



Spring 2016

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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

Dear Friends of the AFCU and American Churches in Berlin, Paris and Vienna,



Thank you for you generous response to "Friends" giving during 2015!

I am especially grateful for the positive response that we received from our letter regarding security concerns in Paris and the special needs projects in all three congregations. Your prayers and financial contributions are extremely important for the continued health of our congregations in Berlin, Paris and Vienna as they continue to do the Lord's work in those cities and beyond. May God bless you for your support!

The AFCU Board and Associates will meet for our Annual Board and Development meetings in Austin, Texas during April 15-17. At these meetings we listen to the needs of the churches from our members, pastors, and church representatives and focus on helping the churches through spiritual and financial support. The Development Meeting is focused totally on the financial support that is needed for the continued operation of the churches. In addition, we work to strengthen the effectiveness of the AFCU organization by our ties and communication with the alumni of the churches. We also work to continually refresh and develop leadership of the organization to ensure strong leadership into the future for our mission.

Board Members, Associates, and Consultants contribute countless hours and financial support to the work of the AFCU and churches. I thank them for their dedication to this important work.

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Have you moved recently? Please update your contact information with us by sending an email to AFCUeditor@afcubridge.org



The Mission of the American and Foreign Christian Union is to support the International, English speaking, ecumenical churches whose ministries bear witness to Jesus Christ. In partnership with our member churches, we will strive to develop and manage a strong financial base to further their programs. We will nurture and strengthen our alumni ties and lend support to the pastors, leadership and members of these churches through our care and prayers.



President's Message, *continued from page 1*

We are always looking for individuals who deeply care for the European churches and want to continue their support after returning to their home countries. The AFCU provides this opportunity for continuing service.

We also encourage partnerships with our home congregations in the United States. The American Church in Berlin has been especially successful with sister Lutheran congregations. If you have interest in helping to develop this type of relationship, please contact me through the AFCU contact connection on our website.

Again, thank you for your prayers and generous financial support of God's work in Europe.

In Christ,

Ted Ziemann

The Heritage Society

The AFCU Heritage Society was founded in 2000. The role of the Heritage Society is to encourage supporters of our partner churches, whether they are active members, alumni or friends, to include them in their estate plans. Today we have over 50 members of the Heritage Society who have included the American Church in Paris, the American Church in Berlin, the Vienna Community Church, and/or the AFCU as part of their estate plan.

At this point in time the AFCU is changing the person responsible for the Heritage Society. My name is Bob DeLuryea and I will be taking over that role. I have been active at the ACP and AFCU for 30 years so many of us already know each other. I look forward to working with all who are members or potential members of the Heritage Society.

For the last 12 years, Russ McNaughton has been responsible for the Heritage Society. He has diligently pursued educating people about the Heritage Society, describing different ways to give in estate plans, recruiting new members, and keeping people aware of the opportunity for estate gifts. All of us owe Russ a great deal of "Thanks" for his efforts in building the Heritage Society. Russ is not leaving us, but is spending much of his time as Financial Secretary for the AFCU.

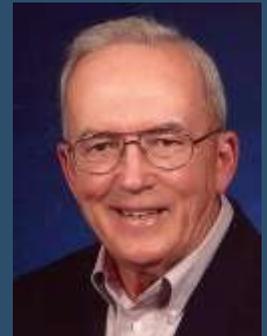
The Heritage Society plays a major role in insuring the long-term viability of our partner churches. The

assurance of adequate financial resources allows each church to plan for the future and know that they will remain financially healthy. For the donors, it is an opportunity to give back and assure that future generations have the opportunity to benefit like many of us have had. We hope that you will consider including our churches in your estate plan.

Additional information can be found on our website www.afcubridge.org. Go to the support tab at the top and you will find a link to Heritage Society information near the top of the support page. Also, feel free to email me at afcuheritage@afcubridge.org. Finally if you wish to call me, my cell phone is 203-885-9959. I will be happy to talk to you at any time.

Robert DeLuryea

Heritage Society



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

2015 AFCU DONORS

The American & Foreign Christian Union would like to thank all of those who made donations in support of our ministries during 2015. 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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2015 AFCU DONORS

Continued from page 3

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During January 2016, donor statements were mailed to all those for whom we have current addresses. If you made a donation during 2015 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 afcuinsec@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

In the Autumn 2015 edition of *The Bridge* I reported on the huge influx of refugees coming into Europe and Germany that was leading in all the media headlines this past summer. Germany's open welcome of the refugees, the greatest number of them fleeing the war in Syria, received admiration and brought great anxiety. At the beginning of May 2015 450,000 refugees were anticipated, but by August over 850,000 refugees had entered Germany. German Chancellor Angela Merkel's answer to anxious German citizens and overburdened public services came at the yearly summer press conference at the end of August. "Wir Schaffen das" (We can do it) Chancellor Merkel said, and it reminded many of Obama's first campaign slogan in 2008, "Yes, we can." At the end of 2015 over one million refugees had entered Germany and 476,649 had made application for asylum. Now in 2016 the German authorities are still trying to process the asylum applications from 2015 even as new refugees continue to enter the country.

Naturally this great influx has brought much political pressure on the Merkel government and measures are being undertaken to stem the flow. The attacks in Paris during the evening of November 13, 2015 exacerbated the anxiety surrounding the refugees. The huge influx of refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan caused a great deal of tension within the expat communities. This caused us to heighten security measures at all our events. I can, however, report record breaking attendance at the Berliner Dom Advent and Christmas Carol Sing and at all our Christmas holiday services.

In the midst of this continued influx of refugees, we at the American Church in Berlin have been exploring ways to partner with refugee services and centers in Berlin. One result was the largest single Sunday offering for our Missions support in September 2015. Our Missions Committee contacted the local refugee shelter in our district and received a wish list of items needed to help the work of the shelter. In January members of the ACB Missions Committee and I met with the director and her aids at the shelter and were given a tour of the facility. As we sat with the director at the end of the tour we asked how we could help. The answer we received was unexpected and challenging. "What would help our clients the most," she said, "is the personal touch. Rather than money and material goods, spending time with them, listening to their stories, working with them or doing an activity together. This would be the greatest donation." There was one material thing we could, however, donate should we wish. There was no stereo or sound system in the commons room on which they could play their own music that they carried with them on their mobile devices. With this in mind the Missions Committee asked the congregation to join them in sponsoring an evening encounter at the shelter and took up a collection for a stereo player to which mobile devices could be linked.

A sign-up list to attend the evening of encounter was made and a collection was taken to purchase the stereo system; the confirmation students led the way with a 60 Euro donation. Due to the great number of sign-ups from ACB the refugee shelter asked us to reduce the number to twenty. The last Friday evening in January we showed up at the commons room with activities for young and old and home baked cookies. It was all well received, but the greatest reception came when we hooked up the stereo system and showed how they could play their music on it. The music boomed from the speakers out of the commons area and through the halls. Within minutes there were residents coming to see where their own familiar music was coming from. A Rumanian man and his family were the first to play their traditional music. The children danced and the parents and adults laughed and smiled. A large group of Syrian men were next to stream their music and then the dancing began in earnest.



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The Berlin Connection, continued from page 5

First a small group gathered for traditional Syrian folk dancing. The young man I was speaking with was from Damascus and told me that these men were from the North of Syria around Aleppo. The group grew until a dozen men were holding hands, weaving, dipping and swaying to their shared cultural music. It didn't take long before the various groups began telling their tales of escape and journeys through Turkey, across the Mediterranean, from Greece, through Serbia, Hungary, Austria and into Germany. Many with just the clothes on their backs.

Of great concern now in Germany is how to integrate the refugees into German society. The Bishop of the Berlin evangelical church has called for greater concentration on integration and the transmission of German values. Perhaps the best way we can effect integration, however, is to acknowledge the particular cultures and traditions of these refugees. Then we can begin to communicate effectively and share those values that modern Germany embraces with those seeking refuge among us.

As I thought about writing this article for the members and friends of the AFCU, I thought about how thankful we are for the much needed financial support that we receive. We are, however, equally grateful for the prayers and well wishes, the listening to and sharing in our respective ministries that members of the AFCU Board convey. At times I hear about the phone calls made to supporters by members of the AFCU Board from those receiving them. Your gracious words on our behalf and your thanks generate a powerful outpouring of wellbeing that brings unexpected and additional dividends. People whom we may not know want to support our ministries because of your gracious spirit. Heartfelt thanks to you from Berlin and best wishes for 2016!

Stephan Kienberger



The Launching of Poems

By Monique Amado

I read of German and Chilean poets
dropping their poems from
helicopters to cities below—
bombs of peace

(not the kind that wear
“peace” as false attire
while killing children
and tearing lives asunder).

The poets' words fluttered down,
harmless,
gentle as snowflakes
on the first of December,
or migrating geese floating southward
till spring.

Would that all bombs were poems,
all missiles were paintings filled with light,
all grenades exploded only into symphonies,

or that leaders would
be still more often
and sit in repose beneath oak trees,
reading the words
of Solomon,
Shakespeare,
and Rossetti,

listening to Beethoven,
and the voices of doves.

<http://www.artoflifeandwellness.wordpress.com/>

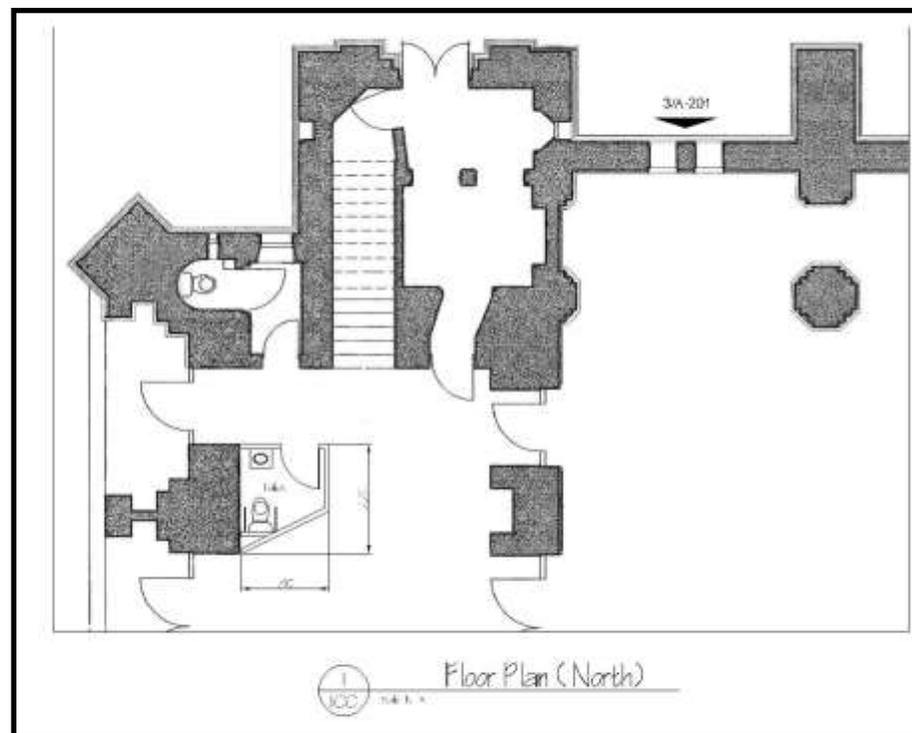
Room for Community

A dream of the ACB community has been to make the church facility more functional to use throughout the week and the year. A thriving community needs room to expand and grow and our facility has been both an asset and a hindrance in this respect. It is an asset in the sense that its size and location are landmarks in Berlin; the bell tower is one of the highest church towers in Berlin and is visible from far away. Our spaces for meetings, however, are limited with three small rooms, the largest of which accommodates no more than twenty adults comfortably. The sanctuary, while large, is costly to heat in the winter and is not conducive for small group activities. We also have limited restrooms and kitchen space.



For the past year the ACB Property Committee has been working to get approval from the Berlin Historic Preservation Office to begin realizing elements of the original concept for the overall church facility. With the help of a member who is a trained architect from the USA and with the persistence of dedicated committee members, we have finally secured the approval to begin construction on the expansion of the restroom to include wheelchair accessibility. We also were able to get the approval to build a meeting room at the back of the sanctuary. The idea is to mirror this room on the opposite side of the sanctuary as funding becomes available. These rooms will help us make use of the sanctuary without the need to heat the entire sanctuary.

It has been a wearisome road, but the blessings are in sight. We hope to secure bids by February 15 and begin with the restrooms



and meeting space immediately after the contractor has been chosen. Most of the funding is made up of the residuals from the heating project that was completed two years ago, the sound system project from this past year, and a capital grant through the AFCU. We are extremely grateful to the AFCU for helping us in the realization of all of these projects. They would not be a reality without your support and generosity. Thank you for strengthening us for service to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Berlin and beyond.

Bob Bakke and Dietrich Rein

Co-Chairs of the Property Committee

The Paris Connection



www.acparis.org

Dear Members and Friends of the AFCU,

Warm greetings to you from a cold and rainy Paris. As we move through this season of Lent, we are thankful for the increasing light in this present darkness. When *Daesh* is threatening further terrorist attacks against France, it puts a whole new meaning in our annual Lenten pilgrimage, remembering Jesus' temptations in the wilderness and his journey to the cross. Nevertheless, we have Easter hope and are wrestling with what it means to deepen our love for God and our neighbors, even our enemies.

One sign of new life that we are very glad to share with you is the anticipated arrival of our new *Associate Pastor for Congregational Ministries*. The Rev. Timothy Vance was selected from a field of almost 150 candidates. Tim was born and raised in Hornell, NY with an older sister and two younger brothers. He attended Houghton College in Western New York where he played college basketball and graduated with a liberal arts degree in Biblical Studies and Educational Ministries. While at Houghton he studied abroad in London, Paris and Madrid.

After graduation in 1999, Tim moved to Bellevue, WA to work with high school



students at Bellevue Presbyterian Church. It was there that Tim met his future in-laws, who eventually introduced him to their daughter, Maija. Tim and Maija were married on 30 December, 2004.

In 2006 Tim graduated from *Fuller Theological Seminary* in Pasadena, California with a Master of Divinity degree. A year later their first child, Noah, was born. Their daughter, Sophia, was born in 2010 and their second son, Ezra, was born in 2014.

For the past six years Tim has served as the Associate Pastor for *Gateway Presbyterian Church* in The Dalles, Oregon. He's been a volunteer justice speaker for *International Justice Mission*, which works to address issues of slavery and injustice that disproportionately impact the world's poor.

I hope that you will pray for Tim and his family as they settle into their new home, church family, and life here in Paris, and I hope that you will be able to visit and meet the Vance family.



The other big news, of course, is the 40th anniversary celebration of Fred Gramman's service as the *Director of Music Ministry* to the ACP. We will have a festive time the weekend of 4-5 June honoring Fred and the many gifts he continues to share through weekly hymn selection; composition, coordination and leadership of organ, choral and bell and other instrumental and solo music in worship; administrating the Atelier Concerts on Sunday evenings; and adding joy and creative energy to the staff team. We hope that you will be able to join us for this special weekend celebrating Fred's ministry and the many musical gifts he brings to our corporate worship.

Please continue to pray for Paris, and that the ACP would seek the peace of the city and faithfully continue to share in word and deed the good news of God's love revealed in Jesus Christ. We are very thankful that generous support came in to help us through a very challenging fourth quarter in 2015, but the wedding ministry revenues are at 10% of where we were a few years ago. We are hoping to complete required fire safety upgrades, disability access and restrooms, as well as a studio apartment renovation this year. We believe God is calling us to continue to be a *Beacon on the Seine*, and it just may be that *God will provide through you to sustain us in these uncertain times*. Thank you for your faithful prayers and financial support!

May God's light and love continue to guide and sustain us all toward resurrection new life.

In Christ,

“Put on Love” by Billy Roberts, Director, Youth and Young Adult Ministries

It is inevitable that during the month of February that one writes on the topic of love. We have so many pictures of what love is. And many words have been written elsewhere to discuss love in its many forms. But I would like to discuss the role of love in our theme verse for 2016 at the ACP.

12 Therefore, as God’s choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. 14 And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 The peace of Christ must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people. 16 The word of Christ must live in you richly. Teach and warn each other with all wisdom by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him. – Colossians 3:12-17 (CEB)

One of the unique and beautiful characteristics of the ACP is the diversity, not only in culture but in theology. We are a body made up of 40-50 different nationalities, but we are also a community with wide-ranging theological views. And this can be a tricky sea to sail upon. Let’s take

a look at just a few (and I mean just a few) examples. ❑ What is the role of women in ministry? ❑ Is homosexuality a sin? ❑ Was the world created in six literal days? What about evolution? ❑ Can



we participate in war as Christians? The reality is that in a congregation like ours there will undoubtedly be as many answers to those questions as there are denominations represented. We are faced with the challenge then to worship together in the middle of a complex web of theologies. You will not agree with every person you meet at the ACP. In fact you may vehemently disagree with certain people on certain issues which may hold significant importance in your life. Here in Colossians Paul lists all these attributes to possess as “God’s choice, holy and loved.” And he finishes that list by saying “over all these things put on love.” Why? Because it “is the perfect bond of unity.” So often in the protestant tradition we have disagreed, but rather than work together, we have split apart, forming yet another denomination. Paul

challenges us here to put on love over all of the other attributes, because through truly loving each other, even in our differences, we are bound together in unity. St. Augustine of Hippo is famously quoted as saying, “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”

Immediately following verse 14, Paul tells us that “the peace of Christ must control your hearts – a peace into which you were called in one body.” Don’t miss that, because our essential is Christ. We

belong to the ACP through our unity in Christ. Remember that, although we have our differences, sometimes big differences, Paul tells us to put on love and St. Augustine reminds us that in non-essentials (which by the way, is what all these controversial issues are) we have liberty, and in everything we ought to show charity. So the love I want for each of us at the ACP is one that, amidst complex theological diversity, is bonded through our most important essential, Jesus Christ. So that in our community of believers of all kinds, we work out our faith together “in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him.”



The Vienna Connection



www.viennacommunitychurch.com

2015 IN REVIEW...2016 HERE WE COME!

Happy New Year to our AFCU Friends!

The Year 2015 was a pivotal year for the VCC! It purchased its first ever fellowship hall - the VCC Meeting Point, acquired a new and modern Manse, welcomed a new interim pastor, and began the search for a permanent pastor. Where do we go from here?

While the first half of the year was consumed with the purchase of VCC's first property, and moving the Manse, the second part of the year involved welcoming our new interim pastor and his wife, Rev. Lowell and Svetlana Karnes, taking steps to make the Meeting Point a welcoming place in which VCC's members and friends could be comfortable, and expanding



fellowship activities.

With the new manse located within proximity of the Meeting Point, it is now much easier for the Pastor to be available for the various activities taking place in the Meeting Point, such as Adult Bible Study, consultations, blessing the choir during its long Saturday rehearsals, preparation of the Sunday sermon, and interacting with the Young Adults.

The Autumn saw the VCC Board refocus its efforts not only to the opportunities of fellowship offered by the Meeting Point, it was also important that the Board set up a structure to ensure its financial viability.

Fundraising

In October, the VCC organized its first fellowship event after the official opening in May – **the International Food Fest and Kick Off of the Capital Appeal Fundraising Campaign**, headed by VCC's Stewardship and Fellowship Chair, Masa Matasushita. Both Masa and Mickela also attended the Autumn AFCU Meeting to seek AFCU support for its fundraising efforts. We were warmed by the reception that we received and the commitment to raise funds on VCC's behalf, led by Rev. Jim Wiberg, a former VCC pastor.



L to R: Mickela Moore, Masa Matasushita, Rev. Jim Wiberg, Kathryn Koob, Rev. Jack and Helen Hustad

Using the Meeting Point

In addition to the Board meetings and Committee meetings, an evening Adult Bible Study group and the Young Adults usually have their weekly get-together at the Meeting Point. In addition, the Meeting Point is rented out during periods of non-use. So far, we are renting it to a choir which sings specially composed hymns in Hebrew, the Psalmenchor; and a Japanese instructor for children. A 10 day exhibition was also held in November by travel photographer, Gerald Waitusch.



The Advent Season saw a flurry of activity for the VCC, including a visit from Walt Dietrich, a Chanukkah Workshop, VCC's first Christmas Potluck in the Meeting Point, our annual Christmas Pageant, and culminated with our popular Christmas Eve Service, organized by our Music Chair, Sandra Nel.

First Christmas Potluck at Meeting Point



L to R: Svetlana Karnes, Anne Storey, Membership Chair; Sonja Botha, Worship Chair, Wolfgang and Mary Geissler; Rev. Karnes, Souvanit Sonnlichler, VCC Member.



Sherley Varghese with her Indian contribution

Young Adults Christmas Party



L to R: Alice Wanner, Young Adults Coordinator and Vaclav Krouper

Christmas Eve Service



Traditional Carol Singing in the Courtyard of the VCC after the Christmas Eve Service

What does 2016 Hold for VCC?

We would like to build on our successes in 2015 by raising more funds for the Capital Fund through events, rentals and appeals, call a permanent pastor, plan a series of fellowship events and grow our Church!

With warm greetings from Vienna!

Mickela Moore, Publicity Chair, Property Chair



**Photos: Courtesy of Missy Fetternof, Wolfgang Geissler, Mickela Moore, Rainer Zimmerman*

2015 Christmas Pageants at ACB, ACP, and VCC!



American and Foreign

Christian Union

www.afcubridge.org

AFCU President, Ken Rislov

AFCUPresident@afcubridge.org

Treasurer, Jerry Burns

American & Foreign Christian Union

2885 Sanford Ave. SW #29934

Grandville, MI 49418

Bridge Editor, Jody Smith

AFCUEditor@afcubridge.org

American Church in Berlin

Leberstrasse 7

10829 Berlin-Schöneberg, Germany

american.church@berlin.de

www.americanchurchberlin.de

American Church in Paris

65, Quai d'Orsay

75007, Paris, France

secretary@acparis.org

www.acparis.org

Vienna Community Church

Dorotheergasse 16

A-1010, Vienna, Austria

vccoffice@chello.at

www.viennacommunitychurch.com

Unsolicited articles and pictures are welcomed. Next Deadline: June 1, 2016

Please send them to:

AFCUEditor@afcubridge.org



Would you like to receive the Bridge via email? Send your request to: AFCUEditor@afcubridge.org

HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE

The American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU) supports the American Church in Paris (ACP), the American Church in Berlin (ACB), and the Vienna Community Church (VCC) through grants to help their programs. Gifts to the AFCU help to increase our support of these churches. Contributions may be sent to the American and Foreign Christian Union at:

**PLEASE NOTE OUR
NEW ADDRESS**

AFCU

2885 Sanford Ave. SW #29934

Grandville, MI 49418

You may also make gifts to the individual churches. If you wish your gift to be tax deductible in the United States, you must make your dollar check payable to the AFCU at the above address. Put the words "for ACB" or "ACP" or "VCC" on the memo line of your check.

DONATION INFORMATION

I PREFER THAT MY DONATION BENEFIT:

AFCU General Fund ____% ; American Church of Berlin ____%

American Church in Paris ____%; Vienna Community Church ____%

Unless otherwise designated, your contributions will go to the General Fund from which annual distributions support all of the churches.

AMOUNT \$ _____ Check enclosed: (preferred)

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: **American and Foreign Christian Union**

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The easiest way to contribute is by going to the AFCU Website:

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