



Summer 2017

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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.

President's Message

Dear Friends,

I have just returned from the AFCU Annual Meeting. This year it was held in Vienna, Austria and was hosted by the Vienna Community Church (VCC) at their new "Meeting Point". A special thank you to the VCC team for their wonderful hospitality and organization.



I also thank all of the AFCU Board members, church representatives and spouses who attended the meetings at their own cost. Their dedication to the work of Christ's church on earth is highly appreciated.

The Rev. Dr. Scott Herr from Paris opened the board meeting with a devotion based on Luke 24, v.13-35, regarding the story of Jesus with some disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Highlights from our Board and Development Meetings include:

- 1. A review of church programs and financial reports from the American churches in Berlin and Paris and the VCC
2. Finalizing and jointly approving the AFCU-VCC Partnership Agreement
3. A review and demonstration of the new AFCU website
4. Development programs designed to provide spiritual and financial support to the three churches

Continued on page 2

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



The Mission of the American and Foreign Christian Union is to support the International, English speaking, ecumenical churches whose ministries bear witness to Jesus Christ.



## President's Message, *continued from page 1*

5. Election of board member classes and officers, including new board members Carol McNaughton (from Associate to Board), Kris Richardson Smith, and Julie Voskuil
6. Normal business items such as budgets, projects, documents, etc.

Our Autumn Development Meeting will be held in Denver, Colorado this year during October 20-21. Our next Annual Board Meeting is scheduled for April 13-15, 2018, in Tucson, Arizona.

I again invite you to attend the American churches when you visit Berlin, Paris or Vienna. Be a FRIEND by supporting the churches with your prayers and financial support. Remember that when giving through the AFCU, your gifts are tax deductible in the United States, since we are a 501(c)(3) organization.

Also, if you have the desire to continue serving these churches with your time and talent after returning to your home country, please contact me or another member of the AFCU Board. We always welcome new members.

Let me close by quoting from 2 Peter 3 v.18: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen."

May God's Peace abide with you.

In Christ,



Ted Ziemann  
AFCU President



*AFCU Board members in the sanctuary of the Vienna Community Church.*

## Our Vienna Meeting by Jane Kendall



*Cake by Eudora Price welcoming the AFCU Board to Vienna*

We had a vibrant AFCU Annual Meeting weekend with a very enthusiastic Vienna Community Church congregation! We were welcomed Thursday evening for a reception at the recently purchased and renovated Meeting Point, along a canal. We were all so excited to see what this committed congregation has been able to do in the short time since they have acquired it. It was great to see familiar faces and to meet new people, including Mary Geissler, the Church's outgoing President and entire weekend organizing team, led by Anne Storey and Rosalind Laimer, who planned all the events, meals, and orchestrated a home concert at Anne's home.

We need to commend the VCC community for its creative efforts to convert this space they purchased into a warm, welcoming place – full of interesting art and comfortable furniture. A committee was very clever in constructing a beautiful yet very functional kitchen, and a cozy office for Pastor Gabor. We are both proud of, and impressed by, their efforts.

*Continued on page 3*

## Our Vienna Meeting *continued from page 2*

Thursday evening after tasty hors d'oeuvres and beverages at the Meeting Point, we walked to a classic Viennese Beer Stube, Gasthaus Nestroy, where we were introduced to traditional Viennese cuisine. Our local hosts helped us to appreciate what might be special. We should note that for this dinner as well as Friday evening's dinner special menus were planned ahead of time with the restaurants to offer us special offerings at reasonable prices, which was so thoughtful. Thank you so much!

Friday and Saturday lunches, during our meetings, we were treated to an international buffet, with dishes from all corners of our planet. VCC members quietly arrived with delicious home cooked meals, and graciously served us with big smiles and warm hearts.

Friday evening, we were treated to a wonderful musical interlude by soprano Sandra Nel and pianist Tomasz Pietak. We were all touched by the exceptional talents of these two VCC members. Anne's home was most welcoming and a young member who comes from Syria prepared some tasty hors d'oeuvres. Her brothers served us beverages and helped welcome us. VCC has made an effort to help integrate this family into Vienna, and provide ways to provide opportunities to learn German, English, earn money, and feel cared for. From there we went to a typical Beisl, Gasthaus Heidenkummer. Some partners of AFCU members elected

to take a walking tour of Mark Twain's Vienna during the day, led by a young woman who did her thesis on the subject, and is considered the leading expert on Twain in Vienna.

Saturday was another full AFCU meeting day, but after the meeting some attendees took advantage of an information-packed walking tour led by Rainer Zimmerman, another talented VCC member. The tour focused on the churches of Vienna. Others took an informative tour of Vienna on a tram that followed the inside ring road around Vienna. Everyone later converged at Restaurant Resselpark, a delightful small restaurant in a park setting.

Sunday, we worshipped together in the historic church setting, surrounded by lovely music, children's time, Pastor Gabor's thoughtful sermon, and a rousing praise band at the end of the service. Coffee hour was both in a courtyard and a reception hall.

We felt blessed to be together to bring thanks for our fellowship and dialogue.

Many who remained attended a farewell dinner at a traditional heuriger.

We celebrate the commitment and love we felt as we were surrounded by the Vienna Community Church membership. We thank them heartily.



*Pastor Scott Herr presenting the ACP report.  
Photo by Ted Ziemann*



*Rick serving hors d'Oeuvres.  
Photo by Rosalind Laimer*



*Pastor Kienenberger presenting the ACB report.  
Photo by Ted Ziemann*

## Welcome to New AFCU Board Members

### Kris Richardson Smith

Dear AFCU friends,

My name is Kris Richardson Smith, and it has been my privilege to be elected to the AFCU Board at the recent Board meeting in Vienna. I have been asked to share a little about myself, so here goes!

I am originally from South Milwaukee, WI, the eldest of 3 children. My Dad was a carpenter, who after going to night school, became an industrial arts teacher. We called my Mom the “volunteer extraordinaire”; which is probably why my sister and I have continued to look for ways to serve our community throughout our lives.

After graduating from Carroll College, I began my career as an auditor in the banking industry in Milwaukee. Soon after, I moved to Dallas, working in the oil industry, moving from auditing to Manufacturing Controller and then on to Procurement. Changing from the oil industry to the hotel business, I became Vice President of Procurement for Accor North America. I consider myself a Texan, after living in Dallas for almost 30 years. It was a happy time, filled with growing children, growing professional challenges and a growing southern accent!

Then my comfortable world ended. In January, 2007, I found myself in Paris, divorced, with a new job, a new language, knowing no one! I was used to being challenged and growing professionally; and, certainly, that was the case with my role in Paris as International Pro-

curement Director for Accor. But personally, I found the move quite difficult. Finding the American Church in Paris made everything different. The ACP added a new dimension to my life; provided a source of friends, reawakened my spirituality, and gave me a chance to contribute to something greater.

My time in Paris was incredible, and ended with celebrating my marriage to John at the ACP, with all our friends and family. We moved to Antwerp in 2011, for another challenging and wonderful international experience. My working life ended in Antwerp in 2013, as Director of Global Operations for an international manufacturing company.

In 2013, John and I decided to retire in both our countries! John’s family and grandchildren are in England and mine are in the US. So we now have homes in Salisbury, England and Boston, MA where we enjoy our families and being grandparents to our 7 grandchildren. We travel back and forth 3 or 4 times a year, and fall immediately back into our lives when we arrive.

We continue to enjoy traveling internationally, and take every opportunity to do so. We are active in our church in both countries; in fact, I am on the board of both churches. I volunteer my time in a variety of activities, including reading with primary school children and acting as Treasurer for a preschool. And we are active Lions, belonging to clubs in both countries.

I look forward to meeting you and working with you, and for you, as an AFCU Board member.

### Tina Blair

I am a “Third Culture Kid,” that is, a person raised by parents of one dominant culture, who has lived in many other cultures. Families in this situation tend to create their own unique “third culture” taking elements from the different cultures they have experienced. My father worked for the United States Information Service and therefore I, the eldest of four children, was born in Casablanca, Morocco, and grew up in Italy, India and

France, with a couple of home-leave years in the Washington, D.C. suburbs.

As a result, I have never felt completely at home in the United States, although I am more American than any other nationality. My high school years were spent in Tours, France, attending a French lycée, so I am bilingual in French and feel quite at home as an ex-pat in France. I have always loved to travel, to learn about other cultures -- their history, their language, their religions. Over the years I have for-

*Continued on page 5*

## Welcome to Two New AFCU Board Members *continued from page 4*

gotten my Italian, but have studied Russian and German, and picked up words in Thai and Hebrew. I spent a summer in the Soviet Union studying Russian while a student at Pomona College.

In 1972 my first husband (Chris Askew) became the Student Intern Pastor at the American Church in Paris. I loved the church and all its ex-pat and local members. That year I rededicated myself to Christ, thanks in part to Theologian-in-Residence, Dr. Robert Jewett, and after much prayer, decided to leave my graduate studies at Stanford (where I had picked up an M.A. in Education) to go to seminary. Over the years I earned a Masters in Religious Education, the equivalent of a Masters of Divinity, and finally a Ph.D. in Theology and Education from the Claremont School of Theology. I was ordained in the Presbyterian Church USA and served churches in Oxnard and Claremont, CA, before becoming a professor of Practical Theology and Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Austin Presbyterian Theological

Seminary for 13 years.

The American Church in Paris kept drawing me back, however. I did my sabbatical in 1998 there as Theologian-in-Residence. And then I returned as Associate Pastor in 2002, ending up as Head of Staff in 2007 – the first woman Head of Staff in ACP history.

We returned to live in Claremont in 2007 so that our daughter Gillian could learn to write in English and my husband (Marvin Steinmetz) could receive medical treatment in a language he understood. Unfortunately, he passed away in 2008. My daughter loves California and is now flourishing as a graphic design student at Chapman University in Orange, CA, only 35 miles from our home. I have served 3 churches as Interim Pastor, and have been teaching, most recently for the New Theological Seminary of the West.

I am thrilled to be on the AFCU Board to help further the support of our American churches in Paris, Berlin and Vienna. And I will keep on travelling!

## Our New Website – Faster, Better and Easier

We've changed the look and feel of the AFCU website, but the URL is still [www.afcubridge.org](http://www.afcubridge.org). The design approach is to offer our readers a more visual, active presentation of the events and happenings within the AFCU and our partner churches. The Home page offers a banner with selected topics to guide the viewer in a more efficient manner. In addition to the welcome information about the AFCU and from the President of the AFCU, we have included a revolving sequence of Latest News items.

The viewer is able to use the banner buttons to obtain more in-depth information about our partner churches (OUR CHURCHES), the mission and history of the AFCU (ABOUT US), making online donations (SUPPORT THE AFCU), staying abreast of AFCU meetings and activities (OUR EVENTS), current news about the AFCU and our partner churches (AFCU NEWS) and a convenient way to contact the AFCU by letter or email (CONTACT US). In the top right there are two more buttons that offer a fast-path option for AFCU Directors (Members Only) and for people wishing to make a donation to the AFCU (Donate).

The design intention of the Home page is to allow the churches and AFCU Directors to display new information directly on the AFCU website. In this way friends and alumni can use the AFCU website to view a snapshot of new events and happenings in a central location with an option to get more details if desired. New pictures and new articles will be displayed in a revolving sequence. There is also the capability to obtain previously displayed events by selecting the AFCU NEWS button.

Questions, comments and suggestions about the AFCU website can be directed to the webmaster by sending an email to [webmaster@afcubrdige.org](mailto:webmaster@afcubrdige.org)

## The Heritage Society

The AFCU Heritage Society represents the American and Foreign Christian Union's efforts to encourage members, alumni, and friends of our partner churches (the American Church in Paris, the American Church in Berlin, or the Vienna Community Church) to include them in their estate plans.

### ***How do I become a member of the Heritage Society?***

Once you have decided to become a member of the Heritage Society, contact me at [afcuheritage@afcubridge.org](mailto:afcuheritage@afcubridge.org). I will send you a Planned Giving Information Form to fill out and return to me. Upon its receipt, I will send you a Welcome Letter and a Membership Certificate suitable for displaying. Also, if you would like to discuss the Heritage Society further, please contact me at the above email address.

### ***How to I give to the Heritage Society in my estate plan?***

As you are probably aware, there are many ways to include the Heritage Society in your estate plan. Looking at our AFCU Heritage members, we find the following ways have been used-

The most common form of donation that has been use by our members is a **Will Bequest** where a fixed dollar amount or a percentage of some assets is left to the AFCU.

Several members are using **Life Insurance** to leave assets to the AFCU by including it as one of the beneficiaries or the sole beneficiary of the policy.

Others are leaving the AFCU **Retirement Plan Assets**, such as 401(Ks) or Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs). Many

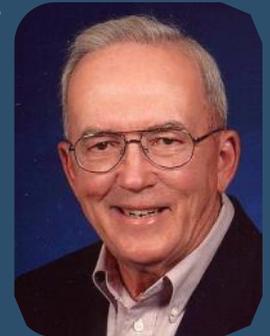
of these accounts have become quite large and a portion of them is left to the AFCU.

**Donor Advised** Funds are also represented. These funds are usually available in community foundations and many public charities. A major advantage of a Donor Advised fund is that you obtain tax benefits at the time of the donation. You, as the donor, have the opportunity of making recommendations as to how the money is distributed and the time you want it distributed.

In addition to these examples there are many other ways to include the AFCU in your estate plans. Examples include **Charitable Gift Annuities, Charitable Remainder Trusts, and Charitable Lead Trusts**. More information is on the AFCU Website, [www.AFCUBridge.org](http://www.AFCUBridge.org) under the Support the AFCU link at the top of the page.

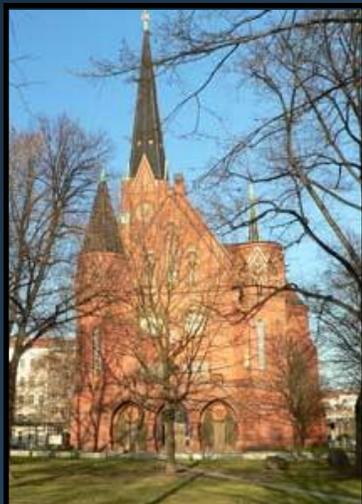
Finally, as you plan your gift and want to honor a specific church, remember that separate endowment funds have been set up to support each of our partner churches. These receive professional management at U. S. Trust. Furthermore, the AFCU Board has several experienced financial professionals who oversee the activities of U. S. Trust. In this way we try to insure that AFCU funds are being prudently managed.

*Robert DeLuryea*  
Heritage Society



*AFCU President Ted Ziemann and VCC Council President Mary Geisler in the VCC sanctuary.*

## The Berlin Connection



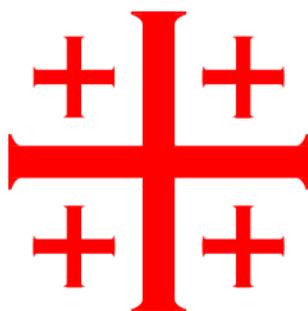
[www.americanchurchberlin.de](http://www.americanchurchberlin.de)

## Five Prayers—Five People—Five Euros



I look forward every year to the AFCU Spring Board meeting, because the members and friends of the AFCU embody what the Apostle Paul exhorts the Corinthian Church to be about: *Let all things be done for building up* (1 Cor. 14:26). Of course Paul is talking about spiritual gifts and their manifestation in the church, but Paul has an expansive notion of the gifts of the Spirit. I brag to the members at the American Church in Berlin that I am privileged to meet with a group of Christians who gather for one purpose only and that is to find ways to encourage, support, and build up the ministries of The Vienna Community Church, The American Church in Paris, and The American Church in Berlin. I cannot tell you how special it is to have such a wonderful group of sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus. Just the

knowledge that there are such wonderful people pulling for you and cheering you on in ministry is a comfort and encouragement, especially when faced with budget deficits or hardships in the community including terrorist threats.



This year I shared with the members of the AFCU Board our stewardship campaign for 2017 at ACB, the “Five-Five-Five” campaign. We seek to build up the community of Christ at ACB by intentionally praying for five people, reaching out and inviting five people into our community, and increasing our weekly financial gift by five euros. It may not seem like much, but if everyone joins in it will transform our community. I made the AFCU Board members honorary members of the Five-Five-Five Campaign and handed out Jerusalem Cross lapel pins to everyone in attendance. For those board members who couldn’t travel to Vienna a card and pin should come to you in the mail.

We have chosen the Jerusalem Cross as the main symbol for our Five-Five-Five campaign because it is made up of five crosses, a large center cross surrounded by four smaller crosses, one in each quadrant for a total of five crosses. It has various symbolic meanings including five crosses for the five wounds of Christ on the cross, or Christ and the four evangelists, or Christ and the four quarters of the world. Indeed, the last symbolic meaning fits nicely in our international ministries as we truly gather each Sunday at our locations with disciples from all corners of the world.

The Jerusalem Cross is used in Germany as a symbol for one of the main Protestant church festivals. Every other year the Protestant churches in Germany hold a festival that gathers the churches from throughout Germany and has representation from throughout the world. It is known as Kirchentag. This year Kirchentag was held in Berlin from May 24-27, with its closing worship on Sunday, May 28, at the Elbe River meadow across opposite the city of Wittenberg in honor of the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. An estimated 120,000 people attended the closing worship with about 140,000 participants coming into Berlin, even former US President Barack Obama joined German Chancellor Angela Merkel at



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## The Berlin Connection, *continued from page 7*

Kirchentag. The city and places of Kirchentag were literally awash in a sea of people bearing orange scarfs with the Jerusalem Cross and the Kirchentag theme: "Du siehst mich" (You see me).

The members of the AFCU are major contributors to each of our world-wide ministries. We at ACB are truly grateful for your support and encouragement. We are honored to call you sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, as we are built up for Christ's service through your love.

Blessings and peace,

**Pastor Steve**



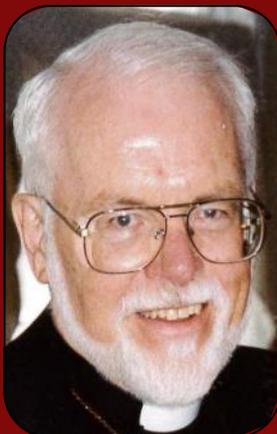
*Former US President Barack Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the Kirchentag festival this year in Berlin.*

In Memory of Rev. Dr. Charles Lindholm

# AMERICAN CHURCH IN BERLIN

Rev. Dr. Charles D. Lindholm

In Celebration and Thanksgiving!



The Rev. Dr. Charles D. Lindholm, former ACB pastor from 1976-79, passed away April 12, 2017 in the presence of his family and accompanied by prayers and songs of faith. His pastor, Rev. Jeff Silvernail, writes that "Charles passed as Mialisa had just finished singing "How Great Thou Art" and in keeping with Holy week "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today" was the next song to be sung."

Charles continued to support ACB throughout his life by serving on the AFCU Board, advocating for ACB's mission and ministry, and preserving ACB's history. Rev. Lindholm wrote an update to the re-release of former ACB pastor, Stewart Herman's history of the American Church in Berlin: A History, and has been working together with ACB member Charles Eypper on a more extensive historical account of ACB.

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## In Memory of Rev. Dr. Charles Lindholm *continued from page 8*

Charles was born in Roseau, MN, on December 1, 1940. The son of the late Rev. Elmer and Ellen (Swanberg) Lindholm, he grew up in the midwest, and went to college at Augustana (Rock Island, IL). After marrying Nancy Lee on August 15, 1964, Charles attended Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary where he received his masters of Divinity.

He served numerous parishes in Upstate New York and the Chicago area. After serving at ACB in Berlin, Charles answered the call to be the pastor of The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Glenville, NY where he served from 1979 -2000.

We give Thanksgiving to God for Pastor Charles, his family, and his years of faithful service to Church of Christ Jesus. A more extensive obituary may be found by going to this link: (<http://glenvillefuneralhome.com/tribute/details/760/Rev--Dr--Charles-Lindholm/obituary.html#content-start>).

Below are pictures from his visit in 2010 with the group from his church that he brought to participate in ACB's Outreach through Cultural Exchange Program (OCEP).

1. *Pastor Charles with members of Rotary International of Berlin, ACB Intern Kate Costa, and ACB Member, Alan Benson.*



2. *The Good Shepherd group arrive at Tegel to participate in OCEP.*



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## In Memory of Rev. Dr. Charles Lindholm *continued from page 9*

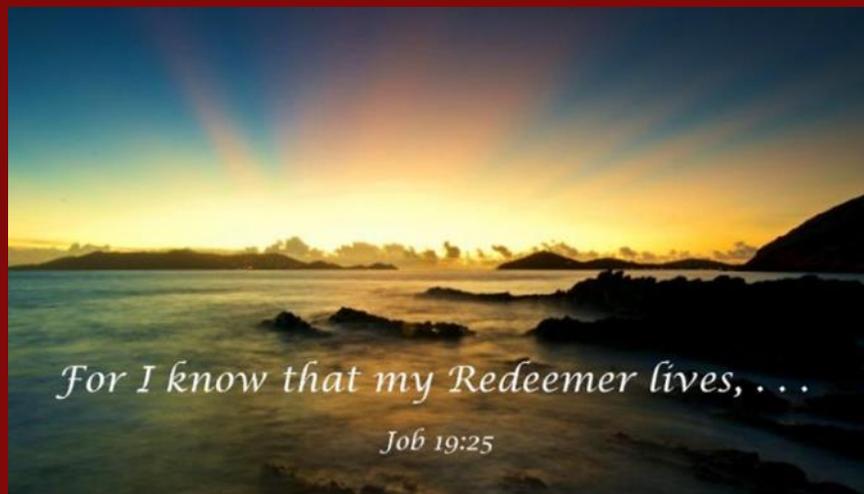
### 3. *The entire OCEP Group from June 2010.*



Our prayers and condolences are extended to his wife, Nancy, daughter, Mialisa, son, David-Sven, and their families and loved ones. A celebration of the resurrection will be held **Saturday, April 22nd at 11:00 AM** at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. He now joins the saints who gather around God's throne of glory singing:

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom  
and thanksgiving and honor  
and power and might  
be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Revelation 7:12



## In Memory of Rev. Dr. Charles Lindholm

It is bitter-sweet news to hear of the death of Rev. Dr. Charles Lindholm. Bitter as the loss of Charles to countless hundreds of people and the community of faith brings sorrow and pain. Sweet because the gift of Charles to all of us brings joy and blessing for his servant heart that was shared with each of us in his own unique and special way. The battle has been long and painful. Charles now rests from his labor and celebrates the gift of God's presence in a new way.

Charles and Nancy and family have been faithful servants sharing the love, grace and hope of God's love in Jesus Christ specifically with the American Church of Berlin. ACB has been very close to the heart and life of both Charles and Nancy. For this we can but say - well done good and faithful servants of the Lord! In the eight years I was at ACB I don't believe Charles missed one AFCU annual meeting. He also came to Berlin numerous times to do research on the history and life of ACB down through the years. His presence was always a breath of fresh air sharing hope, enthusiasm and love.

I had the opportunity to be in the home of Charles and Nancy as he made arrangements for me to speak to many groups concerning the work of ACB. It was always a gracious time of warmth, blessing and joy. It was on one of these trips that Charles made the pitch to the Rotary Club of which he was a member to join with the Berlin Rotary Club to fund the purchase of the van that is used for Laib und Seele food distribution program. With an additional gift from Augsburg Lutheran Church in Winston-Salem, NC, the van continues to travel the streets of Berlin sharing the ministry of ACB. What a gift that has been. This is not the only gift given. Several other AFCU Board members have worked tirelessly with their home congregations to support the mission of the ACB. There are numerous expressions of their gracious gifts that have touched the mission and ministry of ACB over the many years of association.

"Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant Charles. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light. Amen" (from Commendation of the funeral liturgy of Evangelical Lutheran Worship service book)

In Christ's Hope,

Margit and Ben Coltvet  
Rev. Dr. Ben H. Coltvet

## OUR MISSION

We **welcome** all people  
We **serve** the neighbors of Berlin  
We **grow** together in Christ  
We **celebrate** God's amazing love

## *The Paris Connection*



[www.acparis.org](http://www.acparis.org)

It is a privilege and joy to serve as Acting Head of Staff of ACP while Scott is on his 3-month sabbatical. After serving as Visiting Pastor and Spouse in 2002, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017 and p/t Interim Assoc. Pastor in 2015, Alba and I feel like ACP is our "home away from home." I was also a called Senior Pastor in international congregations in Tokyo, London and Buenos Aires. I feel blessed to have such a talented and supportive pastoral team in Tim Vance, Doug Fondell, Jodi Fondell and intern Emily Chesley. We have been working well together and are confident that we will be able to maintain the high level of pastoral leadership and care during the transition to a new church council and the comings and goings of the summer season.

On this Pentecost Day, the birthday of the Church, I am reminded of the description of the Church given by the Apostle Paul. "Think of us in this way as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." (I Cor. 4:1). Jesus exemplifies in word and deed what it means to be a "servant leader." His scepter was a towel that he used in the washing of his disciples feet. We are called to follow in our Lord's footsteps. I believe ACP has a servant mentality and heart by looking at how to bring shalom (peace) and blessing to the city of Paris through such programs as Serve

the City with youth and adult participation, refugee and prison ministries, Habitat for Humanity, and diverse mission projects around the world.

We Christ-followers at ACP are also called to be "stewards of the mysteries of God." We have a rich legacy of biblical truth, tradition and practice that we are to treasure and pass on to the next generation. The worship life at ACP has an exuberance and excellence in both the traditional services and the contemporary service. There is Pentecost feel in the coming together of people from diverse backgrounds, cultures and Christian traditions to worship and serve God. I experience at ACP a microcosm of what I imagine worship in heaven will be like as pictured around the great white throne in Revelation chapter seven. There is a true mix of peoples at ACP. I met and talked with a visiting US Senator and an Afghan refugee in the coffee hour after worship one Sunday. I have been blessed in participating over the years in the Alpha Course at ACP. It is an effective and engaging way to fulfill the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 to "make disciples of all peoples." Children's and Youth and Young Adult Ministries are lifted up as priorities at ACP to help develop young disciples and pass on the baton of leadership.

ACP also has a beautiful "meeting place" to steward on quay d'Orsay which provides a "place of meeting", a spiritual space, where we encounter the living God. ACP serves as center for the international community and our location and buildings help to draw people to the church where they may discover hospitality and God's grace.

One concern that I do have about stewardship is the low percentage of financial giving of the congregation toward the expenses of the church. ACP has depended so long on the income from weddings and room rentals that members and participants at ACP support only 45% of the congregational budget. If you would count the money given by AFCU each year for the Senior Pastor's package and property costs then the congregation only contributes 38% of the actual total expenses. Perhaps the greatest contribution that I have made at ACP is my encouragement to develop percentage giving (tithing) and year-round stewardship interpretation. On May 7, 2017 I preached a stewardship emphasis sermon on the widow's mite and challenged everyone, as I did in 2015, to give 1% more of their household income to ACP as they grow in their grace towards giving a tithe. You can hear that message at [www.acparis.org](http://www.acparis.org).

I appreciate all that AFCU does for ACP and trust that Scott will return from his sabbatical refreshed and renewed. In the meantime, keep us in your prayers.

In the Joy of His Service,  
**Pastor Jeff Powell**

## Easter in Prison?

Chocolate Easter eggs, cakes and soft drinks – along with lots of good conversation. Sounds like a warm Easter gathering? It was! That's how we celebrated Easter in several prisons, following the spirit-filled worship services, complete with singing, prayers, readings from the scriptures, a sermon and holy communion.

It was wonderful. A men's choir joined us in one of the prisons, and a guest speaker gave her testimony in another, adding to the special Easter services.

One of the chaplains preached about Jesus' appearance after his resurrection to two of his followers on the road to Emmaus, where they did not recognize Jesus as he walked with them and explained what the scriptures said about himself – although their hearts burned within them! The chaplain reminded us that Jesus may also come walk beside *us* at times, to talk with us and teach us, but we don't recognized him. A powerful message!

We are now visiting four prisons around Paris: two men's prisons, one women's prison and a juvenile prison, with ACP members attending services regularly in the three of prisons. The inmates and chaplains very much appreciate our presence – they thank us often for coming.

Since we attend regularly, we have come to feel that we have friends behind the bars now. Friends who are going through a terribly difficult time in their lives, but whose burdens are lightened as we turn together to God and spend time with Him. They return to their cells with renewed hope for their future, uplifted and blessed by the Good News they have heard and the love they have felt. Those of us who leave, walk out feeling doubly blessed.

By **Carolyn Bouazouni**,  
Lay Leader, Paris Prison Ministry

(from **Spire**, The Beacon on the Seine, May 2017)

The American Church in Paris is a member congregation of the Association of International Churches in Europe and the Middle East. If you are traveling and looking for a place to worship, please consult the AICEME web site for our sister congregations: [www.aiceme.net](http://www.aiceme.net).

## The Vienna Connection



[www.viennacommunitychurch.com](http://www.viennacommunitychurch.com)

## A Congregation is Reborn

Here in Vienna, we are very thankful for the Lord's love, and that by His grace, we have a wonderful church family, a faithful and eager leadership and many gifts and opportunities from the Holy Spirit to rethink and pray about our future. With a strong Biblical and historical foundation - as we *"look into the mirror"* - we can, however, see that our church is in need of a deep overhaul. Why? Because the actualization and the implementation of our mission needs to grow in order to serve effectively as our vision statement requires: *"We Praise God by Reaching People for Christ"*.

What is the situation? At *"Churchplants"*, pastor/blogger John Pavlovitz wrote this simple diagnosis explaining: *"Dear Church, Here's Why People Are Really Leaving You."*

He said that what unfortunately many Christian churches generally do on Sunday is to *"just become white noise to those really seeking to encounter God. They're ear and eye candy for an*

*hour, but they have so little relevance in people's daily lives"*. Also, the language we use in the church he said, is a *"dead language. You're holding onto dusty words that have no resonance in people's ears, not realizing that just saying those words louder isn't the answer."* Finally according to him, *"most of your time, money and energy seems to be about luring people to where you are instead of reaching people where they already are."*

How can we answer these challenges? We have to understand and pray about these issues and then let us face the problems, stand fast and prepare for the *"battle"*. In order to do this, we have established a new ministry structure for the VCC, called Working Groups. By establishing six core ministries and organizing them into three Working Groups, we believe that by allowing God to be the center of our lives, with a humble heart and by His power, we can be a healthy church. We can move closer to a new XXI. Century Biblical Church structure, which will be more powerful in reaching people for Christ and be relevant in these days in the world.

The *"VCC WHEEL"* as we call it, is a picture of what we do and how we do it here. It incorporates six core ministries into three working groups. Our new core ministries are: 1. Worship and Fellowship, 2. Discipleship and Evangelism, 3. Christian Education and Ministry, 4. Stewardship, Finance and Property, 5. Pastor's Board and the 6. Administrative Board.

Our first Working Group is *"The Hub"*. Symbolically, it is the communication center of the wheel. The hub is of no use without the rim and tire, but without the hub, the tire is unable to function as it was designed. Here we have the Pastor's Board and the Administrative Board working together.

Our second Working Group is the *"Rim"*. Symbolically, the rim keeps the tire held together and makes sure that the weight is distributed evenly and consistently over the entire surface of the tire. Here we have the Worship and Fellowship and the Christian Education and Ministry Committees serving together.

Our third Working Group is the *"Tire"*. Symbolically, the tire is literally where the rubber meets the road. The tire is the piece of the wheel that is providing traction, gaining ground and touching the world. While the hub and rim are absolutely essential; it is the tire that carries out the ministry of the church. Here we have the Discipleship and Evangelism and the Stewardship, Finance and Property Committees working together.

We also understand, however, that the tire cannot sustain itself; it requires air. We are unable to minister apart from the indwelling power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit the VCC is able to do many *"good"* things amongst its members and in the community, but it is entirely unable to effect supernatural change and transformation. A flat tire cannot maintain momentum. Therefore the Holy Spirit's role is absolutely essential in our life.

*Continued on page 15*

## Vienna Connection *continued from page 14*

We would like to follow God's vision, His mission, values that are based on His Word. The moment we move away from any of these we will lose momentum, begin to slow down, and if nothing is done the church will lose its impact. Therefore our focus is on God's Vision, His leading power and our obedience, and by spiritual growth being authentic and dedicated disciples of the Lord!

Please keep the VCC in your prayers as we - with the help of God and according to His vision - try to move forward in faith and continue to build His Kingdom!

Thank you and cheers, **Pastor Gábor**

## Signing of the AFCU-VCC Partnership Document

A document describing the partnership between each of the churches supported by the AFCU, the American Church in Paris, the American Church in Berlin and the Vienna Community Church, and their alumni who relate to the church through the AFCU has been developed for each church. A newly revised and updated AFCU-VCC Partnership document describes the responsibilities of the AFCU to the VCC and the responsibilities of the VCC to the AFCU, the financial relationship and the pastoral relationship. It reflects the experience gained over the years of AFCU and VCC working together to carry out the mission of our Lord in Vienna.

After approval by the Boards of the ACFU and the VCC, the document was signed by Ted Ziemann, President of the AFCU and Mary Geissler, Moderator of the VCC Board, at a brief ceremony following the VCC's worship service on 14 May, 2017. (Picture in a separate file.)



*Mary Geissler and Ted Ziemann signing  
Partnership Document.*



## AFCU Summer Meeting in Vienna



*Rainer's Walking Tour*



*Pastor Lassu in the VCC pulpit*



*Meeting Chairwomen Anne Storey & Rosalind Laimer, VCC Council President Mary Geisler*



*Organist eye-view of VCC sanctuary*



*Praise Band debut; Leader Chanda Rule*

*Photos by Stephen Kienberger*

## American and Foreign Christian Union

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Unsolicited articles and pictures are welcomed. Next Deadline: Oct 10, 2017

Please send them to:

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## HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE

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

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

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