

AMERICAN AND FOREIGN CHRISTIAN UNION

The Bridge

CONNECTING OUR CHURCHES AND FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD



SUMMER 2021

PRESIDENTIAL UPDATE



Dear Christian Friends,

Clearly, we will look back on 2021 as a year of big changes and transition with vaccinations making positive inroads on the COVID landscape and life returning to normal, yet not being quite the same. Changes and transitions, both big and small, are part of our personal life, our spiritual life and our work life. Each year at AFCU, we have new members joining the Board, members leaving and members changing roles. This April, I was elected President, replacing Ted Ziemann who served as President for 6 years. This role change is one of several, and I invite you take a look at the section in the Bridge to meet the new members and catch up with the all the moves.

Reflecting back on my involvement with AFCU, I remember the first time I heard about AFCU. I was so impressed that there was a group of alumni and friends that cared so much about the church, that they continued to give and serve, even after having left Paris. As Council Treasurer, I knew that without them, ACP would have had a very difficult time providing the many services and programs that they did.

I was honored when I was asked to join the Board 4 years ago. The more I learned about AFCU and got to know the people on the Board, the more impressed I was. The Board accomplishments and the passion of the members for all three churches is inspiring.

So, it is with great excitement, that I take on the role of President. I look forward to working with the new Officers and the Board to finish the implementation of the Strategic Imperatives that were identified last year. The best practices and initiatives will add to the Board's effectiveness and productivity in providing new levels of support to our three churches. Look for more information about the new initiatives and the vision for the future in the next Bridge.

Changes and transitions are happening at all 3 churches, as well. While church services may now be able to take place in person, there are still so many financial needs as a result of the pandemic. Any help you can give would be greatly appreciated. Please remember that contributions given through the AFCU, which is a 501 (c) (3) organization are tax deductible.

The last change I wanted to mention is that ACP has called a new Senior Pastor, thanks to the strong collaboration and hard work of the AFCU and ACP Search Committees. Both committees developed the job description including the qualifications. The AFCU committee spent months going through 75 applicant's files to triage the choices for the ACP Search Committee. The ACP team spent judicious time in the evaluation process and ultimately selecting the final candidate to recommend to the church. Congratulations to both teams for their diligence and great teamwork!

May the peace of Christ be with you,

Blessings,

KRIS RICHARDSON

AFCU President

NEW MEMBERS & BODs

The AFCU has embarked on exciting board member additions coupled with the Presidential leadership change. We thank the past leadership for their dedicated efforts in strengthening AFCU. We are adding critical talent in key positions, supplementing the experienced BOD's. In addition, we have added new BOD Officers to support the expanded strategic direction of the AFCU. Please be guided by the following BODs and Officer changes.

CHANGES AND MOVEMENTS

Changes

Ted Ziemann – Past President
Megan Foster – Past Secretary

Resignations

Betty Ziemann – Board Member
Roger Behrens – Associate Board Member
Rev Jack Hustad – Consultant

Join us in offering a big **THANK YOU** to all
for their years of service and support of the churches and AFCU.

NEW MEMBERS

Ardith Meier – Board Member – VCC – Alumni and Friends
Don Farnan – Board Member – ACP – New Development Chair, and ACP Liaison
Lori Roeller – Associate Board Member – ACP – Financial Secretary Assistant

OFFICERS 2021-2022

President	Kris Richardson Smith*
1st Vice President	David Moore*
2nd Vice President	Jon Voskuil*
Secretary	Lynda DeLuryea*
Treasurer	Julie Voskuil
Financial Secretary	Russ McNaughton

* Officer changes

A LITTLE ABOUT THE NEW MEMBERS AND WHY THEY JOINED THE BODs

DON FARNAN

I'm Don Farnan, a husband for 33 years, a father of three daughters and a fan of the outdoors, embarking on retirement after a career with PwC - one of the largest professional services firms in the world. My wife Cathy and I have lived in a few places in the US, as well as Tokyo Japan and most recently from 2016-2021 in Paris, France where we first came into contact with the American Church in Paris and shortly thereafter with the AFCU. I retire to new experiences effective July 1, 2021 and I'm joining the AFCU Board for several reasons. I grew in my knowledge of Jesus Christ's love for me during our years in Paris, I believe in the mission of ACP and in the loving and hopeful message that we as a Christian community can live and deliver to the world. I believe our youth are searching for God's messages of hope and love and at AFCU I can be a small part of bringing that message to those in need.

ARDITH J. MEIER

During my various sojourns to Vienna, especially from 1981-1992, when I was teaching at the University of Vienna, I discovered a meaningful place for spiritual growth at the VCC and also witnessed the important role such a church played in the lives of so many others. Since my return to the U.S. in 1992, I have made annual and biannual trips to Vienna, and my participation in worship services and other events at the VCC during those visits has served to underscore my conviction of the importance of churches such as the ACB, ACP, and VCC. I am humbled and honored, as an AFCU Board member, to serve in whatever way I can to support their missions.

LORI ROELLER

I was lucky to relocate to Paris with my parents in 1983, where I attended and graduated from the American School in Paris. During that time, I was involved with the American Church in Paris where one of my greatest memories was performing at the Sacré Cœur Basilica as a member of the Handbell Choir. I moved back to Minnesota to attend college at Concordia College in Moorhead. I have been married to my husband John for 23 years, living in Seattle for the last 21 years and where we have been raising our two high school aged daughters. I have recently started a new chapter in my life after working in the financial industry for thirty years. I am enjoying more free time with our kids, assisting my husband with his financial planning practice and volunteering in different roles. I look forward to my time as an AFCU Associate Board member working in a financial role to support the ongoing church ministries and communities that are so important all who participate.

NEW SENIOR PASTOR

By AFCU President, KRIS RICHARDSON

On behalf of the AFCU I welcome the Rev. Dr. Paul Rock as the new Senior Pastor of the American Church in Paris. Rev. Rock brings an exceptional educational and experiential background to this position along with strong interpersonal relationship skills. We are so pleased that he and his wife Stacey will be coming to Paris in August to begin his tenure as Senior Pastor.

Paul and Stacey leave Second Presbyterian Church, Kansas City, MO after 12 years of service as Senior Pastor. Previously Paul served six years as one of five Pastors at the 3,000 +member Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City, NY.

The Rocks have three adult children: Emily, a graduate student in Los Angeles; Nathan, a college sophomore in New York City and Claire, who will enter college in Boulder, CO. The family has a history of and love for vacation times in Europe. Paul and Stacey began their early outreach service in Budapest, Hungary with three years of teaching and as directors of expatriate teachers in Central Europe. They wholeheartedly welcome this spiritual call to Paris.

In answering a question about the characteristics of the church I would like to serve, Paul Rock stated; "I enjoy being part of a community that approaches today's challenge of being the church intelligently, intentionally and humbly". The AFCU is excited about and looks forward to welcoming Paul Rock as Senior Pastor of the American Church in Paris.

HAPPY 160th BIRTHDAY!

THE AMERICAN FOREIGN CHRISTIAN UNION

A SHORT HISTORY

The American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU) was formed in 1849 upon the merging of three complimentary missionary societies; the American Protestant Society; the Foreign Evangelical Society, and the Christian Alliance. Twelve years later, in 1861, the AFCU was incorporated in the state of New York. In this time period, missionary emphasis of American Protestant Christians was at a fever pitch and the AFCU was supported by many denominations and individuals.

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. In 1857 the AFCU received a charter from the government of Napoleon III and working with English speaking persons in Paris, founded the American Church in Paris. Since 1931, the ACP Building on the Quai d'Orsay has been its home, where it has welcomed thousands of members and visitors.

The American Church in Berlin (ACB) made first contact with the AFCU in 1889 and in 1914 the AFCU took on the responsibility for managing a fund to support the ACB. Prior to World War II, the church occupied a majestic building in central Berlin which was destroyed during the war. Following the war the church reopened in a chapel in the American sector in the southern part of Berlin. Also, many years after the war, the AFCU received reparations for the building and grounds destroyed during the war. In 2002 the church returned to central Berlin by obtaining the historic Luther Kirche.

In 2003 the Vienna Community Church (VCC) began a formal relationship with the AFCU. With help from the AFCU they were able acquire a space of the "meeting point" where they could center their activities. The VCC holds worship services at the "Stadt Kirche" near the center of Vienna.

2020 DONORS

Susan Aller
Augsburg Lutheran Church
James and Marilyn Ault
Robert and Ruth Bakke
Olaf and Kristin Luana Baumann
Charles & Jane L Beach
Michael and Dawn Benjamin
John and Lexie Benson
Thomas and Liz Benson
Rev Christine Blair
Kathryn Bogie
Pam Bohl
Tom and Nelle Bordeaux
James P and Robin Brady
Rev Elizabeth Brashear
Rev Alan and Gretchen Bray
Richard and Donna Bright
Charles T and Edda Brown
Philip and Roberta Brown
Francis & Kathleen Wessel Burgweger
Jerry and Pat Burns
Richard H. Bush
Margorie Calder
Donald and Ruth Campbell
Gary G. Carlson
Mark and Joni Carrier
Guy F and Donna Caruso
Guyle & Deborah Cavin
Margaret Laseter Clark
Helen B. Clarke
Allan R and Miriam Clayton
Ben McDonald Coltvet
Rev Benjamin and Margit Coltvet
Nathaniel and Beth Coltvet
Jonathan K and Cathryn L Costa
Brett and Cindy Craig
Jon Kyden Creekpau
Jonathan Cregg
Donna Colvill Crim
Walter and Patsy Ann Deitrich
Bob and Lynda DeLuryea
Katherine J Dierker
Robert W Dietz and Merryl Dale
Marilyn T Dikkers
Andrew T and Vicki Sue Duane
Gail Duggan
Maxine T Dunlop
Daniel & Cheryl Dunson
Kenneth & Jan Duvall
Peter Ehresmann Mary Claypool
Sylvia J Elton
Donald and Katherine Eppert
Barbara Evans
Caron and Floyd Farmer
Don and Catherine Farnan
Katherine W Farquhar
Barry E and Donna Ferguson
Norm and Adrienne Findley
Jonas and Brook Fischer
Rev Douglas and Rev Jodi Mullen Fondell
Megan & Gregory Foster
Brian and Tommi Fought
Charles and Mary Hovind Gay
Neil Gibson
Rosemarie Gift and Mantin Martin
Paul W Glewwe and Mary S. Yee
Stephanie Gober
John and Linda Goetz
P. Edwin Good Jr.

Charles P. Goodyear
James & Christina Greenfield
Herrick Griffen
Nate and Courtney Groves
Rev Karen Halac
Rev Don Hamilton
Rev Rick Hartman
Craig and Dorothy Jung Hedberg
Martha and Donald Herr
Robert Hinote
James and Marta Hobbs
F Galen and Hazel Hodge
Kenneth and Linda Holmen
Alan & Denise S. Holzhausen
Rev Jack and Helen Hustad
Alice Kienberger Iverson
Genet Jeanjean
Joseph Johnston
Dr. Larry and Carol Kalajainen
David Dietz and Jane A Kendall
Shem Krey and Alice Kern
Rev Janice E. Kibler
Lisa G Kimbro
Paul and Nola R Knouse
Clinton and Anne Knowles
Kathryn Koob
Christopher and Claire Kramme
Lowell B and Marilyn J Kramme
Henry W and Ruth Kreuter
Don and Sharon Krump
Judith Lange
Douglas W. and Cynthia Lawson
Ronan LeBras
Kathryn Lindquist
Kristina Lindstedt
Rev Odette and James Lockwood-Stewart
Michael R Porter Cheryl J Longtin
Rudolf and Carol Loperena
Geoffrey and Misun Lu
Joseph and Karen Luquire
Morgann Lyles
William and Luz MacArthur
Lita MacDonald
Gregory and Maryanne Macris
Sandra D Marchese
John Martin
Ellen J Maycock
Marissa McCants
Roselyn McKeown-Ice
Kitty McKinsey
Douglas and Lisa McLaughlin
Russell and Carol McNaughton
Ardith J. Meier
Serle Mosoff and JoAnn Messina
Calvin Marshall Mew
Daniel F and Francine M Michalek
Eugene A. and Lois A. Miller
Laurana R Mitchelmore
David and Laura Moore
Janice Moore
Richard H & Cynda P Morehead
Richard Morford
Bruce and Nancy Morgan
Pamela Morris
Debbie Kinzer and Andrew Craig Morrison
Marilyn & Stuart Morrison
Gary and Barb Mutz
Donald and Ruth Myers
Leslie G. & Carol L. Nelson
John C. and Marie Snider O'Donnell
Jeffrey and Linda Olesen
Mary Beth Olombel

Esohe E. Omoruyi
Frank and Amy Parker
Joe and Diana Parker
Brian and Almuth Payne
Vida Peckham
Allen J Pepper
William J Peters
Mark and Mary Peterson
Wesley M and Wendi Pirkle
Curt and Kristin Eldridge Plyler
Rev. Lewis and Pat Poag
George and Lucreta Pope
Michael L and M. Arlene Porter
Rev Jeff and Alba Powell
Jason Pratt and Jennifer Cavanaugh
Christopher and Laetitia Pruszek
John and Norma Puckett
Eunice Raar
Richard and Elizabeth Rand
I. Fitzgerald II Reist
Resurrection Lutheran Church
Kris and John Smith Richardson-Smith
Evangeline Rimbach
Kenneth and Marcia Rislov
Wesley and Sida Roberts
Rev Paul and Eleanor Robinson
Kenneth T. Rock
Don Rohrer
Edward and Kathy Ruse
Gary Schieneman and Susan Fisher
Pamela and Ken W Schulz
Brooke and Kari Schumm
Dr. Michael and Rev. Carol Simpson
David R. and Deborah Smidt
Dustin and Jody Smith
Jennifer Sorrentino
Rick Stegall
W Bradley and Carolyn Stensland
David and Pamela Stitely
Darrell Strobel
Dean and Dorothy Swanson
Vandoster and Evangelyn Tabb
Rev. Charles J. & Sharon Taylor
Andrew Teng
A. J. and Ashley Thomas
Guerry R Thornton, JR.
Bedford and Carol Transou
Richard R Tremain
Elna Tsao
Edward & Katherine Vandenameele
David A Vanko and Carol Appleby
Virginia D Vonreichbauer
Jon and Julie Voskuil
Lyle Voskuil
Robert Wesley
William & Gail Weyerhaeuser
Marleigh and David Van Cleve White
Phyllis Whitten
Rev James and Luray Wiberg
Phyllis Lake Wieser
Stephen Wilkowski
Jonathon Reid and Laura E Williamson
Peter D Wilson
Rev Tom and Grace Wilson
Carl R III and M Kathleen Woodward
Ted and Betty Ziemann
Dr. Karen Fanta Zumbrunn

THANK YOU ALL

AMERICAN CHURCH IN PARIS

VOCARE, TO BE CALLED

By Interim Senior Pastor, ODETTE LOCKWOOD-STEWART

Writer Annie Dillard describes vocation as shaping us through the challenges that change us: “In working class France, when an apprentice got hurt, or when he got tired, the experienced workers said, ‘It is the trade entering his body.’”

For Christians in community, when we experience hurt or weariness for the sake of the Gospel, it is also our vocation entering our bodies. Vocation, for followers of Jesus, vocare, to be called, is not a simple one-time decision. Challenges change us and shape community. In this extraordinary season of pandemic our vocation is entering the Body of Christ at the American Church in Paris.

It has been my privilege to accompany this congregation in a year of great transition and challenge. This is a moment in which God is shaping this community to fulfill our calling, to witness by word and deed to the love of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ as a Beacon on the Seine.

RE-GATHERING AT ACP

French passion for and commitment to holidays, even religious holidays, is wondrous in the nation of laïcité. In the month of May, Ascension Day and Pentecost are both national holidays. As Paris begins to reopen, we reopen to the power and presence of new life in Christ Jesus in community.

On Pentecost Sunday, ACP will return to our magnificent sanctuary for two worship services. Though numbers will be limited to 300 total people each week, and preregistration will be required, we praise God that ACP will be able to live stream our 11h traditional worship service weekly beginning Pentecost Sunday! We will begin simply at first as we improve our infrastructure and build our team.

We praise God for leadership of Teteh Atikpo and Marta Hobbs. Contemporary worship in the sanctuary at 14h begins again after many months. “Called!” has also begun, a new weekly series of 10-minute devotions from ACP’s Contemporary Worship Team, under the leadership of Natalie Raynal. Join

us for worship, live streamed, online devotions, and in person!
www.acparis.org

The transformative work of Audio-Visual Ministry for the present and future of ACP’s mission and ministry is being led by the work of a team of seventeen people and has been enthusiastically approved by the AFCU Board! More on this from Don Farnan in this issue of The Bridge.

GOSPEL WELCOME AT ACP

In 2018 Church Council formed a Welcome and Inclusion Task Force under the pastoral leadership of Scott Herr. After over two years of prayer, Scripture study, listening, work, writing, inviting, training, expanding, this spring, the Church Council adopted an Affirmation of Welcome and Inclusion at the American Church in Paris. On 2 and 9 May, this affirmation was introduced to the congregation as ACP launched a journey of congregational conversations as we seek to live into the Gospel Welcome of Jesus in a world of difference.

*Welcome one another, therefore,
just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

Romans 15:7

GOD’S CALLING OF A NEW SENIOR PASTOR FOR ACP

Vocation is not willfulness, it is listening!

For a year, the ACP and AFCU search committees have listened to God’s calling through a rigorous process of prayer, search and discernment. On 30 May, the fulfillment of that deep listening and due diligence will come as a special meeting of the ACP congregation will be introduced to and vote on the candidate recommended by the ACP Search Committee to be called as the new Senior Pastor of the American Church in Paris.

Interim Ministry turns to transition as we prepare with prayer and praise to welcome a new Senior Pastor and a new season of mission and ministry at ACP.



ACP and Eiffel Tower

ACP and Eiffel Tower



Live stream rehearsal



AMERICAN CHURCH IN PARIS

AUDIO VISUAL MINISTRY PROJECT

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT AT ACP AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

At the core of ACP's ministry is world class worship and music. We seek to bring **God's Word to our faithful congregation**, the citizens of Paris and a growing community of followers around the world. **We must replace the obsolete, inadequate Sound & Light systems.**

- We must **replace the 1930's lighting** in the Sanctuary to reveal the magnificence of ACP's stained glass windows and arched ceilings! And to enable the community and music leaders to read and sing!

- We must upgrade the sound so our congregation **can hear Scripture, prayers, and sermons!** And build **flexibility** for different music styles at three different services allowing **contemporary worship** to continue to bring this ministry to new generations of Christians. And facilitate **concerts, Christian conferencing, lectures and more!**

We must seize the outreach opportunity for live streaming and digital ministry to grow and thrive - to the glory of God as a teaching arts and worshiping faith center in Paris!

DETAILS OF LIGHTING, SOUND AND LIVE-STREAMING

New Lighting to enhance worship, concerts and other events

The beautiful sanctuary of the American Church in Paris is an exquisite example of neo gothic architecture, complete with remarkable stained-glass windows, a vaulted brick ceiling, dark oak furnishings and a marble altar and chancel floor. Unfortunately, the lighting dates from the 1930s and lacks the effectiveness and versatility for the current and future needs of this magnificent space.

The chandeliers block the view of the beautiful stained-glass windows, including the Tiffany windows in the side aisles. Removal of the chandeliers and installation of a variety of luminaries transform the sanctuary. Low glare lighting will enable the congregation to see throughout the church, spotlights directed upward that will enhance the beauty of the beams in the ceiling, and spotlights and other enhancements will accentuate the pianist, instrumentalists and vocalists or the choir. This system will be flexible/adjustable and controlled electronically, enabling variations in colors and beam strength to enhance each worship service or performance. Fred Gramann created 14 different scenarios (traditional worship

with congregation and choir, contemporary worship, concerts, etc.) that lighting architects have used to design a complete solution. Plus!- we will install external lighting that lights the Rose, Resurrection and the other stained-glass windows from the outside. Imagine being in the sanctuary for an evening concert, looking up and enjoying the beauty! The Gospel story will be illumined night or day.

New Sound so we can hear sermons and prayer music and provide a foundation for live streaming

Installing an improved sound system covering all spaces used for worship (Sanctuary, including the balcony, the Narthex, the Chapel and the Theatre) will enhance live and virtual experiences at ACP. This:

- Enables our congregation to clearly hear God's word and sermons without strain and stress
- Enhances the contemporary worship band in all zones as we build this worship community
- Increases the flexibility of providing sound for three different worship styles during our three different Sunday services
- Provides the opportunity to attract other high quality contemporary musicians to perform concerts in our sanctuary

Imagine – no more struggling to hear the sermon! Imagine being able to distinctively hear the flute, guitars, drums and other instruments of a contemporary worship concert by our award-winning Christian musicians! The design, quality of equipment, and technical capacity will utilize the acoustics and enhance the aesthetics of our historic building.

Live-streaming is an opportunity to cultivate our congregation and grow!

Live-streaming is just one part of the overall plan and strategy, but one that is now more crucial than ever.

We will livestream Sunday services - bringing powerful messages with close-up visuals and multiple angles with beautiful lighting, and with mics and integrated sound to give the feeling of being right in the sanctuary. Hopefully, you have had the opportunity to participate in some of our prerecorded Sunday worship services and we hope you are able to continue to do so! Imagine being able to watch and listen to Sunday worship live at ACP (although early am in the US!) but also live-streamed concerts, weddings and other events! This is a time

for ACP to generate and share content which can also cultivate giving from new sources and places to build a strong base for communications for the next phase in the life of ACP. We need to do so with excellence, sustainability, and a vision for future growth.

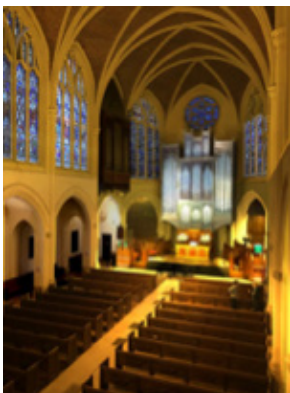
“Live-streaming is more than an obligation to our church family. It is also an opportunity to expand our reach — which translates into new membership, more giving and sharing the love of Christ with more people. We now have a chance to introduce our church, our community, our city to people all over the world — even those who might never set foot in our beautiful Quai d’Orsay building or visit France. If we can touch their hearts, connect and engage them, we can also build our church family.”

Pastor Odette-Lockwood Stewart

Below are just three pictures to give you a sense of the improved aesthetics of the change. These small pictures don’t do justice to the amazing difference this lighting will make to enhance all of the worship services and events at ACP.



The current sanctuary – it is beautiful, but the 1930’s lighting blocks the Rose and other windows as well as the organ.



After we incorporate the new lighting – you can see the Rose window and organ in this architectural rendering!



An architectural rendering of the lighting for a concert pianist in the evening!

STATUS OF THE AUDIO VISUAL PROJECT

This project has been studied and evaluated and reevaluated for years. Over the last year we updated the assessment of our needs, solicited multiple bids, visited churches and theaters in which potential vendors have previously installed systems, seen and listened to equipment demonstrations from potential vendors, and performed other diligence. We assessed and reassessed costs of the project and have considered funding sources.

At the April 16-17 AFCU meeting, the Board of the AFCU approved the project for moving forward!

NEXT STEPS

ACP is currently in the process of hiring a project manager to oversee the finalization of bids, coordination of vendors and installation. The ACP pastoral team, our music ministry teams led by Fred Gramann and contemporary music by Natalie McConnell are excited that this project has begun and we hope to have it installed in time for Christmas 2021 (God willing and COVID-19 allowing).

Please pray for ACP’s Audio Visual Ministry Project. We are responding to a strong call to build a foundation for ministry to flourish for many years to come.

If you would like more information on the project, please reach out to Don Farnan, dfarnan002@gmail.com. We are grateful to God and to all at the AFCU, along with alums and visitors to ACP for your generous support throughout the years. We are working out the best ways to support ACP on this project. If you are excited about this project and would like to donate to the ACP Audio Visual Ministry Project, please reach out to AFCUTreasurer@afcubridge.org

AMERICAN CHURCH IN BERLIN

DAWNING OF NEW DAYS

By Pastor MARI THORKELSON

Prayer of the Day

Finish each day and be done with it.
You have done what you could.
Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in;
forget them as soon as you can.
Tomorrow is a new day.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Thank God for the dawning of new days. After three years at the American Church in Berlin, often wanting to clean out my office yet feeling that I lacked the time during this period of COVID restrictions, I discovered that wasn't the reason.

Lightheartedness and humor have been essential coping tools for making it through these tough times which included a cold spring in Berlin. Another essential is self-care. It's harder to do when the hairdresser's shop is closed, your gym and spa can't open, even your favorite meal at a good restaurant is not available to you. That really emphasizes the "self" in self-care. Thankfully, the time to imagine, walk, read, reflect and pray are still available and have become good friends.

A bright spot at ACB is the addition of new staff. Our new part-time organist, Janis Peelmanis from Latvia, has added unimagined color and sound to our delight and worship experience. Since the organ is the instrument of this year 2021 in Germany, he has made a proposal to include the following: set up a project team, address organ repairs; seek global patrons, initiate online events and fundraisers, regular organ concerts with guests, integrate Praise Band and streaming equipment and more.

Maria King from Los Angeles, living in Germany for the last eight years, began in March as our office manager. She brings solid organizational and financial skills as well as a fresh team spirit accompanied by her musical qualities as a supreme whistler and soloist. She has already graced our worship with her presence. From the start, she tackled her first AFCU meeting, Grant accounting, our ACB audit, an annual report and is still smiling.

Eva Diestel, our high tech director of the Praise Band who also managed the streaming project so masterfully (and we are so thankful to AFCU), is working additional office hours assisting worship administration and hybrid technology. She also initiated a Reopening Task Force to organize the re-start of in-person worship and health/safety protocols.

Worship, the core of ACB's spiritual life, has been via zoom since 31 January 2021. We plan our next in-person indoor service for Sunday, 13 June followed by a congregational meeting. Having received approval for outdoor services through August, we hope to take advantage of good weather and God's magnificent creation whenever possible.

I wish to say a minimum of words here since photos tell a more interesting ACB story.

As we hope we are nearing the end of restrictions for travel here in Germany, my husband Patrick put up the world map on our kitchen wall, and then gave me a dart and said – "throw this, and wherever it lands, that's where I'm taking you when this pandemic ends." Turns out, we're spending two weeks behind the fridge.

AMERICAN CHURCH IN BERLIN

ENDOWMENT FUND CAMPAIGN

The American Church in Berlin is located in the heart of the city and serves a highly diverse population including many immigrants from around the world. The ministry of that church fills a need that provides comfort and a sanctuary for all people within that great city.

As we enter the season of Pentecost and the presence of the Holy Spirit among us, we are drawn to the ministry of the American Church in Berlin. Jesus said right before the Spirit was given: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink." (John 7:37b-38a). By the power of the Holy Spirit, ACB is an oasis in a desert, a place of welcome, love and grace. This is why we are passionate about our desire to see that ministry continue into the future through the help of the Endowment Fund.

To support this ministry, the AFCU gave formal approval to conduct a Capital Campaign to add funds to the ACB Endowment Fund which exclusively supports the ministry and mission of the Berlin church. That approval took place on October 16, 2020 at the Fall meeting of the AFCU Board. The Public Phase of the Campaign then started in earnest and over 120 constituents were contacted by letter and telephone.

Prior to the Public Phase approval, a study of the financial needs of the church was undertaken as well as a study of the feasibility of conducting a successful campaign. Seed money from lead donors was obtained during the study.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Campaign and have provided financial gifts. The total of donations received to date is \$459,352. With a minimum objective of \$500,000, we are close to meeting that objective at this early stage of the Campaign. Our expectation is to reach \$600,000 before the Campaign ends on 12-31-22. We invite you to help us reach that new objective.

The funds we have collected have already been put to work in the form of a distribution from the earnings of the Endowment Fund. Those monies have been used to support the ministry of the church. This has been especially important during the past year when church revenue has fallen short due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

Thank you to all the Friends of the American Church in Berlin for your help and for keeping the church in your prayers.

VIENNA COMMUNITY CHURCH

My maternal grandfather was a master carpenter. He started his apprenticeship during WWI, making caskets that her fervently hoped would be used as horse troughs. Later, he went to work for an international hotel chain, making and repairing furniture throughout his long career. He was a craftsman.

I, on the other hand, took after my father's side. My father was not what we would call mechanically adept. When I was four, he had the neighbour build a Tinkertoy wheelbarrow, and had it glued together, because he knew there was no way he could put it back together if it fell apart. I inherited his relative lack of mechanical skill. Which is why it is ironic, and awkward, that I have been spending most of my days this month out at the cabin, doing things like building shelves, chopping wood, and using chainsaws.

My maternal grandfather, Dick, would have called that "learning to use your left hand." He believed that in order to be fully adept in life, at whatever your vocation was, you had to develop your least skilled skills. If you could hammer accurately, you needed to know how to do that with your shadow hand, because life was going to require that of you at some point. You can't always rest on your strengths.

Here, in the churches of the AFCU, we've been learning with our left hands. We didn't expect to be techno-ministers. We didn't plan on running worship from our home office, and we certainly didn't plan to become expert in microphone voices, camera angles, and lighting. We've been left-handing for a while. At the VCC, we still carry all our tech in an oversized rucksack (since we have to set up after the host church has finished their service). We deploy our cameras, our multiple microphones, our HDMI and USB and PowerLine and ThunderFlash cables in order to do what we've always done: administer the sacraments and try to discern the Word of God for today, for here.

It's been awkward, at times (When we can't get any sound, no matter how many times we bash on the keyboard). It's been exhilarating, at times (when our tech host nails with it with an awesome video). It's been touching at times (when we went into breakout rooms on our Zoom worship to be in close contact with one another). It's been thrilling at times (when our worship leader sings us into prayer from her desktop). It's been left-handing, all the way.

I can't pretend I'm always comfortable with this. I'm not comfortable with the fact that it takes me thirty hours to make a simple bookshelf, either. Or that I would prefer to chop down a tree with an axe, because I can't figure out how to make the chain saw work. But ... left-handing is about being uncomfortable for the sake of growth. For the sake of humility. For the sake of community.

We were never called, nor expected, nor equipped, to be perfect:

A high school stage play is more polished than this service we have been rehearsing since the year one. In two thousand years, we have not worked out the kinks. We positively glorify them. Week after week we witness the same miracle: that God is so mighty he can stifle his own laughter. Week after week, we witness the same miracle: that God, for reasons unfathomable, refrains from blowing our dancing bear act to smithereens. Week after week Christ washes the disciples' dirty feet, handles their very toes, and repeats, It is all right -- believe it or not -- to be people.

"Who can believe it?"

Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, p. 20

"This month, we returned to live worship in the church, while still reaching out to our widespread community via Zoom. We are able now to be "singing inside our masks" which is a real joy. The last Friday in May, we hosted the "Long Night of the Churches" as in former years, with cookies, soloists, and blessings for those who were touring the churches throughout the evening.

Our Board volunteers have held their positions through the pandemic, and we are now going through the process of bringing in new volunteers and allowing some to pull back from the extra duties taken on during our lockdown period. We are looking forward to our congregational meeting as we make decisions for the future: what do we keep, what do we recycle or reuse, what new directions are we going in?"

Peace be with you all.

REV. DR. NEIL PARKER

Interim Pastor, Vienna Community Church

2021 TAX BENEFITS

TAX BENEFITS FOR CHARITABLE GIVING: You can make a difference for the American & Foreign Christian Union and our churches in Europe AND receive added tax benefits in 2021. The **CARES Act 2021** provides easy tax saving incentives:

1. **Anyone** can make a gift of \$300 and claim it on taxes even without itemizing (\$600 for a couple).
2. **If you are 72**, you must take the required minimum distribution (RMD) from your IRA in 2021 – required distributions were only waived for 2020. When you direct your financial institution to send the RMD directly to the AFCU, your gift lowers your taxable income and you provide support to our wonderful churches!
3. **For those who itemize their deductions**, the charitable contribution limitation has been extended for 2021. The limitation for cash contributions, formerly set at 60%, is now being raised to 100% of an individual's adjusted gross income (AGI). This means donors who itemize their deductions can now give more before reaching their AGI limitation.

Please contact your professional advisors for more detailed information.

If you need more information about making a gift to the AFCU, visit our website, AFCUbridge.org

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

Kris Richardson

AFCUPresident@afcubridge.org

Treasurer, AFCU

Julie Voskuil

AFCUTreasurer@afcubridge.org