



Summer 2014

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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.

We, as apostles filled with the Holy Spirit, are on a mission. We have time, we have talents, we have contacts, we have networks, and we have financial resources that, together, will support the front line work in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna.

President's Message

As I write this message, we are in the Pentecost period of the Church calendar. The Church celebrates the Holy Spirit descending to the first Apostles on this day. Pentecost is also recognized as the birthday of the Church. It occurs to me that well over 100 years ago the Holy Spirit descended onto groups of Apostles in Paris and Berlin and more recently onto Apostles in Vienna who, being greatly inspired, gave birth to the churches we know as American Church in Paris, American Church in Berlin, and Vienna Community Church. Now, collectively more than 300 years later, the Holy Spirit still inspires the people of these congregations and of AFCU to proclaim the Good News to the people of these great cities of the world.

We, as apostles filled with the Holy Spirit, are on a mission. We have time, we have talents, we have contacts, we have networks, and we have financial resources that, together, will support the front line work in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna. Our partner churches welcome new people into the congregations, nurturing and inspiring them while they live in the respective communities. As people move or return home, AFCU needs to welcome them into the network that helps support the work of the Holy Spirit in the three congregations. In addition, AFCU needs to expand its

network of friends, alumni, sister congregations, consultants, and associates who, when moved by the Holy Spirit, can infuse an untapped resource of time, talent, contacts, networks and financial resources into the work of the great mission.

The Lord calls on us to be good stewards of all the resources He has entrusted to us. That means while we live on this earth and after we depart this earthly life. Most of us do well sharing resources while living but sometimes we are hesitant to take the step to extend stewardship after our life on earth is over. Your gifts can be carried forward by including AFCU, ACP, ACB, and/or VCC in your will, trust, foundation or estate plan. Information and contacts concerning gifting or estate planning are offered elsewhere in this publication.

The Lord has been good to us and has continued to fill our hearts and souls with His Holy Spirit, not just at Pentecost, but every day, wherever we are, to share His Word. This Spirit spills out of the churches like a beacon into the great cities of Paris, Berlin and Vienna.

Ken Rislov,
President AFCU



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2014 AFCU ANNUAL MEETING

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The Annual meeting of American and Foreign Christian Union was hosted by Ted and Betty Ziemann at Bethany Lutheran Church in the beautiful Castle Rock, Colorado area. It is never easy to be the host to 40-45 people, but with the beautiful Rocky Mountains as a backdrop and the outstanding home and church facilities, the weekend could not have been better!

It is always refreshing to attend the Annual Meetings and to listen to all of the activities of the American Church in Paris, the American Church in Berlin, and the Vienna Community Church. It reinforces and inspires us to continue the efforts of support for our partners in Europe. Each Church is unique in its congregational make up and in its community outreach missions. All are faithful to the teachings of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

American Church in Paris

AFCU Board of Directors voted, along with The Council of ACP, to extend the ministry call to Rev. Dr. Scott Herr. He, his wife Kim and their family have been a blessing to the American Church in Paris and we are thrilled that they will remain. The Board acted to establish (smile.amazon.com) two working groups: first, to review the ACP budget request and the AFCU resources making recommendations to the Executive Committee for final endorsement of the 2014 grants; and second, to recommend a management plan for the ACP Building Endowment Fund to be established as part of the current ACP-160 Campaign.



American Church in Berlin

AFCU Board of Directors heard a report from Rev. Steve Kienberger about the imminent establishment of a partnership between ACB and a congregation in Omaha, Nebraska. The partnership will be mutually beneficial. Hopefully, it is only the first of many partnerships to further the missions of ACB and AFCU partner churches. The Board heard and saw the photos of the preparation and installation of heating systems in the ACB Luther Church. The congregation was thrilled and thankful for the generosity (smile.amazon.com) of AFCU members and

friends who helped them to have a warmer sanctuary for winter worship. They now look forward to enhancements for the heating system and to installation of a new sound system for the sanctuary.



Vienna Community Church

AFCU Board Members heard VCC Moderator, Ronan LeBras, describe the activities in Vienna. After having had a short term experience with a rented meeting/office space, they were not able to continue the rental agreement. The VCC does not own property for its various activities. He proposed that together (smile.amazon.com) we explore the possibilities for support/assistance to raise the funds necessary to own a facility that meets their needs. Jim Wiberg is continuing the effort to complete the VCC/AFCU Relationship documents.

Membership

AFCU Board members elected Ken Rislov, President; Ted Zieman, Vice President; Jerry Burns, Treasurer; Megan Foster, Secretary; Russ McNaughton, Financial Secretary; Don Eppert, Human Resources. In addition, Don Krump and Jane Kendall were appointed co-chairs of the Development Committee. Andrew Teng became an Associate Member while on work assignment in Asia. Rev. Dr. Charles Lindholm retired from active membership to become an AFCU Consultant after 20 years of service and "great company" (standing ovation). Bill Sewell, Treasurer, resigned from Board Membership due to responsibilities at work and family. Katheryn Koob became the newest Board Member, and other potential Board Members and Consultants are being vetted for consideration at a future meeting.



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Highlights of the 2014 AFCU Annual Meeting, *continued from page 2*

Budget Details

Details of the approved budget for 2014 are available on the AFCU website: afcubridge.org.

[\(smile.amazon.com\)](http://smile.amazon.com)

What is this? We all need to be creative about ways to increase the financial pool from which AFCU supports its partner churches in Europe. Most of us make online purchases from Amazon. Amazon has a program (smile.amazon.com) that makes donations to charitable organizations that have been vetted and approved by Amazon. American and Foreign Christian Union, Inc. is approved. The % of purchase is small, but think of the possibilities if each of us sign up at the above address and make usual purchases. It is even better if we recruit all of our families, relatives, friends and others. As I said at the meeting; "a handful of peanuts isn't much, but several handfuls make up a package, several packages make up a box and several boxes make up a shipment." We give up nothing by switching to (smile.amazon.com) but together we can make some impact.

Future Meetings (mark your calendars)

The October 2014 Development Meeting will be led by Don Krump and Jane Kendall on October 18th in Atlanta. The Spring 2015 Annual/Development meeting will be held in Berlin, Germany, hosted by ACB.

2013 AFCU DONORS

The American and Foreign Christian Union would like to thank all of those who made donations in support of our ministries during 2013. 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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2013 AFCU DONORS, *continued from page 3*

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During January 2014, 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

it can be possible that the whites, who brought them the Gospel of Love, are now murdering each other, and throwing to the winds the commands of the Lord Jesus. When they put the question to us we are helpless. (Albert Schweitzer, *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, trans. C. T. Campion (London: A. & C. Black, 1924), 138)

As Germans living in a French colony, Schweitzer and his wife were put under supervision at Lambaréne by the French military. In September, 1917, the Schweitzers were taken to France and placed in a camp for prisoners of war. They were taken to Bordeaux where they spent three weeks interned in temporary barracks. Here both Schweitzers were ill, Albert with dysentery. Then they were taken to a prisoner of war camp at Garaison, in the Pyrenees. In March, 1918, they were placed in a prisoner of war camp just for Alsatians, at St. Remy. Throughout this period, Albert Schweitzer continued to provide medical care to those around him, to work on his Philosophy of Civilization, and to struggle with his own weakened and ill condition. In July, 1918, the Schweitzers were released in a prisoner exchange. As Schweizer tried to come to terms with the aftermath of the war and to find a way to return to and fund his mission work, he served at St. Nicholas Church, practicing medicine at Strassburg's municipal hospital, and continued writing his Philosophy of Civilization.

At a memorial service for the dead, on December 1, 1918, he shared these developing thoughts:

Disregarding all barriers of nationality we remember today those human beings who were sacrificed to the spirit of heartless cruelty. We humiliate ourselves before these dead, and we promise that the heartless spirit in which they were sacrificed shall be destroyed. . . . Reverence for human suffering and human life, for the smallest and most insignificant, must be the inviolable law to rule the world from now on. In so doing, we do not replace old slogans with new ones and imagine that some good may come out of high-sounding speeches and pronouncements. We must recognize

As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. Ephesians 6:15

At a recent meeting with an ecumenical peace group here in Berlin I was made cognizant of the impending centenary celebration of World War I. The question was raised what the church and other religious leaders learned from this first great global conflict, especially since twenty years following WWI the outbreak of World War II was launched. The effects of this war can be witnessed in two of the most influential theologians of this period, Albert Schweitzer and Karl Barth. Whereas Albert Schweitzer became a more resolute proponent of liberal Protestantism, Karl Barth abandoned this theological branch and developed what has become known as neo-orthodoxy.

Albert Schweitzer and his wife, Helene, could only witness the outbreak of the war from their mission station in Africa. He was constantly struck by the contrast between the barbarity of European "civilization" and the ways of the supposedly uncivilized Africans. He often repeated the story of the African who had heard that ten white men known in the area had died in the War; the African found it hard to believe that with so many casualties--ten--the powers of Europe did not meet to make peace. Schweitzer wrote to his supporters at Christmas, 1914:

We are, all of us, conscious that many natives are puzzling over the question how

that only a deep-seated change of heart, spreading from one man to another, can achieve such a thing in this world. (Albert Schweitzer, *Reverence for Life*, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (New York: Harper & Row, 1969, 103-104)

To mark the centenary celebration of the First World War we have brought back the peace crane initiative that was a part of the tenth anniversary of 9/11. Over 1,000 peace cranes will eventually decorate our sanctuary. Long columns of peace cranes descend the twenty meters from ACB's ceiling causing us to look up and ponder "the God of peace" that the Apostle Paul extols in all his letters.

As I write these lines the news has come over the radio that Dr. Maya Angelou has passed. The closing lines of her poem, Amazing Peace, puts into words best what we are trying to convey with the hanging of peace cranes.

We, Angels and Mortal's, Believers and Non-Believers,
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at our world and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves
And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation.

Peace, My Brother.
Peace, My Sister.
Peace, My Soul."

"Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem"
by Dr. Maya Angelou

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways.

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Pastor Steve



Global And Local Mission and Outreach Projects of ACB

ACB has four global and three local projects. We support global mission projects in Ethiopia, India and South Africa. In the Ethiopian program "Let the Woman Read the Bible," women and men in rural villages are taught how to read with the help of the Bible.

In India ACB supports two projects: the "Women's Empowerment Program" of the Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK), and a medical services program.

Through the "Women's Empowerment Program" women learn how to sew in order to be able to take care of themselves and their families. The medical services program in Yelagari brings health education and services to people in remote villages in the form of health camps. In South Africa, Bushbuckridge Mission educates families on AIDS prevention and cares for children suffering from the effects of HIV/AIDS. The mission also offers training in sewing, beadwork, candle-and-soap making, and gardening.

The Missions Committee is currently assessing all our global mission projects.

We have decided that we would like to establish a closer, more personal relationship with our global missions and get more involved on the local level.

On the local level, ACB has three programs, overseen by the Outreach Committee: OCEP, a program that invites work groups from the U.S.A. and Germany to participate in an International Service Ministry. This ministry involves interaction with the local community as well as the American Church in Berlin congregation. ACB is also part of the citywide "Laib & Seele" ("Body & Soul") food distribution program. We distribute food items that have been donated by merchants of local area stores once a week, helping feed about 150 people on regular basis. Our third local program is the Learning Café, which offers free classes in English and German not only for our churchgoers, but also for people in the local community outside ACB who wish to have help in language learning. The Café teaches English in four groups: two beginner classes, one for children and one for adult beginners; a large intermediate-level group; and one

professional translator-level class. In addition, it offers a beginning German class. Diana Parker, beloved "headmistress" of the Learning Café, will return to the States after four years of hard work and dedication to the program. Beside Diana, there are three English teachers and two substitute teachers as well as a German teacher. "I would say our average attendance was around 13 to 15 students each week," she explains. "We have had the opportunity to teach people from a variety of countries including Poland, Afghanistan, Germany, Syria, China, Serbia, and Croatia. It has been a wonderful experience for me to build friendships with these people and to help them with another language. I would like to encourage other people in our congregation to consider stepping up to be a teacher."

Andrea Aker, ACB
Missions Chair



Women in Yelagari



Laib and Seele



Learning Café

The Paris Connection



www.acparis.org

Dear Members and Friends of the AFCU,

Most of you know there are four major seasons in the Christian Church: Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. In ecumenical Christian traditions, Trinity Sunday (this year June 15) is the last High Feast day until Christ the King Sunday which marks the end of the liturgical calendar (this year November 23). The time from June 15 until November 23, then, is what is known as "Ordinary Time."

Ordinary Time (OT) does not signify a lack of importance. Quite the contrary! The origin of OT comes from the Latin *ordinalis*, which means something that is numbered (in this case, weeks). Ordinary and Order are both English words that come from the Latin root *ordo*. In other words, OT is when we attempt to put our lives more in order with God's priorities and plans for us. It is a time of discipleship when we pray for God's grace to help discipline our lives more around Christ's commands to us.

I love OT here at the American Church in Paris. It's my favorite non-season season in the calendar, as it is an opportunity to reflect more on and renew my own inner life and discipleship.

OT always corresponds (at least in the Northern Hemisphere) with the most fruitful harvest time of year. Perhaps this is a clue that God's transforming work is happening not only in the major seasons of feasting and penance, but in our watchful, patient anticipation of Christ's coming anew into our lives and life together any day.

Summer is all OT, and when many of us take time for vacation. Whether or not we travel to see family and friends or get away to a favorite spot of rest or adventure, the idea of vacation is about "vacating" the busy places of our lives in order to enter into places of rest and renewal. Part of the privilege we have in our practice of OT here in Paris is welcoming so many people who are vacationing. Many are amazed at the welcome they receive here at the ACP. Welcome is important ministry. This summer we started off with a stunning art event called "Painting With the Spirit" with Monica Bassett.

We will be hosting a retreat for spiritual refreshment at the Abbey de Fleury with Dr. Martha Robbins from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. We'll also be welcoming Dr. Joel Bacon, a virtuoso organist and Professor of Liturgical Studies at Colorado State University; Jonathan Grant as our Visiting Artist helping with Vacation Bible School; and then Gwen Ingram, the Director of Field Education at Fuller Theological Seminary. We'll kick off



Paintings in ACP Chapel

the rentrée hosting Garrison Keillor for two shows of *A Prairie Home Companion* recorded live in the ACP Sanctuary for two shows Friday, September 6 and Saturday, September 7!

"Welcome one another as God as welcomed you in Jesus Christ," we are encouraged by the Apostle Paul! Welcome is at the heart of the gospel, and we hope to welcome you

again soon to come and see what God is doing in our midst to bless so many people in Paris and around the world. Thank you for your faithful prayers and financial support for the ACP. You help us to extend a world-wide welcome!

In Christ,



Moving Into Action Continues – *an update from the Sandwich Ministry*

By Jurie Ane Feleo

In addition to the American Church in Paris' ongoing partnership with the Friday Mission Lunch and various other local and international mission projects, the ACP Homeless Ministry began last year. This dynamic new mission service was inspired, strangely perhaps, during the singing of a song in the Contemporary Worship Service. You never know how and when God will speak to you, but it happened to me as I was playing the bass with Still Point, the ACP's contemporary band. God spoke to me as we were singing Tim Hughes' song, *God of Justice* with the following lyrics:

*God of Justice, Saviour to all
Came to rescue the weak and the poor
Chose to serve and not be served*

*Jesus, You have called us
Freely we've received
Now freely we will give*

*We must go live to feed the hungry
Stand beside the broken
We must go
Stepping forward keep us from just singing
Move us into action
We must go*



It was the “keep us from just singing” part that moved me to initiate a ministry to feed the increasing number of homeless people (men, women and children living on the streets) of Paris. The ministry has grown in the past year and we are thankful for many volunteers and a growing vision to “feed the hungry.”

In 2014, after the massive joint force of AUP and ACP for sleeping bags and sandwich distribution in February, the Homeless Ministry has been continuously moving forward in its mission in recent months. Many groups have joined our fortnightly mission. The University of Southern California Alumni Club in Paris, which ACP member Chris Pruzko has been involved with, joined and contributed money for the Sandwich Ministry to participate in the Global Day of Service. It was a great day and fun to serve in this mission with them.

Another group has also joined us for the Breakfast Ministry: Kimberly Hunt brought her ACP small group to help make and distribute breakfast bags. Kimberly and her small group believe that it's not just about feeding our souls within the small groups but actually feeding the hungry outside, in our community and that that should be living out what they have been talking about within their group.

We were also blessed that a group from Western Carolina University of Undergraduate Studies was travelling around Europe and was looking for some kind of mission work. On May 21-22 the WCU students generously donated funds and participated in the Sandwich Ministry!

A student from the American School in Paris is also looking forward to partnering with the Homeless Ministry as well. She would like to make a Club in her school that aims to raise money as well as making the sandwiches and helping to distribute them.

God is definitely at work! May He continue to stir us up and send us out!

We must go!

The Vienna Connection



www.viennacommunitychurch.com

Stadtkirche. As you approach, you see the greeters Anne Peschek (left) and Sita Weinrich (right) standing outside welcoming you into the Vienna Community Church's 12:00 service.



As the service begins you look up and notice that Anne has taken her spot as a soloist in the choir loft along with her daughter Martina. Both of them are singing a piece from a Mozart Mass to begin the service. The choir joins in. Along with the singing you hear the tunes of VCC's new organist from Poland, Thomasz Piętak. Thomasz is an impressive performer and improvises on hymn tunes and classical music throughout the service. In the background (of the picture) you see Prentiss Dunn. Prentiss has been VCC's choir conductor for the last few months. You find

out later that he was originally Anglican and studied theology while at university. Prentiss and the rest of the choir have struggled with the lack of rehearsal space since the church left the Blutgasse office. This, unfortunately, was one of the reasons why the choir director and organist who were hired last August resigned just before Christmas. That put aside, you notice that Prentiss seems to be a wonderful addition to the VCC staff.

Jacqui Grainge our office administrator has been organizing the flowers, along with readers and ushers since the VCC Worship Chair resigned. Flowers are always an important part of the VCC as volunteers sign up to bring them every week.



Today the VCC welcomes a new member of both the Board and the church Robert Wesley. You see (from left to right) the current VCC Moderator Mary Geissler participating along with Alexander Vargese who is the chair of the Stewardship and Finance Committee. This is the fifth new member received by VCC this year.

After a reading and a hymn Pastor Troy preaches from the centre aisle. His sermon today is on John 14:8-17, the power of the Holy Spirit. It seems the early disciples and apostles were just a rag tag group of misfits before the Holy Spirit came on the scene.

Continued on page 10

The Vienna Connection, *continued from page 9*

By understanding and trusting the Holy Spirit the early disciples were able to take on all of the shame and torture that would happen to them while still maintaining their own happiness, peace and joy. Pastor Troy suggests that that same power is available to us today to help get us through the stresses, struggles and conflicts of life.

Later in the service Pastor Troy calls the Children to come to the front. The VCC's Children's ministry has grown recently. This is remarkable since the VCC has not had a Christian Education Chairperson for more than two years. When Pastor Troy first arrived there was scarcely two children in Sunday school and no nursery. Today the church has Sunday school and nursery care every Sunday lead by trained and vetted volunteers and paid staff. Part of Pastor Troy's Children's sermon today is about rebirth. To celebrate this new birth the children decorate the cross with flowers (a long Easter Tradition at the VCC). On a separate note, there has been lots of growth in the VCC the last few years, programs, projects and bake sales. Just three years ago, especially in the summer months there were scarcely 35 people in the pews. Today it is not unusual to see 90. Unfortunately the church has yet to get back to the 150 experienced before the church conflicts erupted in 2006.



After the children's sermon, Pastor Troy invites Euripedes, Bettina and baby Isabella and Ribeiro and Hartlieb family members and godparents up for a baptism. Baptism is always a special time at the VCC and they have had several in the last year. You have already met Anne Pesheck on the far left, followed by Bettina Ribeiro, Leila Tuban below her, then Anderson Brown and then above Anderson Euripedes Ribeiro. Timothy Johnston, Raynica Das and Keri Johnston who are singing as a part of the choir. In the front is Baby Isabella, Pastor Troy. Frank Hartlieb is on the far right.

Meeting after the service for Coffee and fellowship has long been a tradition at the VCC. The coffee has mainly been prepared by Jacqui Grainge the office administrator since the VCC Fellowship chair resigned several months ago. In the lower right hand corner we have Galya Adimitrova the VCC's new child minder and Sunday School assistant followed by Selwyn Das, Ruby John. In the distant background you see Susanne Dobhals playing with her children and to Susanne's right is her older daughter Vanessa. Next to Susanne going right (near the pictures) is David Wiberg and Masayoshi Matsushita. Smiling at us is our new organist Prentice Dunn. Closest to us with the red hair is Christina Dietl.



VCC has a long tradition of doing a monthly bake sale for charities. In the past the proceeds have gone to Project Centepede, Doctors With Out Boarders or given to various projects of Diakonie, the Protestant social service and support organization in Austria. This tradition was restarted May, 25th May 2014. Proceeds of the May charity bake sale (€313,90) went to flood victims in South-East Europe. At the far end of the table see Lexi Wiberg selling her homemade crafts. Lexi and Tom Wiberg's craft sale added €24,50 to the donation. Rosalind Laimer and Nita-Denise Schimscha are helping out at the table.



After you buy your goods at the bake sale you walk outside to the courtyard and see that it is a gorgeous day. You say hello to some of VCC's young adults. On the left is Christian Mund the VCC's new Vice Moderator, Catherine McDaniel, Ruth Fikare, Alison Koczanski the VCC's former moderator and Jon Bernhard.



Continued on page 11

The Vienna Connection, *continued from page 10*



You sit down and get to know Christina Dietl and Yvonne Zelter. These are Roman Catholic theology students who have been tasked by their professor to attend 40 hours in a church that is not Roman Catholic. They have enjoyed their time at the VCC attending Bible Studies, New Member's Courses, Prayer Tuesdays and other weekly events.

Today there is a congregational meeting. Congregational meetings are unusual in the VCC because of the many new faces. These meet twice a year to elect representatives and approve the yearly budget. Due to issues with

space in the Reformierte Stadt Kirche, the VCC is attempting to have more meetings in the Lutheran church. Here we see on the far left Louise Pickart, Rainer Zimmerman, Masayoshi Matsushita, Hana Wiberg the VCC clerk, Alexander Vargese the VCC's stewardship and finance chair and Mickela Moore the publicity chair.



After the congregational meeting Rainer Zimmerman takes a group to see the Karlskirche, a large and ornate catholic church just down the road. Rainer regularly takes groups from the church on outings, this last year he has gone to Rupertskirche, Convent of the Sisters Hospitallers in Wien-Gumpendorf, and a tour of the Buddhist Temple. Rainer's tours are fun and a great way to get to know people and get to know Vienna.

Later in the week you discover that there is more going on this week at VCC. On Tuesday is the prayer meeting at Pastor Troy's house, on Wednesday is the New Members meeting

at the same place and on Friday there is the Ladies Lunch. The Ladies monthly coffee and monthly lunch (two different events) are organized by Nancy Wonisch. The congregation thanks her very much for her work. As you attend the Ladies Lunch you meet Nita-Denise Schimscha (left), Nancy Wonisch (center), and Helma Giannone (right).



The VCC seems to play an important role in Vienna and Austria. The VCC Board members are personally invited by Austria's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Integration to a reception of other international churches in Austria. Sebastian Kurtz is only 28 and therefore one of the youngest people to ever be the Minister for Foreign Affairs for Austria. Here we see on the left Ronan LeBras (VCC's Treasurer) followed by Sebastian Kurtz (Austria's Minister for Foreign Affairs), Robert Wesley (Chair of Charity and Missions Committee), Ewald Kirschner (Chair of the Property Committee), Sandra Nel (Chair of the Music Committee), and Pastor Troy.



Well, what a week in Vienna. I hope you enjoyed experiencing the church. Please come back soon. We at the VCC thank you for your help and support this last year. If it wasn't for your continued prayers and support our church would look like this:

Instead of like this:



It's the following week and communion Sunday and the hearts of the congregation are getting ready to receive. I wish you all the best this summer.

In Christ,
Pastor Troy

Vienna Community Church Charity and Missions: A Vision for the Future

By Robert Wesley, Chair, VCC Charity and Missions Committee

The VCC may seem to some as limited in its financial and human resources. While such resources may in some ways be quantifiable, their impact is less so. This is because the work done is God's work, and His work many times goes well beyond our ability to perceive. Like the metaphor of the Butterfly Effect, our role may seem small and of limited consequence, but in fact may be used to initiate larger changes. This is one of the most exciting aspects of benevolent activities – that even by small deeds we may enact larger good.

Small change or big, we are tasked not with a global accounting of our impact, but rather simply to help those in need and to be servants of God's will. When we take up our cross and follow Jesus, just as we need not worry about having sandals for our feet or food for our stomachs, we also need not worry about how we will be used for His will.

Through faith, submission, prayer and our own God-given minds we are able to enter into a discernment process that enables us to understand the approach we must take, as a Church, to benevolent activities. In accordance with this, my vision for benevolent activities in the near- to mid-term contains the following objectives.

1) Universal and active involvement:

This objective aims to ensure that everyone in the VCC congregation who wants to participate in benevolent activities (which I assume to be the entire congregation) is able to do so according to their means. The most important task for the Charity and Missions Committee of the VCC is to understand the barriers to action that prevent people from taking the step from desiring to help others to participating in such activities. This is a challenging task indeed, but one that we must attempt to solve as best we can.

2) Spreading the good news:

The benevolent activities of Christians are a powerful example of God's love. Developing opportunities that others outside the VCC can participate in is an excellent way of exposing others to the faith. The task for the VCC Charity and Missions Committee is to design activities that would promote the mobilization of those outside the VCC

community to participate. The congregation's task would be not only to participate themselves, but also to invite friends, colleagues and others to join in our charity and missions activities. Asking others to join is not always the most comfortable of charges. It requires courage. Thankfully I believe courage to be in abundance at the VCC.

3) Hyper-local, local and abroad:

A comprehensive programme of activities is essential to service those in need in the VCC congregation (hyper-local), in Vienna (local), and abroad. The VCC Charity and Missions Committee is charged with developing a set of activities that can service all three localities.

Over the coming months, the VCC Charity and Missions Committee will be developing a programme of activities that will be designed to meet the above-enumerated objectives. It will require an evaluation of existing activities and approaches, an assessment of barriers to action, and development of a new model for congregational engagement on the issues of benevolence to ensure the widest possible participation.

I hope that others who are inspired to help the VCC fulfill this vision or to partner in its activities will take the initiative to contact me to discuss how we might pool resources and learn from each other as we endeavor to be better servants of God.



Robert Wesley

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