



Autumn 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. Focusing primarily on alumni and friends of these churches, the AFCU manages endowment funds to support these churches, stimulates donations to grow these funds, and offers consultation and direct support to assist these churches in their operations. Please visit www.afcubridge.org for more information.

President's Message

Dear Friends in Christ,

I am writing this letter on my return flight from Paris following visits to the American Church in Berlin and the American Church in Paris. Fortunately, I have been able to visit all three churches supported by the AFCU this year since we held our annual meeting at the Vienna Community Church in May.



Visiting these churches and seeing the great work that they do is a blessing and motivation to continue supporting their mission. They are all different in many ways but their main mission is to present the gospel of Christ in word and deed. It is always inspirational to see that their church services are filled with people. This is a testament to their connection with the communities in which they are located in countries where many churches are almost empty.

In Berlin, Reverend Steve Kienberger has recently taken a new assignment in Astoria, Oregon, and has returned to the United States. We thank Pastor Steve and Kristi for their years of faithful service to the ACB.

I am pleased that Pastor Ben and Margit Coltvet are returning to Berlin in late October where Pastor Ben will serve as interim pastor until late April 2018. We pray that the ACB will find a new permanent pastor by that

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



time. You may remember that Ben and wife, Margit, served the ACB prior to Pastor Steve's arrival. Both have been a real blessing to the ACB and to the AFCU over many years.



Back row, Left to Right: Alex von Engelhardt, Council; Ted Ziemann, President AFCU; Karin von Rosen ACB President; Martin McClure, ACB Representative to AFCU.

Front Row, Left to Right: Kumar Vasanth; Katherina Petroschka, Secretary; Africa Ornga, Council; Jens Winniewski, Treasurer. Council members Frank Campos and Thomas Hinz were not in attendance and not shown.

I had a great visit to the ACB with their new president Karin Von Rosen and the new council. I think the church is in good hands, although they have significant financial challenges to deal with.

Paris was beautiful this October with decent weather and turning leaves. The ACP continues as a bustling community, now with three active worship services on Sunday mornings. I attended all three services. Of course, the 11 AM traditional service is always a blessing. I was also able to attend the 9 AM service and the 1:30 PM contemporary service. Looking out over the congregation, I was reminded of the diverse international community that they serve and how important it is that we continue to generously support these churches.

I encourage you to visit these congregations when you travel to Paris, Berlin or Vienna. See first hand what a blessing they are to their communities. Be a Friend by supporting the churches with your prayers and financial support. Remember that when you are 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 a 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 welcome new members.

Our Fall Board and Development meetings were held on October 20-21, in Denver Colorado. **Our next Annual Board Meeting is scheduled for April 13-15, 2018, in Tucson, Arizona.**

Let me close by quoting from Hebrews 13 v.20-21: "May the God of Peace, who through the blood and eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." NIV

May God's Peace abide with you.

In Christ,

Ted Ziemann
AFCU President

So What's In It For Me

Sometimes we open our mailbox or emails, and we are bombarded by yet another request for our resources, sometimes from some group to which we have just made a contribution!

Please take a moment to reflect on our very important AFCU. It nurtures and supports, in varying ways, the American Church in Paris, the American Church in Berlin, and the Vienna Community Church.

What may not be so apparent to those who have not passed through the doors of these three congregations recently is how international they are- touching all the inhabited continents, with many different languages of origin spoken. And I am not talking about missionary activities but rather the complexion of the congregations themselves.

And even more exciting is the increase in outreach throughout the cities. Each church has had an opportunity to serve God's community in new ways. As the refugee crisis has different faces and challenges in the three cities served by the churches, so are there unique creative ways each church has responded.

Outreach to the homeless along with serving the poor is also a priority. And equally important is serving the

needs within each congregation. ..providing a home away from home for young students studying abroad is so critical. Being a beacon within a sometimes dark world is vitally important as well.

So, why cite these disparate activities?

Because we, who have been in these churches, and have been comforted and supported can help to provide not only stability but also enable our churches to serve God in new and important ways.

When we start to juggle our individual charitable giving resources, I would challenge each of us to think back to our time within the churches, either as residents or short time visitors, and realize how much we were able to benefit from the sanctuary provided.

Once we do that, our pathway unfolds, and our roles become clearer. Our gifts to AFCU are so critical to continue these opportunities to do God's work. So please approach this with thoughtfulness and appreciation, and share your resources with us.

You will feel the same gratification as I have felt. It will assure us that our priority are in the right place.

Jane Kendall



Laib & Seele food distribution

The Hustad Memoir

When we began our first overseas call, to the American Lutheran Church in Copenhagen, we had the notion that the congregation would consist primarily of American Lutherans. We expected they would represent military, diplomatic, education, and business sectors. But walking into the church the first Sunday morning was an epiphany. People from all over the globe, and even a few Danes, filled the pews. It felt like a taste of heaven. As we became acquainted with deeply committed Christians from Eritrea, Swaziland, Uganda, South Korea, Indonesia, and a myriad of other homelands, we felt the overwhelming blessing of being able to serve an international congregation.

Now, twelve countries later, we reflect on the beautiful congregations all around the world that offer worship, fellowship, education, and faith communities for expatriates, refugees, immigrants, and all who find themselves away from home. Some of the most active folks have been people who have married and begun families in a new land. It has been a joy to participate with and learn from those with different senses of spirituality, hymnody, and worship

traditions. We have learned so much about cultures, languages, denominational backgrounds. What an opportunity to expand one's sense of the pulse of the globe, while continuing the sharing of Christ's mission.



It would be impossible to pick a favorite place. It is humbling to identify highlights. Who could resist Johan Botha singing "O Holy Night" on a snowy Chr-i-stmas Eve, or singing "Lux Aeterna" under the baton of Fred Gramann? Serving as wedding pastor gave Jack the opportunity to hear the powerful sermons of Larry Kalajainen and Scott Herr. What a gift! We cherish the memory of countless faces and stories of all who have become lifelong friends.

Participation with the AFCU gives us a chance to continue being active in international ministry. Working with the alumni to find ways to be helpful to the ACP, ACB, and the VCC helps us to keep in touch. Even though the opportunities for actual visits are rare, the newsletters with photos bring a sense of being there. We give thanks to God for all of you!

Helen & Jack



VCC Praise
Band, 2017

The Heritage Society

The American and Foreign Christian Union, along with the American Churches it supports in Berlin, Paris, and Vienna is fortunate to have many friends and alumni who consistently contribute to their ongoing efforts. To encourage these efforts and recognize those who put the AFCU or the churches in their estate plan, the Heritage Society was formed.

Why are we committed to the future success of these churches? We all have our own stories and many are similar. The testimony below represents the views of why one AFCU member and her husband joined the Heritage Society.

Thoughts about the Heritage Society.

We thought about it for a while.

We took the plunge.

We made a commitment.

We are feeling very pleased with ourselves.

Actually proud, too.

So what did we do?

We finally thought seriously about making charitable contributions part of our will.

We got past the idea we have to leave everything to our family members.

And then, our thoughts turned to: well, to whom then?

Many of us are bombarded with such requests. In fact, most sophisticated nonprofits in the United States find a way to gently remind us and cajole us.

It didn't take long to focus on the American church in Paris which has meant so much to us over 30 years.

When we lived in Paris, it brought us joy and comfort and was a home away from home. Now, years later, whenever we are in Paris, attending ACP is very important. As we look at the faces from around the globe, from many types of backgrounds and challenges, we know we are in the house of God, as we always envisioned it should be.

(We also think of the churches in Vienna and Berlin, helped in various ways by the AFCU. We think these churches are very important as well and have provided the same love and inspiration.)

More than enjoying and feeling enriched by attending the American Church in Paris, we worry about the

aging structure. We're concerned about it needing to be handicap compliant beyond a lift under construction. After all, the church is approaching 100 years old, so with that comes 100 years of operational and structural issues such as old plumbing, potentially troublesome and inadequate wiring, etc. Anyone who has owned a home, a bicycle, a car knows about the need for maintenance.

If we want to see ACP here when its big anniversary arrives, we need to commit ourselves to help it through our current as well as our legacy gifts.

That's why my husband David and I rest more easily now. We've made that commitment to the Heritage Society, in our wills, and we know that our gifts will help the church in the years to come.

David and I hope you will pray for guidance, and make a commitment as well, whether it be through a gift of stock you may have received from some relative who bought it 50 years ago when it was worth very little but has since appreciated, or through a specific financial commitment.

One last thought, lots of us are squeamish about wills to begin with. Throw out that feeling. They are very responsible and important documents. They are a gift to those who need to figure out what to do when we die, either young or old.

*Jane Kendall & David Dietz
September, 2017*

If you would like to take steps for future gifting as part of your estate plan, please contact us at our e-mail address: afcuheritage@afcubridge.org. Also, if you have already included the AFCU or one of its partner churches in your estate plan, please let us know so that we may welcome you into the AFCU Heritage Society.

Robert DeSuryea
Heritage Society



Welcome to New AFCU Board Members

Jon and Julie Voskuil

Julie previously served as AFCU Treasurer from 2004 to 2007. She is joining us again as Treasurer, and she and Jon look forward to working with the board in the work of supporting international churches.

They both graduated from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI. Jon has an MBA in Marketing from Michigan State, and Julie has an MBA in Finance from Western Michigan University. Jon works as a Vice President, Global Marketing, Amway Corporation, and Julie is an Accounting professor at Calvin College.

Jon and Julie have been blessed to live overseas both in Paris (1996-1999) where they were members at the American Church in Paris and more recently in Tokyo (2013-2016) where they were members at the Tokyo Union Church. They have a strong commitment to support international churches from which they received so much: faith formation, friends, community, and the opportunity to serve others, while living in both Paris and Tokyo.

Today, Jon and Julie live in Grand Rapids, Michigan and have three children who have all appreciated their expat-child experiences. The Voskuils enjoy travel, great food, tennis, and walking. They are happy to join the AFCU Board and are looking forward to meeting the rest of the board members at the Development Committee Meeting in October.



ACP Fred Gala



The Paris Connection



www.acparis.org

October 2, 2017

Dear Members and Friends of the AFCU,

This Autumn is significant for any number of reasons, but for the AFCU and ACP there are two important events to consider. Firstly, Christians around the world are remembering the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's nailing of his 95 theses on the *Wittenberg Schlosskirche* door on October 31, 1517. Secondly, we here at the *American Church in Paris* are celebrating our 160th year of Napoleon III's official charter for our congregation to hold public English-speaking worship services on our own property. It was The Rev. Edward Norris Kirk who was, with the initiative and support of the AFCU, the founding pastor of the chapel located on the *rue de Berri* in the 8th *arrondissement*.

These two historical events are significant because, as Edmund Burke

once famously said, "Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it." In my earlier years as a pastor, I used to robustly celebrate Reformation Sunday, while in my more recent years have come also to see the Reformation as something to lament. There are at least 35,000 or more different Christian denominations. This is not exactly the outcome the Lord Jesus prayed for in his prayer, "That they all may be one" (John 17:21)! So it's a poignant time for the church. How do we focus on the renewal the reformers intended without continuing to add to the division and schism within the Body of Christ? While only formally catalogued in the 20th century, the three *solas* that were most common in the 16th century are: "*Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fides*" ("only scripture, only grace, only faith"). They were designed to recover a particular focus on the gospel and life together: scripture over tradition, faith over works, and grace over merit.

The ACP's annual theme verse in honor of Reformation history and our own anniversary celebration is taken from Revelation 21:5a, where the Risen and ascended Lord declares, "*Behold, I am making all things new.*" We are literally making ongoing renovations to the ACP's magnificent physical plant, with a new wheelchair accessible lift and lavatory, new flooring in the

basement, new firehose dry pipes, and other upgrades. But we are also reflecting on how Christ is making all things new for us spiritually. How do we need to be open to traditions that need to be changed in light of the central biblical motif of God's saving love for *all* people? How does faith need to prioritize our works, and grace become the primary ethos of our life together? How do we avoid hypocrisy and be guided better by Jesus' prioritizing the weightier matters of the law, "justice and mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:23)?

I found it interesting reading again the farewell discourse by Rev. Kirk, when he said, "And here according to our purpose and our compact the services are to be Christian, simply and purely Christian. That is, they are to be *evangelical* but never *denominational*. Just so far as Christian men [sic] can agree to compromise some of their denominational peculiarities for the sake of Christian charity and Christian fellowship, so far they may be satisfied with these services. But let it be most definitely understood that, except by a violation of compact, the chapel we are erecting can never become exclusively devoted to the forms of any one sect. Some have complained of this. I glory in it." Indeed.

We are pursuing and proclaiming in word and deed

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Pastor Herr, *continued from page 7*

what I hope is the gospel (*evangel*, or “good news”) of Jesus Christ, and in a spirit of unity rather than “denominational peculiarities.” Please continue to pray for us as we prepare for the new thing God is doing in and through us. It is quite clear that in our broken world where so many suffer violence and hopelessness, our witness is both important and urgent. Thank you for your support, and I hope we’ll see you soon for a visit. Grace and peace,

In Christ,



Kate Shellnutt, “The Rise of the Nones,” (*Christianity Today*, July 20, 2017), referenced online: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/july/rise-of-nons-protestants-denominations-nondenominational.html>
Cochran, Joseph Wilson, *Friendly Adventurers* (Paris: Bretano’s, 1931), 68.

An Intern in Paris

Recently someone at the ACP picnic asked me why Tricia and I came here? They were curious as to why we would extend an already laborious three-year master’s program and delay the day when I would graduate and be able to earn a “real” income. As I processed this question with my feet dangling above the Seine while drinking cold rosé and eating a perfectly toasted baguette, I could have answered her with one word: Paris. However, the truth is that we came here seeking answers to questions.

Four in particular stand out.

1. As Christians, how do we cultivate a warm spirit and a keen mind, sharpen the intellect while softening the heart?
2. How do we create an ecumenical atmosphere while maintaining conviction?
3. How do we form and foster a diverse community that reflects the Kingdom of God?
4. How do we welcome the “outsider”, fight injustice, and make disciples?

These are not just intellectual questions but practical ones. So, we wanted to participate in a community that not only had robust answers to these questions, but also seemed to be putting those answers into practice. After we browsed the many internship opportunities available to us in Princeton, we were drawn to the thriving community of ACP. An ecumenical and diverse church in the heart of Paris that seeks to serve the city, cultivate justice, and practice charity.

We landed in France August 1st and the past four weeks have been marked by rest and adventure for Tricia and me. We have explored the city of Paris and are feeling settled. We know where to get groceries and which how to find the Seine, so, needless to say, we are set. And most important for us, we have met wonderful people here who have made us feel like we really will be able to call this home. We couldn’t be more excited to learn, live, play, and work alongside such a thriving community.

Jake van Asten

ACP Intern

Welcoming the Stranger

Last September, I became the happy recipient of a Louisville Institute grant to explore the topic of Welcoming the Stranger: How the Church can provide a place of belonging for the foreigner and immigrant. My interest in this topic was sparked by own experience of living as a foreigner for the better part of the last 20 years. 16.5 years in Stockholm, Sweden, 1 year in London, England and now this season of interim ministry at ACP. All of the churches that I have had the great privilege of being a part of are part of the Association of International churches in Europe and the Middle East that all of the churches associated with AFCU in Europe are affiliated with. These International churches have a unique and great privilege to welcome the stranger to their churches and provide that soft place to land for foreigners seeking to navigate a new country, culture and language.

One thing that we know for sure is that Immigration is not going to stop. We live in a very transient world. The church is often behind society when it comes to important issues. A key theological focus on the ministry of hospitality as demonstrated in scripture, especially as it relates to welcoming the stranger and caring for the foreigner is a clear driver for this conversation.

Key questions for me include: How can the church model hospitality to the stranger, in particular to the immigrant? What are the main obstacles to welcoming the stranger into our churches? How can hospitality to the stranger help the church become a stronger agent of reconciliation and cultural understanding in the church?

Scripture is filled with a call to exhibit hospitality, to be kind to the foreigner in your own land. The Mosaic law frequently associates aliens and strangers with widows, orphans, the poor and Levites. This emphasizes that a foreigner's life is not an easy one. Her work is often hard and poorly paid, and she may not be able to afford good housing. In addition to any material difficulties

she may face, there are emotional challenges: she is an uprooted person, deprived of the comfort of her native language, family and friends. In short, she is alone. This loneliness is all the more painful because it is often not a personal choice, hence the tendency for foreigners to stick together. They attempt thereby to recreate their home environment.

The more different the home country is from the new country, the more leaving home seems like going into exile. Sometimes this exile can motivate foreigners to try to integrate in their new society. But more often it has the opposite effect and makes them vulnerable, in some cases even to the point of criminal activity. Because exile causes suffering, God has a special love for aliens and strangers.

The Hebrew word *ger*—which most English translations render as “foreigner,” “alien,” or “sojourner,” appears ninety-two times in the Old Testament. Some Old testament scholars argue that “Welcoming the stranger... is the most often repeated commandment in the Hebrew Scriptures, with the exception of the imperative to worship only the one God.” The references to the immigrant in the Old Testament follow a few recurring themes. First, many of the heroes of the narrative of Scripture—Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Ruth, David, Daniel—were themselves immigrants, crossing borders under many of the same circumstances as today's migrants: fleeing poverty and famine, aiming to reunify a family, seeking asylum, or trafficked involuntarily. The parallels between the biblical narrative and the realities of today's immigrants are many. God also has a great deal to say about how Christians should treat immigrants: he repeatedly challenges his people, the Israelites, to remember their own history as immigrants in the land of Egypt, and, once God has established them in the Promised Land, to allow their ancestors' experience to inform the way they treat the immigrants who come into their land. “Do not oppress a foreigner,” God commands, “you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because

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Welcoming the Stranger, *continued from page 9*

you were foreigners in Egypt” (Exod 23:9). The immigrant appears frequently in the Old Testament alongside three other vulnerable groups of people who compose what Nicholas Wolterstorff calls the “quartet of the vulnerable”: the resident alien, the orphan, the widow, and the impoverished. God makes clear that he loves these vulnerable individuals, whom he commands his people to love and protect. “Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor” (Zech 7:10). The prophet Malachi warns that “those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice” will be judged alongside adulterers, perjurers, and sorcerers (Mal 3:5). “The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow,” the Psalmist proclaims, “but he frustrates the way of the wicked” (Psa 146:9). “The Lord your God... defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing” (Deut 10:17-18). God not only loves immigrants, he also establishes specific rules to ensure that they could meet their own basic needs, commanding the Israelites not to harvest the entirety of their fields, but to leave the edges “for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you” (Lev 23:22). God insists that the immigrant be granted the same labor protections as Israelites, including a Sabbath day’s rest, freedom from oppression, and timely payment of wages. In almost every aspect of Israelite life, the immigrant was to “be treated as your native born” (Lev 19:34), which stood in stark contrast to the laws of the societies surrounding Israel, which showed little regard for immigrants. Because these scriptures reveal God’s heart, they should motivate us to reflect these values in our hearts as well.

Finally, the primary application is the importance of establishing our identity on the basis of who we are in God’s family rather than who we are in social perceptions. Because “outsiders” are members of God’s household their social location as outcasts has no bearing on who they are in the fullness of reality, on

who they are in God’s estimation or on who they are in the context of God’s ultimate designs for history. While socially strange and foreign in Asia Minor, excluded, powerless, and homeless in the Roman empire, in God’s family, we learn in I Peter 2:9-10, they are included, they are royalty, they are at home as God’s people.

Ephesians 2:19-2 say, ‘So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.’

Often, when living in a foreign country, the church becomes our family and that is a good thing. We just need to ensure that we don’t form a closed circle of family but remain open to the new family members that God wants to bring into our midst. An important question to ask ourselves is this: Where is our identity rooted: In our national heritage or in our connection to God in Christ and in the new people of God, that is the church? We must allow our citizenship as Christ’s followers to be our highest concern. We can still embrace our national heritage but protecting it or lifting it above others is never what God intends for his people.

We speak often of hospitality and how important it is in the church and in our lives. I believe it is central to what we are to be about for it really does help us to build community. Interesting enough, the word for hospitality in scripture is *philoxenos*...*philo*: brotherly love *xenos*: stranger...love for the stranger...the very opposite of *xenophobia*...which is fear of the stranger.

Friends, we have such an amazing opportunity to fulfill this calling here at ACP. Let’s continue to pray that God will open our doors wide to those in need of a warm welcome in Jesus’ name.

Jodi Fondell

The Berlin Connection



www.americanchurchberlin.de



The Times They Are A Changing

The Good Ship ACB is sailing through turbulent times but God's Grace is indeed a Blessed Assurance, which carries us forward!

The process of saying our good byes to our beloved Kienbergers has been a short and intense interlude; the juggling of daily office routines, organization of guest and interim pastors, services and meetings a sizeable challenge without Pastor Steve at the helm.



But we are carried forward in confidence through God's abundant Blessings within ACB, indebted to the many helpers who have stepped up from the council, staff, volunteers within the congregation as well as our generous and active sponsors at the AFCU and the ELCA. We look forward to greeting many of our dear friends from the AFCU this month in our midst as they travel to their annual Fall Budget meeting! The Council is very grateful to be able to meet on October 10th with Ted Ziemann, current AFCU President, receiving his support and guidance as we embark on a new pastoral call process.

The new ACB Council however has also been focusing on moving forward with a new strategic development plan for our home and ministry in the Luther Kirche. At the Council Leadership Retreat on September 8th time was taken to examine the gifts the new council as individuals and as a team bring on board the Good Ship ACB as well as preparing for a 5-year review of our 2012 Vision. Mission and Goals. We are especially grateful to Susanne Smith-Hinz and Christina Stansell for their expertise and support facilitating this retreat. Essential

Agreements for working, living and communicating together were explored and will be shared at a **Meet & Greet Getaway Evening for Committee Chairs, Staff and Volunteer Team with our new Interim Pastor Ben and Intern Jim on Friday November 10th**. Time and place tba, mark your calendars and watch for your invitation!

As the song goes, The Times They Are A Changing: Our Interim Pastor Ben Coltvet arrives with his wife Margit, along with our Intern Jim, his wife Isabel and new born son Ezra this month. And yet we will be propelled forward in the Call Process for a new pastor to ACB with the wonderful support and guidance of our partners at the ELCA. In the efforts to update our church profile in order to post the position in the USA **we need YOU; your input is urgently needed!!!** Everyone in the congregation is asked to please take part in a short **10 minute Pastoral Leadership Survey**: Please follow this link to register your wishes by end of October latest! <https://goo.gl/forms/UYiY5Q8E92uQevEV2>

Thank you for continued prayers and support during this season of stewardship and thanksgiving; especially in keeping with our 5-5-5 Stewardship Campaign this year!

Yes we need YOU to be HIS hands, Feet, Voice and Light!

Yours with love and faith in Christ,

Karin von Rosen
ACB Council President

AMERICAN CHURCH BERLIN
an Ecumenical International Protestant Church

FIVE - FIVE - FIVE
ACB Stewardship Challenge 2017

What can I do to keep our church thriving?

Five-Prayers
Pray for others and change your world.

Five-People
Invite someone to join you at ACB.

Five-Euros
Give 5€ more each week above your regular giving.



Help us grow into the future!



www.americanchurchberlin.de

A FOND FAREWELL TO THE KIENBERGERS *by Kumer Vasanth*



Our 7 Years of the Kienberger's at ACB were truly remarkable years. The days weeks, months and the years passed so quickly, and it was not easy to say good bye!

We count all the blessings we have received from them, which will remain anchored in our hearts.



A FOND FAREWELL TO THE KIENBERGERS



We are indebted to their joyful commitment to our musical ministries as well as determination and vision they invested into bridging relations and collaboration with our German and International Congregations throughout the City of Berlin.



October 1, Steve starts his commitments with a new congregation in Astoria, Oregon USA, and we wish him and the family all the best and the blessings for their new ministry.

Life's Shoes

What woman doesn't like shoes? On Saturday, September 16, Christian Women of Berlin (CWoB) held its second brunch of 2017 with the theme "Life's Shoes" at the Sorat Hotel in Berlin. Tables were decorated with a basket that contained a large rustic heart with a shoe leaning against it, and a delicate bud vase with a simple but elegant spray of



flowers. Every table had a different type of shoe as part of the centerpiece. Each place setting included a shoe-shaped paperclip on a card with two verses from Scripture: "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Hebrews 12:1) and "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). Jeannie McClung, the leader of CWoB, engaged the women in a little fun called Name that Shoe!

As a connection to the theme, a young woman involved with Christmas in a Shoebox operation provided everyone with information about the program and even had special shoeboxes available for women to take home and fill. Then she introduced Marianne, a recipient of a wrapped shoebox when she was a young girl in Rumania.. She said it was important to wrap the shoeboxes with love and pack them with prayer.

Ruth Bakke began the presentation of the theme from the view of a slipper. According to her, this shoe

indicates rest. Rest can be understood in terms of absence from work such as vacations for refreshment and then our time of retirement. God built rest into the natural rhythm of life. It can also be a time away from worries, anxieties, and stress such as devotional time, Bible study, hobbies, worship, etc. Psalm 46:10 in the Message Bible states "Step out of the traffic!" Put on those slippers! The most important rest is in the context of Jesus as our Rest. He tells us in Matthew 11:28-30 to learn from Him and find rest for our souls. Only in Christ is our soul fully and truly at rest. God's rest is a 'shalom: or sense of well-being with regard to our relationship to God. She closed with the following quotation:

Christ can make the rest of your days
Be the best of your days
If He is the Rest of your days.

Kristi Fauss spoke about hiking boots. This footwear makes one think of protection and faith. Although they are not necessarily comfortable and not always essential they enable one to proceed with confidence over rough terrain. One thing to remember about hiking boots is that they can take one to unexpected beauty.



Heather Hinton spoke about wearing an unusual type of footwear—a medical walking boot. This described so many parts of her life—spiritually, emotionally,

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Life's Shoes, *continued from page 14*

physically, and relationally. There are times in our lives when we feel isolated, alone, and broken; in other words, injured but engaged in life. There were five points Heather brought to the women. 1) Lean hard into your grief with grace. Even little things are real and can cause pain. Go there with God and bring it into the light. Remember, pain does not negate joy. 2) It is better to ask “what” and “how” rather than “why”. Pray to God and ask what He wants you to learn from the experience. 3) You must know who you are in Christ. This supercedes what you do. The utmost importance is that you are a child of God. 4) You are comforted by God so you can comfort others. 5) There may be scars. But this is better than coming out of the experience bitter, stinking, and festering. Through Jesus Christ, God loves us abundantly. “Step out” to touch others. The entertainment was provided by Caitlyn Liston, a young ballerina. She learned that we can't always put on the shoes we want and had to do a routine on carpet with something other than her ballerina slippers.



Ruth Bakke



Leib und Selle 2016



Worship Café

The Vienna Connection



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Reformation 500

Dear Friends in Christ,

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed 95 theses on the gates to the Wittenberg Castle Church. Thus began the Reformation, whose 500th anniversary is in 2017. A remarkable celebration of the occasion was held on September 30th at a great event in the Rathausplatz in Vienna. The Protestant Churches in Austria - Lutheran, Reformed, and Methodist - commemorated this special event with a festival in the middle of the city which was free and open to the public. Our congregation, the Vienna Community Church also

participated on this wonderful event and many of our members were present in specially-designed T-shirts introducing our ministry to the people, singing with our beautiful choir, displaying photos of our activities and witnessing to the love of Christ for the people in Vienna. This event was the kick-off for our first and blessed outreach opportunity. As our vision statement says: *"We Praise God by Reaching People for Christ!"*

However we also need to learn the origin of this celebration and understand what this means for us in the 21st century. Martin Luther was a catholic priest and monk, who walked a sincere path in his quest for peace with God and for intensive study of the Bible. This led him to first understand, and then to challenge indulgences: the idea of the Catholic church that people simply could purchase salvation. Luther did not find any Biblical evidence to support what Pope Leo X offered in 1517 to the people in a form of indulgences for those who gave monetary contributions to help with the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. This unethical and non-Biblical action led Luther to challenge the entire ecclesiastical and political authority of the Roman Catholic church and the Holy Roman Empire.



Reformation 500 celebration in Vienna.

Luther's teachings can be summarized in the *"Five Solas"*, which are five Latin phrases explaining basic theological principles in contrast to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church of the day. *"Sola"* in Latin means *"alone"* and Luther wanted to emphasize those basic principles which by today have become the foundational elements of nearly all Protestant Churches worldwide.

First Sola Scriptura, *"Scripture alone"*, meaning that the Bible alone is our highest authority. It states clearly that the Bible



International choir led by VCC member Chanda Rule Bernroider.

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alone teaches us all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured.

Second Sola Fide, "*faith alone*", meaning that we are saved through faith alone. Our justification does not rest on any merit or virtue to be found in us because Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible fulfillment of God's perfect justice.

Third Sola Gratia, "*grace alone*", meaning that we are saved by the grace of God alone. In salvation we are rescued from God's anger by his grace alone. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

Fourth Solus Christus, "*Christ alone*", meaning that Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Savior, and King. This means that our salvation is accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father.

Fifth Soli Deo Gloria, "*to the glory of God alone*" meaning that we live for the glory of God alone. It is affirmed that because salvation has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and as a human response, we must glorify him always. It is mandatory that we must live our entire lives before God, under His authority and for His glory alone.

By these teachings, the Reformation began as a revival movement, and the reformers like Luther did not want to establish a new church or denomination, but they truly wanted the church to come back to its Biblical foundation, so that all people could return to the human life liberated in Christ. Unfortunately the Reformation led to tears, many fights, misunderstandings, wars and much distress which was also severely painful for the body of the Church. 300 years needed to pass, until the 1817, on the 300th anniversary of the Reformation, the Protestants were not wanting to attack the other side, but emphasized the pain of rupture. Since then, thanks to the 20th century revival movements, Protestants and Roman Catholics are working side by side to renew the Church of the one and holy God unceasingly and bring it up to date in modern times.

Many historians look back to the Reformation finding that it was a significant and influential movement transforming our society and culture for centuries. From civic and economic improvements, ethics and public education to a refreshing of the arts, music and providing a new sense of all life being related somehow to God and his glory, it certainly made a considerable difference to human development. It makes quite an impression to study how theology about sin, grace, the sovereignty of God, and the emphasis on salvation by grace could be the catalyst for such a vibrant moral transformation. The reformers did not want to establish a new political or cultural position, but they showed to the world that when people put the love of Christ and the clear Gospel first in their lives and proclaim the grace of God to the Word, the effects follow naturally.

Let us remember and celebrate the Reformation and these five pillars of our faith with thankfulness in our hearts to God and the work accomplished by Martin Luther 500 years ago!

Pastor Dr. Gábor Lassu



Outreach with Pastor Gábor
& VCC members.

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