

Connecting Our Churches and Friends around the World



AFCU Challenge

The AFCU organization and purpose was the topic for the last article in the Bridge. The local churches to which the AFCU has aligned its support and the AFCU Board are in a constant state of change. Thus it is imperative that we continue to define our roles.

The individual churches are operationally oriented and their vision and sense of purpose deals primarily with the local community. In the case of the American Church in Paris, their Mission Statement centers on the interdenominational and international Christian community in Paris. Their stated purpose "is to bear witness by word and deed to the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, to provide a place of English-language worship in the American Protestant tradition and to engage in ministries and services that enrich the lives of residents and visitors in Paris." The American Church in Berlin defines themselves as an ecumenical, international church. Their diversity is

united through Christian faith, the English language, and the spirit of tolerance. In a similar way the Vienna Community Church defines its congregation as being international, interracial, inter-denominational and ecumenical in spirit. They seek to provide an atmosphere in which all people may be renewed through Christian worship, education and fellowship. Each of the churches has a common purpose in a diverse, international environment.

As stated in the last article, the purpose of the AFCU was defined. While our role of support, ministries and organization were detailed they do not clarify our role with the ever-changing demands of the church ministries. For instance, we are specific in our financial role with the ACP. We take responsibility for nurturing the alumni support of all three churches. Finally we manage all the endowment funds within the charter of a 501-(c) (3) organization. While these are specific tasks they really do not represent a broad mission or vision for our organization. Perhaps this helps explain the ambiguity that seems to continually exist in our role with the churches. At the very least our vision and sense of purpose needs to be reexamined in light of the ever-changing demographics and struggles of our supported churches. In the broader sense, we need to explore what our future roles should or could be in the international Christian environment. Through the leadership efforts of our Development Committee we have already begun this process. It now needs to be refined and set forth as the vision and mission of the AFCU. This will be a key agenda topic for our next Board meeting on March 29, 2004. The vision of any organization sets the tone and priorities of its future commitments and actions. It is our goal

to set a broad base, meaningful mission statement for the future of the AFCU.

We thank each and everyone of our alumni for their past thoughts, prayers and financial support. We ask for your prayerful guidance and wisdom for our future.

Jim Craig, AFCU President

Planned Giving

The Heritage Society of the AFCU was founded in April 2000 and currently consists of members and friends of the American Church in Paris who have included the church in their planned giving (Estate Planning). The same opportunities exist for those who would chose to support the ministries of the American Church in Berlin (ACB) and the Vienna Community Church (VCC). Arrangements can be made to get interested people in touch with the appropriate representatives involved in development from those churches.

We believe that planned giving, which is sometimes referred to as deferred giving, is one of the most useful tools to ensure continued long term ministries of the church. This is the case particularly when the contributions are used for strengthening the Endowment Fund of the chosen church.

Those of you who have lived or spent considerable time in Paris are aware of the enormous impact that the ACP has had on many peoples from around the world, not just Americans and French. From the Sunday worship service to the various activities, youth as well as adults have been touched by their association with

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the ACP. Supporting these activities with your generosity will go a long way to ensure their continuation into the far future.

Anyone interested in setting up a planned giving program can contact us at the AFCU. For gifts designated for the American Church in Paris, the documentation should include the following language “ — gift the American & Foreign Christian Union (AFCU) for the benefit of the American Church in Paris”. The

AFCU has a 501-(c) 3 status with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a not-for-profit charitable organization. Keep in mind that in all cases it is important to obtain the help of a legal or accounting professional when setting up your giving program.

If we can be of any assistance with your plans, please contact us at russmacton@aol.com or 512-261-9725

Russell McNaughton, Heritage Society

NC Friends Gather in Raleigh

The Joel Lane Museum House in Raleigh, North Carolina rang with laughter on the evening of November 8, 2003. On that festive night the beautiful historic home, the birthplace of Raleigh, hosted still another historic meeting, the Friends of the American Church in Paris.

Co-hosted by Ed and Kathy Ruse, Don and Kathie Eppert, Rita Krupp and Cory Krupp Toth, about 25 former Parisians gathered to sip red wine, eat paté and cream puffs, and reminisce about our experiences at the American Church in Paris.

The guests of honor were ACP Director of Music and renowned Hand Bell clinician Fred Grahmann and his wife Nancy. AFCU Friends Champion Rita Krupp welcomed everyone and spoke about the importance of the Friends program.

AFCU Board member Calder Ehrmann and his wife Glenda drove up from Greenville, South Carolina, for the occasion. Former ACP Interim Pastor Lewis Poag and his wife Pat came from West Jefferson, North Carolina. Bob and Carol Martin, from Atlanta Georgia, took advantage of this reception to visit their son Scott, who lives in Raleigh. The Martins, who were in Paris from 1990 to 2000, had the longest tenure, and Ruth Clendenin, who currently lives in Richmond, Virginia, had the most recent, spring 2003. John Humber, who lived in Paris as a child, was

our most senior Friend, while Stephanie Ruse, daughter of Ed and Kathy, was the youngest.

You maybe asking yourself what could draw so many people from all walks of life together?



Above: The NC Friends of the American Church in Paris.

Left: Guest of Honor Fred Grahmann, ACP music director, Stephanie Ruse, Ed Ruse and Cecilia Brown.



Several had traveled some distance to attend the 2-hour event. Could love of music, wine and pastries be that strong? Perhaps. But what really draws us together is a special bond of kinship, of shared experiences, both joyful and tearful, and finding a home away from home in an American church. It may have been in the charming Alte Dorfkirche or the historic Lutherkirche in Berlin, the beautiful gothic Reformierte Stadtkirche where the Vienna Community Church meets, or under the Tiffany windows in the American Church in Paris. It may have been last month or many years ago. But this kinship never dies. So when you hear of a Friends meeting in your area make the effort to attend. I am certain you will find it worth the drive.

Kathie Eppert

Friends' Events — Looking Ahead

Bringing “Friends” together from all three AFCU supported churches has proven quite successful. Several social events were held in recent months and more receptions are planned for Spring and Summer.



AFCU Friends' Champion Rita Krupp and NC co-host Cory Krupp Toth

By combining “Friends” from the three churches, there’s a great opportunity to share experiences and build new friendships. Events can now be planned throughout the US, thanks to the combined expat population in many areas.

Here’s a schedule of some of the upcoming events:

† Sunday, March 28th - Naples, FL. Friends’ Reception for members of all 3 churches, in conjunction with the annual AFCU Board Meeting.

† Sunday, April 18th - New York City - Bell Choir Concert, Fred Gramann conducting, at the Riverside Church, 4 PM. Friends’ Reception to follow.

† Other social events pending in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and several other cities.

For more information on these events, please Email Rita Krupp at JRKrupp@comcast.net

We’d welcome ideas for Friends’ events you’d like planned for your area. Please keep in touch. We appreciate your support!

Rita Krupp, Friends' Champion

Under Construction

The AFCU Web site is still undergoing renovations. Web Master Robert DeLuryea hopes to have the site ready soon. Thank you for your patience.

PARIS CONNECTION

Youthful Recollections: The American Church In Paris.

My father, Robert Lee Humber, was a native North Carolinian and my mother, Lucie Berthier was a native of Paris. They met in the summer of 1922 at the American University Union in Paris where Maman was secretary to the director and where my father came to get his mail as a student at the University of Paris. At some point during the next seven years of their courtship Daddy and Maman began attending the American Church when it was still situated on the Rue de Berry. In October 1929 Robert and Lucie were married by the Pastor of the American Church in Paris, Dr. Joseph Cochran. Edmund Pendleton, the music director and organist of the American Church and a close friend, wrote their wedding music and played at their wedding, which was held at the American Cathedral on Avenue Georges V because the church on the Quai d'Orsay was then under construction. My brother, Marcel Berthier Humber, was born in November 1930 and I came along in August 1933. We became a part of the American Church from our earliest moments.

It is difficult to identify the time of my earliest recollection of attending the American Church. It just seems that it was always there as we grew into active children. Every Sunday except during vacation trips until the summer of 1939 the American Church remained a constant part of our lives, becoming more and more of a cognizant experience as we grew older. In the summer of 1939 our parents took us to Hendaye in the southwest of France for vacation. Realizing what was going to happen in the coming months, my father kept us there until June 1940, when we made our way through Spain and Portugal and by ship to the United States, settling in my father's boyhood home in Greenville, North Carolina. So I was almost 6 years old when we left for Hendaye in 1939 and all of my merged recollections of the American Church stem from the time I was old enough to remember until that fateful Summer of 1939.

Sundays were very special. We always got up early, ate breakfast and dressed in our Sunday clothes. Daddy usually dressed in his striped

trousers and tails with his top hat as was the custom of the day. Or perhaps he only dressed that way when he was to perform some official function such as ushering. Maman wore a regular length dress with an elegant coat and when we were young we were dressed in little brown velvet suits. We had long blond hair with big curls like little girls, as was a custom at the time. On Saturday nights we had to wash our hair and get it rolled up in little leather covered wire contraptions we called "bigoudis" so that we could have pretty curls for church the next day. Those leather things always pulled and we hated having those things put in our hair, but that was a routine on Saturday nights when we were very young. Later when we were older we had short pants, shirt and some sort of string tie with a navy blue coat. And then we got regular boy type haircuts. I don't remember my first haircut, but I'm sure Maman did when we lost all those blond curls.

Then Marcel and I would walk with Daddy around to the garage a block away to get the car if we got ready in time, and bring it around to the front gate for Maman. The four of us would get in the Hupmobile and head for Paris and the American Church. It took a while to get there from Villeneuve as I remember. But I don't recall much about the places we passed, until we got to the River Seine, where we always went down a street that was close to the water near what seemed to be an industrial area and followed it for a time. Eventually we would reach the Quai d'Orsay and parked in front of the church or on the Rue Jean Nicot side.

We always entered the church from the street into the Narthex. I recall it was a large chamber that ran the width of the sanctuary that was entered from the end towards the Church House. I recall that some of Frank Armington's paintings hung in the Narthex and it seems that there was a triptych on the far end of that room. There may have been some in the Sanctuary as well, I think. I always liked looking at them when we went in because they seem to set such a quiet mood over the place, just like the vaulted cathedral ceilings of the sanc-



tuary did. There was something special about the shape of the doors and arches. The light coming through the stained glass windows added to the special feeling I got by just being there. I remember these things as a child because I found them so beautiful. All of this together made me feel that I was in a very special place. When I had questions as to who certain figures were or why certain features of the building were built as they were, Daddy always took the time to explain them to me. He and Maman had a lot to do with creating the atmosphere that I always experienced there by helping me to understand the significance of my surroundings.

We entered the sanctuary from the Narthex from a central door and walked all the way to near the front on the right side where we normally sat with Maman. Daddy usually served as an usher and helped with the offering, so he remained in the rear of the sanctuary after we were seated and joined us for the sermon.

Mr. Pendleton, who Maman and Daddy always called "Pen", was the first to come into the sanctuary and start playing a prelude on the organ to begin the service. It was a pipe organ that had such big pipes and made such wonderful sounds. Those deep notes and rich chords would reverberate throughout those vaulted ceilings and echo back and forth before dying out. I remember the music and the impression the sounds had upon me, but not the words. It was the music that captivated me at that age. You could feel the music as well as hear it. The ambience gave a presence with the organ that I did not experience elsewhere, such as concert halls and movie theaters.

Then the choir came in and sat in the special pews on both sides of the chancel, and there was a mirror mounted on the opposite wall from the organ because I remember looking in it sometimes after the service. Mr. Pendleton conducted the choir while he played the or-

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gan accompaniment and the choir members sitting on his side of the chancel with their back to him could see his direction in the mirror. There was a bass or baritone in the choir by the name of Mr. Yoe whom I really enjoyed hearing sing. I liked his singing so much that I named the stuffed bear my Uncle Johnnie gave me for him. And I still have "Mr. Yoe". The hymns with the organ, choir and congregation singing and playing together were a thrilling sound in that large vaulted sanctuary that I never forgot.

When I was little I usually sat in Daddy's lap while Dr. Clayton Williams delivered the message. Fidgeting was rather difficult in that place, but there was usually a pencil available to make some highly important entries on the church bulletin, such as filling in all the "o"s that I could find. My favorite parts of the service, however, at that age were the music: the hymns, the special music and Pen's preludes and postludes at the organ.

After Dr. Williams finished his sermon, and I could fidget once more, we sang a closing hymn. I think I got a bit more fidgety then in anticipation of our visit to the Williams' apartment in the church house attached to the sanctuary across the courtyard. That was a routine Sunday adventure, but we had to wait until Daddy finished talking - with everybody in the church it seemed. We knew he served as Chairman of the Church's Prudential Committee and worked with the finances of the church somehow, and we knew he had people to see and talk with on Sundays. Later, when we were older, we learned that he had raised the pulpit endowment fund from John D. Rockefeller and Arthur Packard among others.

While he was doing all this talking and visiting with people after church, I usually tried to slip away and go up by the organ and watch Mr. Pendleton play the postlude. The sound was louder there and it was fascinating to watch all those stops pop in and out as he was changing the registry. I marveled at how his feet would move around the pedal board without his looking down. He was always very kind to me and didn't seem to mind my being there. That was always a very special time for me.

Finally! We would go to the elevator in the Church House and ride it to the Williams' apartment, on fourth floor. We would walk out

into the main hallway and to the living room at the front of the apartment where Mme. Fernande Williams would greet us. After that we were free to join Jean Pierre and Robert (who was named after Daddy) in a playroom somewhere down the long central hall. Daddy and Dr. Williams always had things to talk about and we figured that if we made ourselves scarce they would just keep on talking and we'd have a longer time to play. Mme Williams always seemed to have a little something to eat to help stave of the hunger monster until we got home. It was always a happy time visiting with Jean Pierre and Robert and we looked forward to those Sunday visits.

There were some special people we often saw at church on Sundays besides the Williams family, such as Frank and Caroline Armington, both eminent artists. I remember seeing them, but I wish I had clear recollections of the Armingtons. I knew they were special friends when I was around them. I knew that Frank Armington created some of the paintings in the church that instilled a special feeling in me as a child when I passed by them. They were part of the setting that helped provide that quiet, worshipful atmosphere that permeated the sanctuary. I didn't know why at the time perhaps, but I felt it just the same and knew it was a place of peace and rest. Frank Armington also made the drawing of the American Church that was used on all the Sunday bulletins from the time I could remember. I believe the Armingtons were Canadian and the Peel Regional Museum in Brampton, Ontario, has dedicated a portion of their collection to the Armingtons' works of art. Brampton was, I believe, Caroline Armington's birthplace. In 1939 Daddy commissioned Frank Arlington to execute an etching of the Petit Trianon at Versailles, including the bench on which Daddy proposed to Maman. Daddy gave it to her on their tenth wedding anniversary.

Dr. Frank Balsam was another friend whom we saw at church. I recall Dr. Balsam as having a beard and wearing glasses and a dark hat. He had a friendly face although I don't recall ever talking with him. He had a wonderful life's story that Daddy told me when I was older. He had operated a medical clinic in Brooklyn for the poor and needy and was called on to save the life of the husband of one of his patrons who helped support the clinic. This man was deathly ill with double

pneumonia and had been given up for lost by other physicians. Dr., Balsam succeeded in bringing him out of this illness and when this man incorporated his business he gave Dr. Balsam five percent of the stock in gratitude. That man's name was F. W. Woolworth. When we knew Dr. Balsam he was a retired bachelor living very simply in Paris. Daddy said he gave away what he had to help the people in need, only keeping what he needed in order to live. Such persons make an impression on young minds and later help them to formulate their own ideas about the values they esteem most in life. I wonder if anyone at the American Church today knows anything about Dr. Frank Balsam and how he lived his life?

I made a re-acquaintance with the American Church in 1949 during our family visit after the war. Dr. Williams was back in the pulpit, but somehow I didn't feel the need to fill in the "o"s in the Sunday Bulletin. I recall that on one particular Sunday Dr. Williams was to be away and asked Daddy to fill the pulpit that day, which he did. That Sunday also happened to be the last day that three friends from the East Carolina Teachers College in Greenville were going to be in Paris before flying home. Somehow, neither of us knew the others were nearby. One of these three friends, Marguerite Austin, said to the others that Robert Humber had told her that if she ever found herself in Paris on a Sunday she should attend the American Church on the Quai d'Orsay. So, her companions having other plans, she went to the Sunday Service at the American Church. I think that when Daddy got up to deliver the message she went into shock. After the service, with her hands shaking and in a tremulous voice, she asked him, "Do you do this often?" These coincidences can certainly be one of the spices that enrich our lives. Over the years Marguerite and our family have enjoyed the re-telling of this coincidence in our lives, sharing this experience at the American Church.

As children the American Church in Paris was one of the two centers of our lives in Paris outside of our home, occasional visits to our father's office at 44 Champs d'Elysee being the other. And we always looked forward to Sundays when we would be together as a family and going to this special place that was so beautiful, quiet and peaceful, so much so that

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What's Going On



SC/MO co-chairmen Helen Cocaigne and Robin Brady.

The Social Concerns/Mission Outreach Committee has taken on a new life with its co-chairs Helen Cocaigne and Robin Brady. These two dedicated young women have as their objective to get the congregation involved in their many good causes to meet the spiritual and other needs of those less fortunate; to “be the hands of Jesus” for both global and local causes through prayers, time, talents and financial support. They kicked off their campaign with a “Volunteer Sunday” where 9 speakers took two minutes each to talk about their individual causes. Among the various associations represented were the English Library for the Blind, FACTS, orphanages in the Philippines, a home for girls in Lebanon, Compassion International to sponsor a child anywhere in the world, support for peace and reconciliation between the people of Israel and Palestine, Habitat for Humanity, Rafiki and a local mission for refugees and the homeless. In addition, a questionnaire was distributed during the Sunday service for churchgoers to indicate their choice of causes to support. There are regular meetings of the Social Concerns Committee open to all, and a web site and bulletin board.

The co-chairs are also seeking lay leaders to represent the various associations in order to interface with church members and “excite” them to participate either in a one-off mission or through an on-going action. The fact that there is no bud-

get allocated to this committee does not deter these determined workers!

Helen is English and was born in Bristol. After graduating with a degree in French and Information Systems she spent five years working in Paris for an American company, Thomson Financial, as an Account Manager. Recently married to Fabien who is French, they had the opportunity to spend 2 years working and living in Boston, Massachusetts. Currently she is completing a diploma in interior design and also works part-time as an English Teacher.

From an Anglican background, Helen chose to worship in the American Church in Paris which she finds to have an open approach, an active population and many ways to get involved in the church life. Helen’s efforts to fire projects for the committee is her way of “giving something back

Robin was born in Mississippi and lived in Saudi Arabia for several years from the age of ten, which has inspired her interest in the Arab world. She met her husband in Houston and after having lived there for six years, the couple moved to Norway for six months in bitter cold before moving to France during one of the hottest summers on record. Leaving her profession in marketing behind and staying home with her 3-year-old daughter and new daughter Gillian, born in early January, is an adjustment for Robin with her “type A” outgoing personality. But it is one that she has used to great advantage to run a mission office for her church back home. And she is now using that experience to full advantage here in Paris for “serving and carrying out God’s love for the world”.



Display of items for the silent auction

Harvest Challenge

The Harvest Challenge evening fund-raiser on October 11th was an unmitigated success bringing in 7,000 euros for the church and providing an entertaining evening for all. Our two elegant hostesses and organizers, Alice Gardiner and Margaret Alessi were on the scene to welcome everyone into the beautifully decorated room. Peter Bannister entertained us at the piano while the crowd alternated between sampling the refreshments, chatting with friends and making the rounds of the tables where 140 items were up for silent auction. The real challenge of the evening was trying to decide which of the many tempting offers to choose from: facials, yoga lessons, haircuts,



Harvest Challenge co-chairs Margaret Alessi and Alice Gardiner

dinner at the Ritz for two, original water colors and etchings, objets d’art, wine, books, dining with a reporter from the NYT, and a giant 50 lb. pumpkin, among other choices.

Alice was “touched by the generosity of many church members and even more so by those from the wider Paris community. This event not only raised funds for the ACP, but also raised awareness of the church’s missions and its vital role in the community.”

Bloom 2003

You have just arrived in Paris with your two little kids armed with your 9th grade French and plans to visit the Louvre. Your husband (or wife) goes off to the office everyday and you are left on your own to buy the groceries, run the errands, find a bilingual school for the kids, get hold of a doctor

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who speaks English and figure out the transport system. The concierge is wildly waving his hands while vociferating and you understand you have committed some heinous crime probably involv-



Tad and Nicole Brown display their giant pumpkin for the Harvest Challenge auction.

ing where you put the garbage. Naturally there are no friends or relatives around who can intervene and you are on your own to fend off anxiety and loneliness.

Then you learn of a two-day program called Bloom Where You're Planted the first two Tuesdays of October (just in time).

So you and 214 others head off to the American Church in Paris. You are greeted by



Peter Bannister entertaining the Harvest Challenge crowd at the piano.

a bevy of friendly hostesses in bright red berets who speak English and welcome you with open arms. The feeling of relief and happiness is overwhelming. You leave the children with the child care unit and go off to spend the day



The Bloom Hostesses

with speakers and in workshops dealing with subjects such as French culture, travel, ex-pat children's activities, learning French, computer

information, fitness, food, fashion, wine, security, flea markets, AND coping with stress.

You are greeted by the American ambassador, the mayor of the 7th arrondissement and various well-known personalities. At lunch you sit with other participants who live in your area and you chatter on comparing your concierges and scoping out where to find the best local butcher. You get to wander around and discover just about every English speaking non-profit group in the city ranging from churches and schools to clubs and libraries. You can find where to buy cranberry sauce and pancake mix and where to find English magazines. To top it off, you receive a copy of the indispensable Bloom book crammed with useful information.

And all this is made possible through the efforts of co-chairs Christina Grandinetti and Meghan Ballantyne who pulled everything together. Despite initial reluctance on their part to take on such an enormous task, they eventually became "hooked" when they realized how influential the program is and how rewarding it is to volunteer. Planning started in April and the two met together several times a week and once a month with the more than 20 committee heads, reviewing progress reports, trouble shooting issues, deciding logistics for each day, etc. Coordinating the committees and multi-tasking was like "putting together a patchwork quilt". Complications inevitably arose and at one point three speakers canceled, but the co-chairs stayed on top of the situation and found replacements right away (apparently speakers are delighted to participate at Bloom). In the process of working together Christina and Meghan became best

friends. "We always had fun every time we met...many times we would just laugh through so much of the tedious planning, be it making fun of my same ripped up Bloom folder that came with me everywhere or Christina's professional organized binders where she file and labels every Bloom correspondent, email, etc."



Where to find goodies from the US

Participants filled out evaluation forms on the last day and "the feedback was extremely positive on both days...Peter Caine (Paris Walks) is always a hit, Meri Kathryn Peed's talk on Healthcare is always so helpful to all,



Co-chairs Christina Grandinetti-Wawach and Meghan Ballantyne

and everyone can't believe how much they learn in two days."

In the meantime, Meghan has moved back to the States, but Christina will be on hand to organize a one day "mini Bloom" in March with speakers in the morning and a wine social in the afternoon. Our thanks go to the Women of the American Church for sponsoring this event and to Christina and Meghan for their dedicated work in organizing it. Thanks to them we now know how to deal with the concierge and even how to haggle over the price of fish at the market!



The kitchen volunteers prepare lunch

Cobi Camberlin, ACP correspondent

News From my Sidewalk Café

Christmas in Paris was looking a little too commercial for me when Printemps hung their fuschia pink hearts and Japanese lanterns in the trees and had vast open windows of black and silver promoting a brand of Japanese make-up. So we headed for Alsace hoping to find the “reason for the season” and an infusion of traditional Christmas. “Over the hills to Grandma’s house” was actually a relaxing train ride east and a rental car that would play our Christmas CDs as we traveled the “Route de Vin.”

The largest marché de Noël is in Strasbourg but as we have done that several times we headed for the small villages along the route where we found l’esprit (the spirit) of the season alive and well. In Obernai we lunched on “tartiflette” in a traditional Alsatian Taverne decorated with fresh greens, red apples in the trees and wonderful odors of fresh baked spiced breads.

In Sélestat the Maison du Pain (Bread Museum) served delicious samples of various local specialties and was filled with all types of Christmas cookies. At l’église St. Georges we found an interesting exhibition of sapins géants (huge Christmas trees) hung inside each arch of the church leading toward the altar. They were decorated to show the evolution of the decorating of Christmas trees from the first, simple tying on of apples and fruits to our modern day extravaganzas.

On to the tiny village of Bergheim, we passed through the ancien (1470) fortified gates where we saw our first crèche, which was made from rough timber from the nearby woods. The entire village of Bergheim was adorned with every type of crèche the locals could imagine, complete with homemade signs guiding your way around the village to each crèche. An excited little boy on the street told me that the locals call their village “Bethleheim,” this time of the year. Families had homemade versions of the crèche scene either in their front windows or in front of their homes. Many of the children had included the regions’ storks visiting the manger. Some were as simple as children’s paintings or drawings; loving

papier mache creations; pottery or ceramic creations; and my favorite was the children’s toys used to re-create the nativity scene, complete with a bald headed, plastic, baby Jesus in a Barbie bassinnet!

The merchants’ windows were filled with their inventions. The boulangerie crèche of “pain” (bread) had each character individually formed; the chocolate crèche at the confiserie (candy store) did the same, the fromagerie (cheese shop) crèche was creatively made with cheese, straw and twigs; the butcher must not have been artistically inclined as he had simply purchased one but at least he had one in his window; and another favorite of mine was a very stylized version of the holy family in the jewelers’ shop. It was made of bright red tissue paper twisted to create each form and simply highlighted with gold foil.

Les marchés de Noël in the villages of Ribeauvillé, Riquewihr, and Kaysersburg were outstanding. Many of the stalls sell imported ornaments from China, these days, but in these particular villages there were still a lot of local artisanal type products; many different types of fresh baked cookies, kougelhoff, spice breads; local confiture (jam) and miel (honey) and wines, all for sampling; and either the local boy scout troop or the village clochard selling mistletoe gleaned from the trees.

We crossed the hillsides filled with sleepy vineyards from village to village along the route, enjoying Alsace in the winter. Even without its usual bountiful flowers and leafy vines dripping with grapes, it’s a wonderful area of rolling hills, les Vosges (mountain range) in the background, colorful homes,

vineyards and charming villages. At this season, the villages were filled with pine greens in the windows where geraniums used to be, marchés de Noël along the streets, Christmas concerts at the local church, Christmas music playing throughout the towns, hot sausages, hot chocolate and hot wine wafting through the air, and lots of happy, strolling people just enjoying the moment.

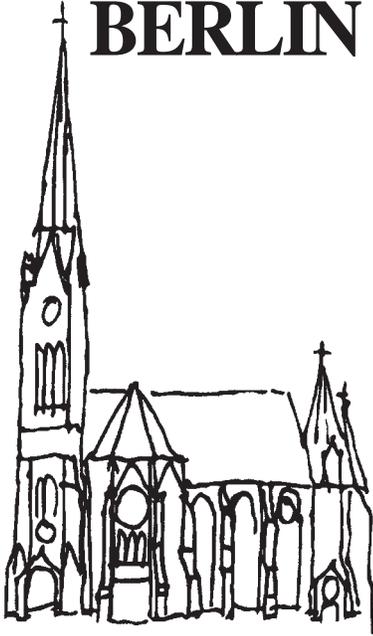
I hope each of you found “the reason for the season” wherever you were this year. From “Bethleheim” I wish each of you,

Bonne Année — Bonne Santé

Ellen Soret, Paris Correspondent



BERLIN CONNECTION



Resolutions!

No one can go back and have a new beginning, but everyone can start now and have a new ending.

— Buckner Fanning

As the couple sat with a marriage counselor for their first session, the therapist asked them to identify what seemed to be the root of their problems. The wife responded, “It all started when we thought it would be cute to think up each other’s New Year’s Resolutions.” (Houston Post, December 31, 1991, p. D-9)

If you are like me, you have made many New Year’s Resolutions. And I have a hunch that they have not lasted that long. In fact, how often have you not thought up some good New Year’s Resolutions for your spouse, friend, neighbor or employer! How easy it is for us to see the speck in the life of another and want to dig it out without seeing the log in our own eye.



The Lutherkirche sanctuary.

How often are we not like the man who missed the point of New Year’s Resolutions? With an eagerness to make some changes in the area of his financial habits, he called his credit card company and said, “I’d like to pay off my Master Card. Do you take Visa?”

In the play Pygmalion (brought to the screen as the movie My Fair Lady), Eliza Doolittle expresses the sentiment of many when she cries out, “Don’t tell me you love me, show me! Show me!” Saint Francis of Assisi said it succinctly when he declared, “Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.” Emmanuel Suhard wrote, “To be a witness means to live in such a way that one’s life would not make sense if God did not exist.” Although words are a necessary part of evangelism, we could all probably stand a little improvement in the area of communicating love through deeds.

As you look forward to the year ahead what might your resolve be in communicating love through deeds to your spouse, friend, neighbor, employer, community? I find it so powerful to hear the words of John 3: 16ff. saying, **This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn’t go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.** (The Message Version).

God acted in Jesus Christ. God came into our smelly, dirty, confused and dark world. God came in a Babe — vulnerable and powerful; small and mighty; honest and loving; human and divine; teacher and Savior; confrontational and forgiving. Into the darkness, hatred, pain, suffering, violence and disobedience we see in daily life, God came in Jesus Christ to make all things new.



ACB members Chad, Kristina and Eric Rislov

As we walk into the New Year of 2004 the promise shared in I John 1:5-10 is: **This, in essence, is the message we heard from Christ and are passing on to you: God is light, pure light; there’s not a trace of darkness in him. If we claim that we experience a shared life with him and continue to stumble around in the dark, we’re obviously lying through our teeth—we’re not living what we claim. But if we walk in the light, God himself being the light, we also experience a shared life with one another, as the sacrificed blood of Jesus, God’s Son purges all our sin. If we claim that we’re free of sin, we’re only fooling ourselves. A claim like that is errant nonsense. On the other hand, if we admit our sins – make a clean breast of them – he won’t let us down; he’ll be true to himself. He’ll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing. If we claim that we’ve never sinned, we out and out contradict God – make a liar out of him. A claim like that only shows off our ignorance of God.** (The Message Version)

Welcome to the New Year 2004 lived in and through the grace of God in Jesus Christ!

*Pastor Ben Coltvet,
American Church in Berlin*

Giving to ACB

The American Church in Berlin depends on the offerings and gifts from members and visitors for its financial obligations. If you wish your gift to be tax-deductible in the United States, you must make your dollar check payable to one of our partner organizations, “The American and Foreign Christian Union” (AFCU) or “The ELCA Foundation” (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and write the words “for ACB” on the memo line of your check. The church issues year-end receipts of giving acceptable for both German and American tax returns.

Giving to the ACB Luther Church Campaign: The funds of the Luther Church Campaign are designated to the building and renovation aspects of the Luther Church Development Project. These are entirely separate from our operating funds. If you would like to make a contribution to the ACB Luther Church Campaign by transfer, the account is with Riggs Bank, BLZ 100 201 00, the account (Konto) number is 4441 1047. Please be sure to designate your gift for the Lutherkirche fund.

Reflections as a “new” Repatriate

My family and I lived in Berlin, Germany for nearly 12 years, from 1991-2003. Commercial real estate development due to reunification and the “new” capitol brought us there. Shem and I never expected we’d stay so long, and we never expected we’d want to stay even longer.

Life’s choices are not always self-directed. In contemplating repatriation — a regular subject among expats (“How long will you stay? Where are you headed next?”) — we spoke with those who preceded us for their insight. After much deliberation, and nearly 8 months of overseas “commuting,” in late August 2003 we returned to the U.S., to the Boston area.

It’s great to be back in America — isn’t it???

While we feel we’ve managed the transition well, it’s been a bit of a rough road. The repatriation process — also dubbed reverse culture shock — is familiar to most of you who

have already experienced several international moves or have returned “home.”

Five years ago I became familiar with consultant and author Craig Storti who wrote, among other titles, *The Art of Coming Home*. Soon I began recommending this valuable resource to others who were contemplating or in the process of returning to their home countries. With our own impending relocation, the time came for us to re-read it... and after our arrival, to re-re-re-read it to remind ourselves that yes, it’s all right feel lousy about being back, it’s normal and we’re not crazy! The apparent rule of thumb is, it takes six months to a year to feel “normal” and “at home” again.

Where is home, anyway?

Storti’s main message is, “Home is where you live, not where you’re from.” When you live at a place for a year or more, it’s inevitable: roots form, alliances develop, adaptation occurs. Especially abroad, new traditions take hold and, friends can become closer than family. That place becomes home. It can be surprising how leaving can be so difficult.

After 8 international moves in 12 years, one friend reflected, “It doesn’t get any easier, but at least when I’m on the kitchen floor crying, I know what phase I’m in.”

Living in Berlin during these dynamic years has been simply incredible. In returning to the United States, we opted for an optimistic perspective since in today’s mobile world, it’s possible to not really “leave” Berlin even though we now live elsewhere. Keeping in touch with friends, colleagues and affiliations are doable in a variety of ways, and this reality has made the transition to “home” easier. Also, it seems that every day we discover “new” links between Boston and Berlin. Moreover, when time and resources allow, there’s always the possibility of a return visit. As another expat quips, “It’s great going back.”

Ecumenical, international churches offer a unique home...

Our earliest and most consistent sense of “home” in Berlin was, and still is, the American Church in Berlin. This is no surprise to you readers, since each of you have a similar anchor, either directly or indirectly, at the American Church in Berlin, the American Church in Paris, or the Vienna Community

Church. Your link could also be to the American & Foreign Christian Union, the “umbrella” organization for all three ecumenical, international churches.

The American Church in Berlin provided for us, during all our years in Germany, a sense of home: a place that always welcomed us even though we were in a foreign land; a place where we could reach out and pray in a common language; where our faith tradition could be honored and appreciated among the many other traditions represented; where children, youth and adults could learn about God’s promises and experience the journey of faith with people of diverse nationalities and walks of life.

...and a unique opportunity to serve.

Those years also offered a unique opportunity for us to participate in church leadership, especially at a time when the American Church embraced the metamorphosis of Germany and Berlin. With reunification, growth was inevitable. We feel blessed to have played a part in the search and acquisition of a new church home — resulting in the historic return of the American Church in Berlin to Schöneberg — and grateful to the American & Foreign Christian Union which lent its support during the process.

Now with a larger church home, the American Church in Berlin can welcome more people than ever. Recently a visitor remarked during the beginning of the service, “This must be what heaven is like — people from all over the world gathered together to worship the Lord.”

The American Church in Berlin will always be a “home” for us.

So while we are “at home” in Boston, and though we will find a “new” church here, we still feel our church home is the American Church in Berlin, and in a way we always will. Our lives have been enriched forever. What a remarkable family of faith, touching the lives of so many — not just in Berlin but also in Europe and throughout the world.

Although no longer resident in Berlin, Shem and I continue to support this unique international, ecumenical ministry and invite others to join us.

Alice Kern, Berlin correspondent

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as a child I sensed it even though the understanding of it was still in the future. But the music I felt I did understand, if only by simply loving the sound of it that thrilled me so. Perhaps it had a role in my later decision to take my BA in piano at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The American Church in Paris has always remained a special place for me, and for so many thousands of other people as well, as I have learned since. It is indeed a blessed place. God dwells where one seeks Him, but it is easier to find Him in places like the American Church in Paris.

John L. Humber

*(As John was writing this wonderful reflection for **The Bridge** his brother Marcel Berthier Humber became very ill. Marcel passed away on December 30, 2003. Our sincere sympathy goes to his brother and family. KAE.)*

Existentialism at the ACP:

Albert Camus and the Minister
by Howard Mumma

“For several summers during the 1950s, I served as guest minister and preacher at the American Church in Paris...” So begins an important discussion of existentialism that tells about Albert Camus attending worship at ACP. Published in 2000, these memoirs had been kept secret for nearly 50 years at Camus’ request. It is appropriate that they be published now for the important light they shed on one of the 20th century’s most significant persons. A small part of it will be of interest to those of us who know and love ACP.

The first chapter talks about Mumma’s discussions with Camus both at his apartment in the church (presumably the associate pastor’s

apartment) as well as in other locations in and around Paris. The first few pages mentioning the world’s people who come to the church could have been written yesterday. What drew Camus to the church was the famed French guest organist, Marcel Dupré. The rest, as they say, is history.

Don’t miss the chapter near the end of the book about General Norstad and Ambassador Harriman. It is an amusing incident which succeeding pastors could attest through their own similar experiences. Unless you’re really interested in existentialism, I’d recommend borrowing the book from a friend or look for it in your local library.

Tom Duggan, literature correspondent

(Dr. Duggan is a former pastor of the ACP and currently serves on the AFCU Development Committee.)

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Former ACB Pastor Enters Eternal Life

The Rev. Dr. Walter Bock, former pastor of the Lutheran American Church in Berlin (LACB) from 1965 to 1968, passed away in San Francisco on the Second Sunday after Christmas, January 4, 2004. He and his wife retired to San Francisco in 1979. There they were members of St. Mark’s Lutheran Church and lived in the Martin Luther Tower complex. During his retirement, he served as interim pastor of St. Marks, and as director of senior ministry program for his church and chaplain at Martin Luther Tower.

In 1965, Dr. Walter Bock was serving as Pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church in Manhattan, New York City, when he was called as the Senior Representative of Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Berlin. The LACB congregation then unanimously approved the Rev. Dr. Bock as their Pastor. Pastor Bock served both these offices from July 1965 through the summer of 1968. At that time, the Lutheran American Church reimbursed the LWF \$1,200

per year for his pastoral ministry. The previous two pastors of this church, under similar arrangements, were the Rev. Dr. Richard Solberg and The Rev. Dr. Frederick Otto. After leaving Berlin in 1968, Walter Bock became Director of Church Relations for Wagner College on Staten Island.

A native-born German, Pastor Bock continued to work for German-American Relations. He was chairman for the German-American Committee of Greater New York, chair of the Annual Steuben Day parade on Fifth Avenue and served as a Director of the German Society of New York.

In acknowledgment of his service, he was given two prestigious honors from the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1969, he was awarded the Officer’s Cross, First Class, of the Order of Merit and in 1975, he received the Commander’s Cross of the Order.

The Lutheran American Church in Berlin, where Pastor Bock faithfully served, was officially organized on Reformation Day October 31, 1961, and worshiped in the “Alte

Dorfkirche” (Old Village Church) of Zehlendorf, in the American sector of Berlin. In the late seventies, the Lutheran American Church in Berlin changed its official name to the American Church in Berlin and was received into the historical lineage of the American Church in Berlin, which had worshipped in this cosmopolitan city since 1865. The American Church in Berlin moved its worship and education center in November 2002 from the small “Old Village Church” in Zehlendorf to the historic Lutherkirche at Dennewitzplatz in central Berlin, four blocks from the first American church building.

Pastor Walter Bock’s memorial service was held at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in San Francisco, on Sunday, January 18, 2004. We thank God for Walter Bock, for his witness to the Christian Faith and for his dedicated ministry of the Gospel.

The Rev. Dr. Charles D. Lindholm

(Pastor Lindholm is a former pastor of the ACB and currently serves on the AFCU Board.)

VIENNA CONNECTION



Music for Expats

A benefit concert for the AFCU was held on Sunday, October 19, 2003, at the Seattle First Baptist Church. World class violinist Jane Chung had studied in Vienna in 2001 and offered her marvelous talent for this benefit concert to help support Expat Ministry in Europe. Ms. Chung is a regular guest artist of the Da Capo Chamber Players, which brought her to Russia in 2003.

The concert was organized by Delores Heller and Helen Hustad, both former members of the Vienna Community Church. After enjoying the afternoon of music, concertgoers were invited to make a freewill offering gift for the Vienna community Church, the American Church in Berlin, and/or the American Church in Paris. Over \$1000 was raised for these churches.

Reflections on Vienna and Paris

The news last year that the Vienna Community Church would come under the umbrella of the AFCU had a special resonance in our household. Thirty-five years ago, I met the woman who was to become my wife in the VCC coffee hour. When we joined the American Church in Paris in 1976, roses appeared on the communion tables here and in Vienna, as was then the custom, to announce the birth of our son on the previous day. It was, for us, a perfect example of a connection of worship, fellowship and music that we have seen grow stronger through the years.

Our married life has very much been a tale of two cities—and two churches. But we are far from unique.

Not long after our move to Paris, Ruth and Don Campbell appeared in the ACP congregation. Their son had been the Joseph to our daughter's Mary in the last VCC Christmas pageant before we left Austria. Ruth went on to become ACP Council secretary. Don somehow managed to run Proctor and Gamble and the ACP ushering corps. His 'chalk talk' to servers on Communion Sunday was legendary.

The children of Sally Faidi were in Sunday School with ours, in Vienna and in Paris. So were the daughters of Barbara and Christian Stapfer. Christian became moderator of the ACP Council.

Debbie and Guyle Cavin, like so many ACP members, were with us in Paris all too briefly before being transferred. A few years ago, when they returned to France, we learned that they had been in Vienna and active in the VCC. Debbie was in the choir there and is now back in the ACP alto section. (And their daughter Marisa is in the youth choir in Paris.)

What is it that connects a big downtown brick edifice on prime real estate overlooking the Seine—busy almost 24/7—with a stone building hidden on a side street far from a view of the Danube, and occupied by its congregation not much more than an hour per week?

People first, of course, like the Campbells and Stapfers and Cavins, all of them, regrettably for us their friends, on short-term assignments. Others elect to stay for careers abroad. It is a neat coincidence, but a good example, that the current ACP moderator Doug Lippoldt and his VCC counterpart Bill Price both took jobs in international organizations – the OECD and

United Nations respectively - that set them in France and Austria.

For us, music is a major part of the bridge that links these two churches. Soloists from Vienna days—Peter Baillie, Reid Bunger, Tom Cavendish, Steve Tachell, Julie and Darrell Parsons, Nancy Hoerl, to name a few—slide comfortably into the ACP as visiting singers. We know that Fred Gramann would be at ease conducting the "Hallelujah Chorus" on Easter Sunday at the VCC, with a volunteer choir just as enthusiastic to see him as his ACP singers.

Yet along with the familiar hymns and sermons in English, membership in either congregation brings a sometimes blunt education in international affairs.

When refugees poured into Austria after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the repression of the Prague Spring in 1968 and the uprising of Polish Solidarity, the VCC was there for them too—just as the ACP has been here for those fleeing human rights abuses in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

So it's no surprise that an American member of the VCC choir, Louise Hodgkin-Pickart, and her Austrian husband Heinz responded, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, to the discovery of the plight of Romanian orphans by founding "Project Centipede," a project to provide shoes for children. The ACP, in its turn has sent teams to build Habitat for Humanity homes in central Europe and South Africa. And those are but two examples of outreach from congregations that, with transient membership, are constantly finding new roles.

It was nearly 200 years ago in Catholic Paris, nearly 50 years ago in the Four Power occupation of Vienna, that English-speaking foreigners first gathered in apartments or coffee houses for prayer in their own language. The congregations that followed, formally recognized after bureaucratic and financial struggles, might look different from each other, but their founders—and today the AFCU—would certainly recognize them as united in the same mission. We pray that the bridge linking them may remain solid.

*Charles Mitchelmore,
ACP/European correspondent*

Project Centipede—The Personal Experience

Al & Sue Liebetrau

(Al & Sue Liebetrau were members of the Project Centipede team that traveled from Vienna to Romania in May 2001. The following is the second in a three-part account describing their experiences. The group of 20 adults and teenagers left Vienna on a bus loaded with nearly 10 tons of food, clothing, and educational supplies. The Project supports training workshops for mentally handicapped youth, and assist 3 grade schools.)

Finally, we reached Cristuru Secuiesc/Kerestur, an orphanage and school in Romania. Here, as at every stop we made, we formed a human chain to unload boxes, in this case the “colorful” shoebox-sized cartons of candy, soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes, and toys. We delivered colorful boxes to the kindergarten-aged children in several classrooms and helped them open the boxes. They sang for us, and our teenagers performed the “Hokey Pokey.” It was like Christmas! Sweets are a rare treat for these children, and they probably had “sugar highs” for days after our visit.



Here, as everywhere we went, the children seemed starved for attention. Always, one or two children would attach themselves to one of us within minutes after we arrived, and would not be separated from us until time to leave. In spite of the staff’s best efforts, there were just too many children for the necessary personal attention. Moreover, at a reception following this event, we were informed that the orphanage must close in the fall—the gov-

ernment was closing all of them. Where would the children go? Some would be adopted; some would be on the streets. Sad. We spent a few more minutes with the older kids, playing with their new tennis balls, and then moved on to Csikszereda.

At Csikszereda, we met Pastor Hegyi, our host and Romanian point-of-contact for Project Centipede, and ate a welcomed supper of cabbage rouladen at the parsonage. Then we climbed onto the bus once more and drove to a Caritas center near Csikszereda, our hotel for two nights. Real beds!

By 9:00 the next morning, we were on the way. At our first stop, we unloaded colorful boxes and also banana boxes, heavy cartons with supplies of flour, sugar, and other necessities designed to support a family for several months. We attended a reception for several foster mothers, many of whom brought their children. Besides the kids’ colorful boxes, we distributed banana boxes (one per family), also a grocery bag of candy. Then we visited two



VCC committee members Al Liebetrau and Helen Hustad.

(The journey will be completed in the Spring issue of The Bridge. KAE, editor.)



The Bridge Editor
Katherine Eppert
eppdk@aol.com

American & Foreign
Christian Union
475 Riverside Dr., Suite 2050
New York, NY, 10115

AFCU President
Jams Craig
jwcraig2@aol.com

American Church in Berlin
Onkel-Tom-Strasse 93
14169, Berlin, Germany
american.church@berlin.de

American Church in Paris
65, quai d’Orsay
75007, Paris, France
secretaty@acparis.org
www.acparis.org

Vienna Community Church
Scheileingasse 2/6
A-1010, Vienna, Austria
james.wiberg@chello.at
www.ViennaCommunityChurch.com

foster homes. The first was quite large and nice; the second was smaller and poorer. Both were clean and well-kept. While we were waiting to board the bus, some gypsy children and an old man came and asked for food/chocolate. We didn’t dare give them any, or the resulting crowds would have strained our resources. Again, sad.

Al & Sue Liebetrau