

The Bridge

Connecting Our Churches and Friends around the World

“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.”

John 1:9

THIS MONTH

AFCU HISTORY

The American and Foreign Christian Union was formed in 1849 upon the merging of three complimentary missionary societies; the American Protestant Society, the Foreign Evangelical Society and the Christian Alliance.

Page 4

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

FINANCE - The AFCU is an IRS classified 501(c)(3) organization supporting the English-speaking ministries of the ACP, ACB and VCC. Your donations are tax deductible for US tax purposes. Your gifts are important and appreciated and you can support the International Christian Community through a prayerful donation.

Page 9

AFCU PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear friends in Christ,

I wish you a very merry Christmas as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The AFCU board has continued to be very active during the past several months. We had our Autumn board and development meetings in Minneapolis during October 4-5, wonderfully hosted by Russ and Carrol McNaughton and Ben and Margit Coltvét.

Following are some of the highlights from the meetings:

AMERICAN CHURCH IN PARIS

- As many of you know Pastor Scott Herr's role as senior pastor will end during the summer of 2020. As a result, the interim senior pastor search committee has been very active in interviewing and evaluating candidates for this position. The AFCU search committee has now submitted recommendations to the ACP for a final selection. (The selection may be made by the time you receive this letter.) We had a large group of excellent candidates for this process, so a selection of finalists was difficult. We wish the individual selected the very best as he or she prepares to serve as interim senior pastor beginning next summer. I wish to thank Don Eppert for his leadership in this activity as well as all the team members who worked many hours in the selection process.
- As part of the joint long-range planning effort, the AFCU board commissioned a study by architect firm Pei Partnership Architects, LLC/Cortez Associates/Sarl Architects to study better utilization of the ACP church house to meet future needs of the church and the church community. A report was given to the board summarizing the major aspects of the study at the October AFCU meeting. As a result of the report, the board with the ACP are forming study teams to focus on the various aspects of a potential project including feasibility, space utilization, architectural detail, capital requirements, and financing. You will be hearing more as these teams make progress on their segment of responsibility. The teams are commissioned to present their progress reports at the May 2020 AFCU Meeting.

AMERICAN CHURCH IN BERLIN

A special AFCU finance team has been working with the ACB do better clarify the financial situation of the church. Members of this team have also been working on the feasibility of raising capital for an endowment to assist in helping support the pastor and the church's ministry. We expect a final report at the May meeting. We are collaborating with the ACB and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in this effort. The ELCA has committed to pay four months/year of Pastor Thorkelson's salary for a period of three years as the ACB and AFCU work to provide a long-term solution to the financial needs of the church.

VIENNA COMMUNITY CHURCH

Following Pastor Gábor Lassu's departure last May, the VCC has been blessed with two interim pastors. The first, Pastor Tom Garrison, completed a three-month term in September. The new guest pastor is Reverend Neal Parker who recently retired from the United Church of Canada and was a former military chaplain. The VCC also again wishes to thank all of those who helped support the purchase of the "Meeting Point" facility which has been a major asset for their organization and programs.

ALL THREE EUROPEAN CHURCHES

All three European churches remain active in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ in their communities. The AFCU is here to support them and to do so with prayer, by collaborating on various church task forces and teams, and by assisting with fundraising as needed. In addition to our time, members of the board provide significant financial support.

The European churches continue to transition from being primarily expat communities to being a very diverse population with strong missional responsibilities. We continue to need active volunteers to serve in the leadership and support positions of the AFCU to support these churches. I invite you to prayerfully consider how you may be able to utilize your time and talents for this purpose.

The next meeting of the AFCU will be held May 15-17 in the United States. A specific location has not been selected as of the writing of this letter.

Finally, I am saddened to report that Rev. Thomas Duggan died on October 21 at his home in Claremont California. He was senior pastor at the American church in Paris from 1978 through 1992 during a very busy time. A couple things you will note when visiting the ACP is the current beautiful pipe organ and the pulpit with the carvings of the key early Christian theologians. Both were installed during Reverend Duggan's tenure. Rev. Duggan continued to support the ACP for many years by being involved with the AFCU. We all miss him.

Thank you for your continuing support of the American churches in Europe. I invite you to attend the churches when you visit Paris, Berlin, and Vienna. Let the pastors know when you visit if you would be interested in supporting their church by becoming involved in the AFCU. Of course, you can also contact us via our website at www.afcubridge.org.

In Christ,



Ted Ziemann
President, AFCU

AFCU HISTORY

DID YOU KNOW?

The roots of the American and Foreign Christian Union, AFCU, go back to the mid-19th century and its presence is still felt around the world today. The dynamic congregations worshipping at the three churches the AFCU supports would make the founders rejoice. Each Sunday hundreds of Christians from around the world renew their spiritual strength from attending English language, American style worship services at the American Church in Paris, the American Church in Berlin and the Vienna Community Church.

The American and Foreign Christian Union was formed in 1849 upon the merging of three complimentary missionary societies; the American Protestant Society, the Foreign Evangelical Society and the Christian Alliance. During this time period, missionary emphasis of American Protestant Christians was at a fever pitch, and the AFCU was supported by many denominations and individuals. Most AFCU officers were leading members of the clergy who were also active in other interdenominational benevolent societies.

The AFCU grew quickly and by 1860 supported 73 workers in the U.S. and granted subsidies to help support 212 foreign workers. With the widespread interest in the mission field, however, most of the major protestant denominations established their own mission programs in the last third of the 19th century. As a result, AFCU mission efforts were curtailed and by 1884 it focused solely on the American Church in Paris, which it had founded earlier.

In 1857, the AFCU received a charter from the government of Napoleon III and working with English speaking Christians in Paris founded The American Church in Paris. The initial membership consisted of a small group of Americans who had been meeting in a French Reformed Church since 1814. The AFCU funded the construction of the first church building and selected and provided for its minister.

In 1926 Construction of the current American Church in Paris building on the Quai d'Orsay was begun. It was completed in 1931 and has been church home to thousands of English speaking Christians who find themselves in Paris permanently, for a few short years, or for a few days. Today over 500 persons regularly worship each Sunday in its beautiful sanctuary.



HERITAGE SOCIETY

The Heritage Society of the AFCU recognizes members and friends of the American Church in Paris, the American Church in Berlin and the Vienna Community Church who have included one or more of these churches in their estate planning. Perhaps you would like to make a significant contribution to help the American and Foreign Christian Union support the commitment it has with the member churches it serves. Endowment funds for each church have been established to help sustain long-term ministry in these churches.

To learn more about the Heritage Society, please visit the AFCU website at AFCUBridge.com and look at The Heritage Society under the Support the AFCU tab.

Also, you may contact the AFCU at AFCUHeritage@AFCUBridge.com.



AMERICAN CHURCH IN PARIS



Dear Members & Friends of the ACP,

As we move through these last days of Advent and prepare for Christmas celebrations, I want to thank you for your faithful support of the ministries and missions of the ACP during this year. The words to that lovely Christmas carol, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, are always moving to me: "Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting light; The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight." We are in a time both here in France and in the United States full of hopes and fears. And so it is a privilege to remind you of some of the highlights on how God is at work meeting us where we are and working even through us to bring good news and light even amidst the darkness and fears of this world...

The **Alpha Course** was offered twice this year with over 100 people participating, and a number of those people committing their lives to Christ. If you haven't been a part of an *Alpha Course*, a fresh cooked meal is provided, a teaching video in English with French subtitles is shown, and then small groups discuss questions – none are off limits! It's a wonderful introduction to the Christian faith with over 24 million participants to date offered in over 100 languages in over 100 countries!

Like we started the year, we are ending it continuing **100 Nights of Welcome** during the coldest nights to offer a hot shower, warm bed, and some tasty food to refugees in our city. We began welcoming guests to sleep in the gym on December 1st, just after a camp of over 2,000 refugees was closed down and temperatures dropped to near freezing. The first night we welcomed 14 men and a woman recommended to us by the *Jesuit Refugee Services*, and have offered shelter to guests from Afghanistan, Mali, Morocco, Iran, Rwanda, Eritrea, Sudan, and the Ivory Coast so far in just the first couple of weeks.

The **Friday Mission Lunch** also celebrated 25 years of serving food to the hungry and this year we will have helped to serve about 3,120 three course hot lunches to our guests. Many thanks to Kristi Worrell, who has led that mission work for over 20 years. Because of her and your donations, we have helped to serve 62,400 lunches since Kristi joined the leadership team for the FML!

It was Steven Covey who once said, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing!" And the main thing for us is **worship**, the heartbeat of our life together as a church. Without counting special services during Holy Week and *Taizé* services during Lent in the Spring, **we welcomed over 34,000 worshippers this year**. Despite the *gilets jaunes* demonstrations and the *general strikes* which have been a general nuisance for so many people, we continue to welcome thousands *each week* for worship, Bible studies, school and various community and support groups, activities and services. For example, I was just at the **International Counseling Services** holiday party. We remembered and gave thanks for *the Rev. Dr. Tom Duggan*, whose life and ministry we will remember and celebrate this coming January 18th, who helped found ICS 30 years ago, and providing counseling for thousands of ex-pats.

As we light candles and sing about the hopes and fears of all the years this Christmas Eve, please remember to say a pray for *The American Church in Paris*. We appreciate your partnership in the gospel and for your continuing financial support to help us continue in different ways *to bear witness in word and deed to the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ*. We pray that people will not only hear ("*Angels, we have heard on high...*"), but experience the message of God's love throughout the year ("*Gloria, in excelsis deo*")! On behalf of the Council and all of the members of the ACP, we thank you and wish you and yours a very **Merry Christmas** and a New Year filled with faith, hope, love, joy and peace!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott".

Scott

AMERICAN CHURCH IN BERLIN



Dear Alumni & Friends of the ACB,

May you all find peace and time for meditation as we await the coming of the Christ Child. The busy-ness of the Advent Season is quite unavoidable, and we all find ourselves exhausted as Mid-December rolls around. Year after year. It is an old cliché, but still quite unescapable. This past weekend, I joined a group from ACB on a train trip up to Rostock, on the Baltic coast, to stroll around the Alt Stadt and take in the festivities of the Christmas Market spread along the main street through most of the city. What was momentous for me was the unhurried time spent with friends, and getting to know a few members better. The Gluhwein and Bratwurst were only the means to that end. My wish is for all of you to find similar time with friends, unrushed and simple.

Briefly recap just the last few weeks at ACB in Berlin? Where do I begin. For outreach beyond our membership, the annual **Dom Konzert** presented ACB's choir along with the JFK School Choir and Orchestra to a sold out crowd downtown. Our Luther Church also hosted a wonderful **Jazz Christmas Concert** to a slightly smaller crowd from the community.

The ACB Congregation held its biannual meeting on November 24th with the largest attendance since more than 5yrs. The budget 2020 was passed after much informative discussion. Thanksgiving was celebrated the following weekend with fantastic music and plenty of food. **The old year is coming to pass...**

...and a new decade is upon us!

Looking 2020 into the new year, the Property is preparing to authorize the repair of our lightning rod system once the grant from the German Lotto have been finalized. Additionally, modifications to the electricity and lighting will also be made. The Development Committee strives to top its 2019 earnings of around €5,200 in rental and concerts by focusing on more rentals and better concert attendance. Beyond 2020 we are preparing for the 500 anniversary of Luther's "Here I Stand" in 1521 in Worms. ...stay tuned!

Yours in Christ,

Martin McClure

VIENNA COMMUNITY CHURCH

IN TRANSITION & LOVIN' IT

"The secret to change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new." – Socrates

As VCC enters its 63rd year and the Christmas Season is upon us, it is an opportunity to reflect and be thankful for every gift God has given this Church. It also is a time to focus our future. Over the last months, VCC has had wonderful spiritual leadership in the persons of Pastor Tom Garrison and Pastor Neil Parker. With their energy and styles of spiritual leadership, VCC is looking towards a future on its way to becoming: a church girded by faith and humility; real community hurtling into a new space. During 2020, VCC will be looking at itself, its governing documents, its relationship with the Austrian Protestant Church and it will be searching for a new pastor. That's the future.

The present has been a wonderful journey. We are so happy to have paid off our loan on the VCC Meeting Point. We could not have done it with the support of so many. With the hard work and participation of several people, our fellowship activities, from Ladies' Bible Study to Film Night have provided opportunities for deeper fellowship. Pastor Tom gave a wonderful series of talks on the Gospels and the Book of Acts for Bible+. Our current Guest Pastor, Pastor Neil, who has gone way and beyond being a Guest Pastor, has invited people to drop in, while his mother-in-law has been showing him how to bake Austrian-style Christmas cookies at the Meeting Point and he has on display an eclectic collection of Nativity figures that he has been collecting over the last decades. Some high points of the Autumn was our International Thanksgiving Buffet, the first of the series "Songs on A Sunday" with uplifting and meditative singing, soloists and instrumentalists, and topping it off with VCC's annual Christmas Pageant, which took place this past Sunday, transitioning us into the real meaning of Christmas, beyond the numerous Christmas parties, present buying, decorating and the like. To end the film season, some of us watched "The Bishop", starring Cary Grant, David Niven and Loretta Young. How we would wish that an Angel would visit! But, perhaps she has already?

Anne Storey, our Fellowship Chair, has been organising the first, away, VCC Retreat for about a decade and it will take place at the end of February. We are looking forward to sharing a weekend with over half of our membership in a castle in a quaint city, called Drosendorf. Our former Pastor, Jim Wiberg and his wife Luray, who have been tirelessly supporting the VCC over the years, will no doubt have good memories of the retreat held there. We expect approximately 40 adults and some 11-14 children. This will also be an opportunity for real conversation beyond the niceties of Sunday service, and we hope to have a clearer picture and understanding of who we are as a Church and what kind of a footprint do we want to leave in our community. I look to Paris and Berlin for inspiration!

As we end this year, the Vienna Community Church wishes to thank you for your support and prayers. Merry Christmas and a wonderful 2020!

**Mickela Moore, Moderator
Vienna Community Church**



FINANCE UPDATE

AFCU PROVIDES SUPPORT

The American Church in Paris (ACP), The American Church in Berlin (ACB) and the Vienna Community Church (VCC) are ministering to a diverse population spiritually, culturally and economically. The American & Foreign Christian Union, established in 1848, provides Board guidance and economic support to American and International Christian churches, and is thankful for our current partnerships!

We welcome supporters who want to impact the world through these vibrant ministries. If interested, join us by following the giving instructions below.

The AFCU is an IRS classified 501(c)(3) organization supporting the English-speaking ministries of the ACP, ACB and VCC. Your donations are tax deductible for US tax purposes.

Your gifts are important and appreciated and you can support the International Christian Community by sending your checks to our address shown below.

TO DONATE ONLINE

An alternative gifting option is to donate through the AFCU web site using your credit card or PayPal account. The AFCU web site address is afcubridge.org. Go to the web site and click on DONATE.

TO DONATE VIA CHECK

1. When gifting by check, please designate your donation to one of these ministries, as follows:

American Church in Paris
American Church in Berlin
Vienna Community Church
AFCU General Fund

2. Make the check payable to the AFCU, and include the church designation, noted above. Mail to:

AFCU Treasurer
2885 Sanford Ave. SW # 29934
Grandville, MI 49418

AFCU CONTACT INFORMATION

President, AFCU

Ted Zieman

AFCUPresident@afcubridge.org

Treasurer, AFCU

Julie Voskuil

AFCUTreasurer@afcubridge.org