments that "Mrs. MacElwee furnished the Church apartment for her accommodation." It seems that her time at the American Church in Berlin came to an end when it was decided in the Spring of 1916 to close the church and deposit the keys with the U.S. Counsel General.

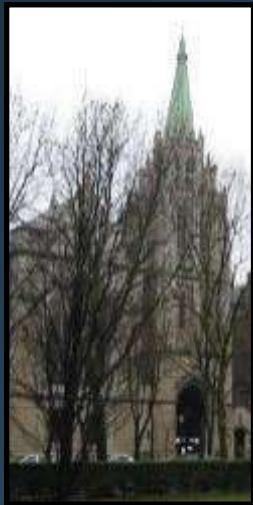
After the World War II she settled close to Frankfurt a.M. Until her death in 1952 she devoted herself to assist the refugees then flocking into West Germany from Eastern Europe. She died at Bad Homberg, near Frankfurt, on March 14, 1952.

Dr. Gertrude von Petzold's importance cannot be overlooked. She was the first ordained woman minister with a post in England; an acclaimed scholar and preacher admired by both men and women; a role model for women in her day; unique in her ability to transcend confessional boundaries by belonging to Lutheran, Unitarian and Quaker communities, sometimes all at the same time; and active in various women's movements, especially with regard to suffrage. It is our hope at the American Church in Berlin to find a particular way to honor her contributions to our history.

1. Stewart, W. Herman, *American Church in Berlin: A History*, (Privately Published: 2001/1978), 36, 37.
2. K. Gilley, "Gertrude von Petzold: The Pioneer Woman Minister," *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society* 21.3 (1997): 159.
3. Ibid., 157-59.
4. Ibid. 161, also: Claus Bernet, "Gertrude von Petzold (1876-1952): Quaker and First Woman Minister," *Quaker Studies*: Vol. 12: Iss. 1, Article 9 (2008): 131.
5. Ibid., 164.
6. Ibid., 165



The Paris Connection



www.acparis.org

Dear Members and Friends of the AFCU,

Warm greetings to you in this season of Lent, the “holy Spring” of the Church. It is one of my favorite times of the year, especially as the days grow longer in *La Ville-Lumière*!



Fluctuat nec mergitur... As many of you know, this is the motto of Paris and the inscription on the city's coat of arms. It is translated, “tossed, but not sunk” and is a good summary of the mood of the city after the *Charlie Hebdo* and

Jewish grocery terrorist attacks in January. The brutal killing of 17 citizens opened up important issues that require reflection and response in this great city. Resistance to social integration among minority groups, economic injustice, religious bigotry, and rising jihadism are some of the factors giving way to a growing sense of fear and alienation.

The immediate and defiant response of millions

marching in solidarity around the slogan “Je suis Charlie” has given way to a more sober admission that the problems will not be solved by political braggadocio. In fact, the *big lie* of France is that there is “Liberté, égalité, fraternité.” Indeed, politicians and pundits alike are arguing over solutions, but many don’t even agree what the problems are and so there aren’t going to be easy fixes. I doubted at first, but am moving more in agreement with the conclusion that the attacks were “France’s 9/11.” Paris has changed, and it feels not like a “sail” change, but a “sea” change.

All this is to say that the ministry and the mission of the ACP is all the more critical, and your prayers and support are deeply appreciated as we continue to ask the hard questions about

what it means for us to be a *Beacon on the Seine* in these stormy days. Because of the Japanese Embassy’s travel advisory warning Japanese of the dangers of the city, our wedding ministry is down and this directly impacts one of our key revenue streams. *Montessori School* and *Michelle Lennen School* parents have requested that a door buzzer system be installed so that the campus is essentially locked-down during school hours. While this seems prudent for a variety of reasons in the current culture of fear, it is sad that we have had to move away from our “open door” policy. Whether this is a permanent change only time will tell.

The ACP-160 capital campaign, “Strengthening God’s House,” is one way that you can support and strengthen our work here. Increasing building costs are a reality and endowment revenues offer a relief to the general operating budget to help us keep up with the relational ministry needs that we are seeing in these tense times. We are close to our goal of 1.5 million euros and we are grateful to those of you who have already made a pledge. If you haven’t pledged, remember that the strong dollar means your gift will be a bigger blessing, so please do give generously.

Continued on page 10

The original practice of “giving up” something for Lent in monastic communities was so that Christians could be more generous to the larger community. Our goal is to “bless the city,” and this Lent we at the ACP are reflecting on what it means for us “to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.” We believe that God calls us to be a community that provides safe harbor for those going through the storms of life, to proclaim in word and deed the good news of God’s love, to embody the Kingdom of God, and in even a small way, to change the world for God’s glory. Please join us!

And as always: grace, peace, and more light to you,

In Christ,



Scott Herr



Dear ACP Friends and Alumnae,

Earlier in this newsletter you've read from Scott Herr's letter (ACP Senior Pastor) and the Heritage Society report (Russ McNaughton) about ACP-160 capital campaign. I want to share with you about the WHY and the HOW of ACP-160: Strengthening God's House.

There are three important segments to this campaign: The Immediate Use segment, The Building Maintenance segment and The ACP Ministry segment. The Immediate Use segment is composed of projects in need of immediate action. If you have attended a worship service on a wintry, cold Sunday morning, then you will understand why the heating system needs improvement. If you have helped a person with disabilities come into the church or use the bathroom facilities, then you will understand why the access to these needs improvement. The church council has a list of other building improvements that are also needed. The Building Maintenance segment creates an endowment that will build a capital reserve to maintain the building into the future. This reserve will provide a way for those of us that have experienced a worship service in this beautiful building to pass it forward to future generations. The ACP Ministry segment creates another endowment to support the AFCU's obligations as the title holder of the building (for example, taxes and insurance) and for the senior pastor (for example, recruiting and employing).

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” Malachi 3:10

To receive more information about how to make your commitment a reality, contact the AFCU Treasurer at either 2885 Sanford Ave. SW #29934, Grandville, MI 49418 or afcotreasurer@afcubridge.org.

Yours in Christ,

Gregg Foster, AFCU Campaign chairman

The Vienna Connection



www.viennacommunitychurch.com



In April I (Rev. Troy Morgan) will be celebrating my three year anniversary being the Pastor of the Vienna Community Church. The last three years have been an adventure. I am proud of what we have accomplished together as a community.

I was asked by the editor of the Bridge to address the challenges of working with a diverse congregation with different cultures. As you know, the Vienna Community Church is a very diverse congregation with people from all over the world. Many times unique culture, language and traditions shine through during weddings, baptisms and funerals. Having been in international ministry for over 15 years, I am always honored when asked to play an integral part in personal celebrations.



I personally enjoy the diversity of cultures and outlooks that our congregation provides. For some, such as those in the Foreign Service, the ability to adapt to other cultures while staying unique and honest to their own is a skill set that they



have acquired over time. Others who have just recently moved to Vienna the Viennese culture can be very foreign and overwhelming. These people may be afraid to state their needs, fears and even prayer requests.



My constant challenge in Vienna is in identifying those individuals whose needs are just as salient but who are less likely to be transparent. Many times individuals are participating in the life of the church, teaching Sunday school and even helping with worship, are content to stay unobtrusive. Unless I take the time to draw others attention to it, these saints of the church would be rarely acknowledged for their incredibly important contributions.



Over the years, I have noticed the varying ways individuals from different cultures deal with pain, guilt, sickness and death. Some cultures are very private in their grieving, others much more public, wanting the Christian community to be involved in all stages of the sickness, dying and committal processes.

Being aware of the fragile nature of emotions during times of stress, my pastoral goal is to be as accessible as possible, being honored as my role unfolds in the life of the individual. While international ministry can become overly complicated and frustrating at times, the rewards greatly outweigh the challenges.

As I write this the Vienna Community Church is moving towards a new milestone. We are making headway on purchasing property to be used by the community. If we are successful, this will be the first time in VCC history that the church has owned property. This new property will be available for meetings, Bible studies, outreach events, concerts and will office church staff. While the process of acquiring this space has been difficult and arduous, I am confident that by the next Bridge Article to have a full report on this space and how it is being used.

As the pastor I thank you for your continuing support of the ministry of the Vienna Community Church. Unlike many congregations of its size, the VCC is dependent on outside contributions. In order to continue to move forward, the church is in desperate need of your prayers, thoughts, and financial support. We have been your central European home for the last 58 years, and we plan to continue the ministry for many years to come!

Every Blessing, Pastor Troy Morgan



Vienna Community Church Music:

A continuation of the article found in the Autumn 2014 issue

By Sandra Nel

What is happening on our side of the globe in Vienna at the VCC Music? Exciting and new things because of special and exciting new people!



Soprano Kristin Lewis, with husband Werner Schwaiger. Kristin sings at the Vienna State Opera, Bastille Opera House, in Paris, France, La Scala Opera House in Milan, Italy, and many other great Opera houses of the world. She sang the title role in Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Aida" at the Operafestival in St. Margarethen near Vienna.



Our very own „Kammersänger“ Johan Botha here seen as Otello, has treated us with his glorious voice on several occasions when back in Vienna. He is travelling a lot and a constant guest at the Metropolitan Operahouse, Royal Operahouse Covent Garden, San Francisco Opera, Los Angeles, the Lyric Opera House Chicago, Munich, Grand Teatre Liceu in Barcelona, the Vienna State Opera and at the Bayreuther Festival.

He has been gracious in offering his talent to do a Benefit concert for us here at the VCC with myself and other South African singers, Tertia Potgieter, former VCC member, Megan Kahts and Olive Sandilands as well as the Vienna Schubert Male Choir. It will be for the VCC and for Project Centipede.



Our Pastor Troy Morgan uses his singing voice during sermons sometimes to illustrate and underline in a touching way. He told us the story about a little boy who sang „ You are my sunshine“ to his unborn sister whill'st still in the mother's womb and when terribly ill after birth was cured by her little brother singing to her again and reassuring her of his love and presence!

So the music life at the VCC is truly a blessed and a multitalented event at all times and I am looking forward to an even greater time coming when there will surely be more and differentiated projects possible!

It is good to dream to want to achieve and change and be all we can be to His glory and the uplifting of our fellow man through Music in all its facets.....

Yours in Christ with lots of blessings!

Sandra Nel VCC Music Chair



One View of VCC

by Ardit Meier

I first attended the Vienna Community Church (VCC) in 1973. It was memorable, but perhaps not in the way one would have wished. The pastor actually scared me off with what a 20-year-old German Lutheran from Iowa perceived to be something of a “fire-and-brimstone” sermon launched in a deep Scottish voice. At least those are my memories. It was just too much additional “different” to be dealt with as I navigated so many other challenges of living and studying abroad for the first time. I returned to Vienna, however, a couple of times after my junior year abroad and was again drawn back to the VCC. The second time I stayed – for almost 11 years. Instead of scaring me off, the worship services and many of the VCC members became an anchor in the varied storms I travelled through as I taught at the university, struggled to complete my doctorate, and dealt with a normal myriad of personal life issues. My greatest involvement at the VCC was during the time that Gil Miller was pastor, and he and his wife Lois became dear friends.

Since leaving Vienna in July, 1992, I have returned at least once a year, usually in May and June -- sometimes for a teaching stint, sometimes to just “come home” again. Attending services at the VCC is always a special and meaningful part of these sojourns. It has also become special to a friend of mine from Wisconsin who often joins me. Since he does not speak German, it gives him a place to worship where he can feel less “foreign.” Two of my former U.S. students also attended church at the VCC when they were student-teaching in Vienna. For them too it became a port in the storm.

I strongly believe in the mission of an international and interdenominational church such as the VCC. I have witnessed the important role it has played in so many people’s lives other than my own. For some it has been a life-jacket of sorts, for others a place to worship that feels right and thus, be enriched. It is my guess that the members, regular attendees, and pastors of the VCC often have no idea how important they are to others’ spiritual and emotional lives. People come and go with great alacrity at the VCC, but when they go, they do not leave empty. What rich gifts the VCC gives and has the potential to continue to give. It is a place where God’s love can be felt. The sense of being “one in the Spirit” is almost palpable as one looks around the congregation at those representing diverse places of the world. It is truly a place where one can see the Holy Spirit at work as God’s grace blesses all who enter there.

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