

AMERICAN AND FOREIGN CHRISTIAN UNION

# The Bridge

CONNECTING OUR CHURCHES AND FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD



WINTER 2021

# PRESIDENTIAL UPDATE



Dear Christian Friends,

Our Fall meeting was held via Zoom on November 5-6. It was wonderful to have 40+ members on each day of the meeting and for a total of 50 different attendees over the course of the meeting. I am constantly amazed by the generosity of our Board members with their time, talents, and treasures. It's a pleasure to work with each of them to spread the gospel through the support of our 3 international churches.

Over the past 2 years, the Board has been working to define and implement a 5-year Strategic plan. The plan revolves around a key objective for AFCU to become a more effective organization in supporting our International American churches. A strategic Imperatives study was initiated in 4 areas:

1. Review and Renew the AFCU organization
2. Expand the Financial base
3. Communications
4. Expand our mission of supporting and sharing the gospel

We defined concrete actions to take in each area which resulted in many new best practices to be implemented and a new organizational structure to highlight Development. The structure, which involved a new position of 2nd Vice President and the expansion of our development committees, was put into place during the spring meeting.

In our recent meeting, it was exciting to see how the new best practices will be implemented and to approve the 2022 preliminary goals and actions plans of the Leadership team, various standing committees, and the new Development structure. The Development goals and plans are highlighted in a separate section of this issue's Bridge to give you an idea of the actions being taken.

To implement the overall objective of being a highly effective board, the Board must have leaders in development and actively engaged members. The Membership team has identified a series of actions such as training programs and establishing a membership pipeline to accomplish these objectives. At the same time, they have identified immediate needs for members and volunteers that are interested in key areas such as development and communications. If you, or someone you know, might be interested, please contact me at [AFCUPresident@afcupbridge.org](mailto:AFCUPresident@afcupbridge.org).

Times are still tough for our churches. Rentals and events such as weddings and concerts are down, causing huge challenges for the churches while Sunday attendance is still transitioning. If you have the ability to help financially, please consider doing so. Every donation helps the churches maintain their programs which are so important to the community. Contributions you make through the AFCU, a 501(c)(3) organization, are tax deductible.

Finally, there are a few pastoral transitions that I would like to bring to your attention. We want to thank Rev Dr Odette Lockwood-Stewart Odette for her excellent service and dedication to ACP as Interim Senior Pastor. While the congregation was sorry to see Odette and her husband Jim leave this summer, they eagerly welcomed Rev Dr. Paul Rock, as their new Senior Pastor in September. We are happy to welcome Paul, as well, and look forward to working with him. Lastly, ACB pastor, Rev Dr Mari Thorkelson has resigned effective November 30, 2021. Many thanks go to Mari for her service to AFCU and ACB. ACB has identified an Interim Senior Pastor and plans to start the search for a new pastor shortly. Please keep ACP and ACB in your prayers as they work through these transitions.

May the peace of Christ be with you,

Blessings,

**KRIS RICHARDSON**

**AFCU President**



# FALL BOARD MEETING



# AFCU BOARD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**By Jon Voskuil**

This past year the AFCU identified a strategic need to restructure its approach to development and fund raising. This strategic board objective is critical to the AFCUs ability to continue to support and serve the Paris, Berlin and Vienna congregations in their respective missions. As a result, a new structure was put into place in the second half of the year and is beginning to bear fruit.

This new approach called for the creation of the a Development Leadership Team (DLT), composed of the five main Standing Committee Chairs and facilitated by an Executive Team Leader. Working as One Team, we are busy exploring new funding sources, improving our data and information systems and enhancing our processes to better enfold church alumni into the AFCU family. We are proactively assisting churches in developing their strategies and identifying their funding needs while also improving our communications about the AFCU organization. Finally, we continue to nurture and engage our core base of loyal supporters through our annual campaigns.

We will also have more intentional goals and planning for our integrated Fund Raising and donor management efforts. Next year, in 2022, we have set a goal to raise \$425k in total donations, a 6% increase over 2021. This funding level will be a critical support for our churches who will be entering a post-Covid recovery period.

We would like to thank you directly for your support, whether long-standing or recent, as your generosity is directly helping our member churches share the gospel of Christ and minister to local congregations and communities in Berlin, Paris and Vienna!

# EXISTING AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

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## EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

The most important thing our AFCU Board does each year is to thank our beloved and loyal supporters especially those here in the United States that are away from our three churches. We do that each fall appropriately around Thanksgiving by making every effort to talk to each of the hundreds of supporters throughout the US. Each board member takes upon themselves a list of eight to ten supporter and calls those for which we have phone numbers, emails those for which we have Internet addresses or hand writes a personal thank you to those we have only home addresses. For our loyal supporters, those that help our churches year after year, we ensure the same board member, friend or family member on the board thanks them. This is a most fulfilling activity for each board member and is appreciated by our supporters. These activities, which we call our AFCU Fall Thank-A-Thon, activities allows us to personally maintain contact and show our sincere appreciate for the supporters' gifts and prayers. Again, we thank all you out there that support our three churches and their essential ministries to their congregations and communities. Bless you.

**By Don Krump**

## NEW DEVELOPMENT

The vision for the New Development team is to identify, explore and implement new sources of funding for the AFCU and the three churches it supports, and over time contribute to sustainable relationships and sources of funding for them. We are focused on new sources that are consistent with supporting the ministries of the three churches, in Christ's name. The world is changing rapidly and so we will try non-traditional approaches as well as new twists on successful historical sources of funding. We will focus on not just ideas that work, but those that have the most impact, including leveraging the best idea across the three churches. First actions are crowdfunding and mission trips from home churches.

Have a great idea?

**Contact Don Farnan, John Benson or Ken Rislov.**

**By Don Farnan**

# CHURCH, COMMUNICATIONS, AND SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

## CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

By Jane Kendall

Our liaison team, one Board representative for each church, has the role of partnering with the churches to continually review and rework each church's Strategic Plan as needed. With the "new normal" we envision in a post-pandemic era, (if that arrives,) we know that our plans from two years ago will be modified. These modifications will impact budgeting, fundraising, communications, and many other facets of our AFCU roles. With new pastors in all three churches in 2022, we look forward in great anticipation to working with this new leadership.

Our team is composed of Kate Koob for VCC, Russ McNaughton for ACB, and Jane Kendall for ACP.

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## COMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT

By Brett Craig

The communications team is revamping its mission to ensure the AFCU communication strategies align with Christ's Kingdom and missionary support of the three churches. The team is modifying AFCU's relevance through enhanced branding, charitable significance, and communication tactics wholly aligning with the ever-changing donor environment. This mission will ensure AFCU center's its efforts on both the short and long term needs of the churches.

We have identified 4 donor segments and are formulating appropriate channel communication strategies for each segment.

**EXISTING**—AFCU board members, AFCU board member affiliates and (ACP, ACB, VCC) church members

**OPPORTUNITY**—Participants in church sponsored or rented functions, wedding's, concert's, etc.

**REACHING**—Loosely aligned affiliates via AFCU board members; US church's, friends and family, etc.

**WIDE**—Cause-based related contributors.

Our team members are Jim Hobbs, Don Krump, John Smith and Jody Smith

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## SYSTEMS AND TOOLS DEVELOPMENT

By Nate Groves

The Systems and Tools Committee exists to support all of the other development committees with their key systems and tools requirements. Over the next year, this committee's main focus will be on the AFCU's donor management software. We are looking at our current systems and documenting the current state processes and pain points. Then, we are documenting the strategic requirements for our future state donor management system. After this, we'll look at possible donor systems for the AFCU. If we decide to move forward with a new system, we'll convert data and start using the new system sometime in 2022.

# TREASURES

# FINANCIAL REPORT

By Julie Voskuil

At our recent annual meeting, the AFCU board approved a budget that includes support commitments to each of the three member churches. We have committed to supporting the Vienna Community Church in the amount of \$45,430; the American Church in Berlin in the amount of \$80,000; and the American Church in Paris in the amount of \$350,000. To fund these commitments, we need continuing support from our donors. The AFCU is run entirely by volunteer board members. Each board member also contributes financially to the AFCU.

The AFCU also supports the churches through periodic special fund-raising projects. During 2021, we helped the American Church in Berlin purchase new audio-visual streaming equipment to support their virtual church programs. We have also been fund raising for wonderful new sound, light, and audio-visual improvements in Paris. In past years, the AFCU helped the Vienna Community Church purchase and improve the VCC Meeting Point.

Russ McNaughton and Julie Voskuil handle the accounting and financial reporting roles as volunteer board members. We have each been members of the American Church in Paris. Russ has been an AFCU board member for more than 30 years. Julie has been an AFCU board and associate board member for 16 years. She has served as the AFCU treasurer for eight years.

We both appreciate the mission of the churches we support in Europe. We also enjoy getting to know the donors who share our commitment to these churches. We enjoy the notes we receive and contacts we have with many of you. Encourage your family and friends to worship with these churches when they travel. It's amazing the friends that are made even from a single visit.

# HERITAGE SOCIETY AND FOUNDATION

By Dustin Smith

During our time in Paris, the American Church was a vital part of life for my wife, Jody, and me. In many circumstances, it was a life saver as we tried to navigate a new culture, new language, and new overall experience. We were surrounded by Christian believers in a place that felt like home. ACP held a special place in our hearts and in our lives while we were living in Europe and that has remained true even after we returned back to the US. I am confident that many of you reading this article will share a similar sentiment based on your experiences whether that be at the American Church in Berlin, at the Vienna Community Church, or at the American Church in Paris.

But how do we even begin to give back and say thank you? We do this through praying for the AFCU and our member churches, through our financial gifts that we make periodically, and making the AFCU a beneficiary in our will and estate plans. We want future generations to be inspired, as we were, by the Christian leadership in the church, the diversity and willingness to share and work together by members and friends of each congregation, and the comfort of being part of an international church family. Of course, there are many other reasons, and every person's experience is unique. Nevertheless, we want these Christian experiences to be available for current and future generations.

What memories do you look back on with fondness from your time in one of our member churches? How did the church impact your life, strengthen your faith, bring you closer to our Savior, and encourage you to go out and be His hands and feet? In order to ensure that others after us have a similar experience, please consider becoming a member of the AFCU Heritage Society through an estate gift to the American and Foreign Christian Union to support the American Church in Berlin, the American Church in Paris, or the Vienna Community Church.

I want to thank you all for your ongoing support of our efforts along with a special thank you to those who have become members of the Heritage Society. Your involvement is making our mission of supporting the ministries of our member churches possible.

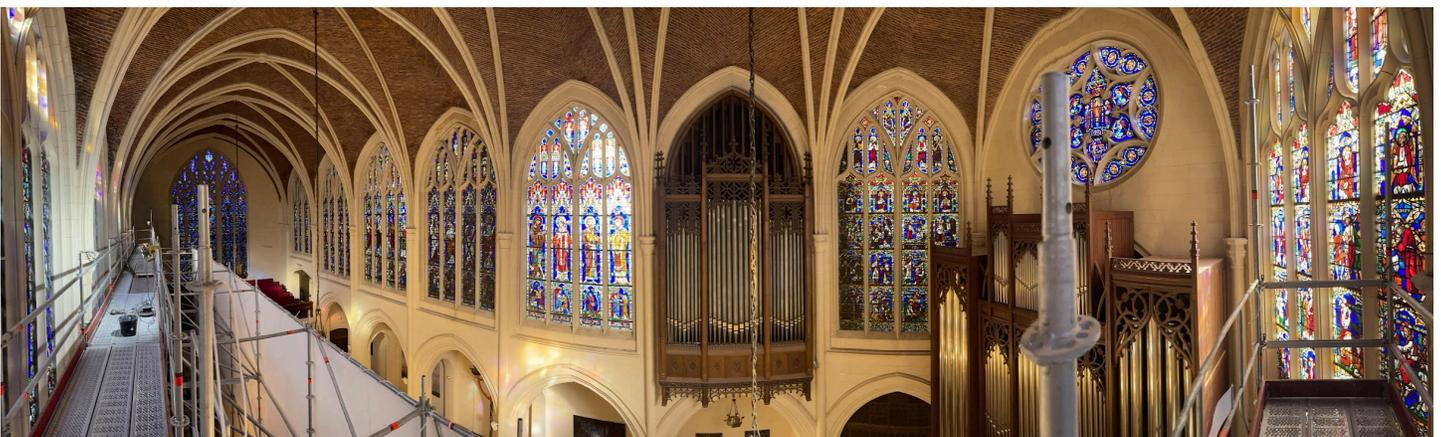
More information can be found on our website: [WWW.AFCUBRIDGE.ORG](http://WWW.AFCUBRIDGE.ORG). Go to the "SUPPORT THE AFCU" tab at the top and click on "THE HERITAGE SOCIETY". Also, feel free to email me at [afcuheritage@afcubridge.org](mailto:afcuheritage@afcubridge.org). If you wish to call me, my cell phone is 614-530-2307. I will be happy to talk to you at any time.

## AUDIO VISUAL MINISTRY PROJECT SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT AT ACP AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

By Don Farnan

ACP currently expects the new sound and lighting systems will be mostly installed within the ACP sanctuary in time for the December 11 concert. The congregation will then be able to hear scripture, prayers, sermons and music with vastly improved clarity and resonance. The lighting will enhance worship and concert attendees will see spotlighted world class musicians at the returning ACP Christmas concert on December 11! The sound, video and lighting will be in place to support ACP's vision for renovating and rebuilding the post-pandemic church! You can watch videos to learn more – listen to Fred and Natalie describe ongoing activities and history at <https://www.acparis.org>.

All of ACP is grateful for the support of AFCU and excited for the new possibilities for delivering inspiring worship and music. The total current estimated cost is \$840,000 including an estimate for uncertainties until the project is completed (some delayed lighting will be installed in February 2022). While we have raised a large amount, there are still funds to be raised before we are fully funded. If you are excited about this project and would like to donate, please reach out to [AFCUTreasurer@afcubridge.org](mailto:AFCUTreasurer@afcubridge.org).



Pictures above show the scaffolding at ACP as installation progresses

## PRODUCING MORE FRUIT (AND THE PRUNING THAT GETS US THERE)

By Paul Rock

Three months. That's what it's been – three months since we dropped off our youngest at CU Boulder and boarded a one-way flight to Charles De Galle and the American Church in Paris. What an amazing journey it's been. On the one hand, it feels like Stacey and I have been here three weeks. So many feelings, so much has happened, and we're learning and taking in so much - it's been an absolute rush. On the other hand, it feels like we've been here for years – and that's because this feels so much like home. We love it. And a lot of that has to do with the gracious and generous community that has welcomed us like family. And it helps to have a clear sense that this is exactly where we're supposed to be. Thanks be to God.

Many of you have been to or lived in Paris, so you know it's an enchanting city. But like many cities, the pandemic was especially difficult for Paris and Parisians. Our arrival at ACP coincided with the most recent attempt to “re-open” and gather in person. So, far, so good. But we shall see. One of the ways I've been trying to get to know individuals and families is through one hour Zoom meet and greets with random folks from the congregation. No more than 10 can sign up for each meeting and we spend time simply introducing ourselves, talking about what “home” means to us and how church can and should be different in our post-pandemic world. The stories of loss have been poignant, but so has the very real sense that we will not return to normal. We will emerge and re-build ACP differently, with even more attention to caring for one another, making sure all stories are heard and shared and finding new ways to connect and to embody the good news of God's love for all.

Our series for the year “Renovating and Re-building the Post Pandemic Church” is not just a sermon series on Acts, it's a dialogue with the Spirit, the early church and each other that we all expect will leave us different. The fact is, we don't really have a choice. The financial losses we've experienced due to the steep fall of in wedding and rental income, combined with the diminished capability for many in the congregation to give, is forcing us to re-group, prune and re-think every one of our ministries. The introduction of live streaming and zoom has allowed us

to connect and study, build relationships and worship in ways we never could have imagined before – across the city and across oceans. We will invest in improving and better utilizing those tools. And the inequities exposed by both pandemics – COVID and climate change – are calling us to focus on God's mission to care for God's hungry children, refugees and the marginalized on our streets and in our community.

And yet, I've been surprised, week in and week out, by the persistent peace and joy that has made this transition (so far) filled with grace and hope. The words of Jesus from the 15th chapter of John's gospel have echoed in my soul. Jesus is the vine, we are the branches and God is the Gardner, pruning the branches that produce fruit with the reminder that “if you remain in me and I in you, you will bear more fruit; while apart from me you can do nothing.” In this season, our job is to remain in Christ and lean into the important and slow work of pruning, adjusting and rebuilding the post pandemic church – which, in time, will bear much fruit. Honestly, the persistent but moving scaffolding (trellis?) in our beautiful sanctuary has been a constant reminder of God's hand at work in this awkward and important time.

As we adapt, sit in new places, worship in new ways, make adjustments and accommodate God's work in our midst, my prayer is that we would all really, truly be open to the new thing that Christ is seeking to build within and among us. Because here's the thing I've learned so far from the first chapters of Acts, and in 30 years in church leadership: When God actually does new, bigger and more holy things in the church, it is uncomfortable, we don't like it and some of us won't agree (at first) with it. But quickly or eventually, we will learn that it is fruitless to fight with God. Better to yield, breathe, shift and know that new growth will come – differently and more beautifully than we could have imagined.

Friends, may God give us the fortitude and faith to stay curious, to sit with the uncomfortable, and remain open to the new thing The Spirit is doing in her Church. We're going to love it.



## FROM TRANSITION TO TRANSFORMATION

By Denise Banks-Grasedyck, ACB President

Sometimes we say transition, when what we mean is transformation.” These words radically changed how I look at our current state at American Church in Berlin.

For months, since the resignation of the pastor in May 2021, we have been saying we at ACB are in “a time of transition.” After being elected to our church council and becoming president of ACB on September 21st, I began discerning what the best course of action would be for me in leading the congregation during this time. I sought the counsel of a former pastor for whom I have incredible respect and deep admiration. In a way that very much resembled the way my own father was, he did not tell me what to do, but rather left me to ponder the application of his impactful words, “sometimes we say transition, when what we mean is transformation.”

Within a few days of the impact, came the ripple from that statement: transition is moving from one point to another with very little change in who we are, however when we move from one point and end up as a new being at the new point, that is transformation. That is the journey, the path, that we are on at ACB, moving not only from where we were six months ago, but also becoming a new congregation as we move. By the time we arrive at our next crucial point on the journey, with a

new pastor, we will have undergone a transformation so deep that the path behind us will be at best a collection of lessons well learned and leveraged.

What does it take to move from superficial transition into integral transformation? Focus. Focus on who we must become and what we must do and cease doing to live into our vision. Ours is a vision of continuing to be the hands and feet of Christ at the center of the rapidly and ever-changing metropolitan city of Berlin, a city filled with people of every age, walk of life and inclination. So many here are Light-starved and craving something far more fulfilling than the open-all-night kebab stands and endless party locations, could ever offer. This is where ACB can seize the opportunity to serve and to shine like a lone star in the darkest desert night - if we focus.

How do you focus amidst leadership changes, increasing ministry needs, personnel challenges, and pandemic regulations that all tug at the integral fabric of a diverse, international, ecumenical congregation? Decide what matters now and what your priorities are and align everything else to ensure that what matters most is reflected in the decisions you make and the actions you take.



Here is an outline of what that focus looks like at ACB during this stage of transition on our way to transformation:

[Ensuring a solid foundation for a healthy, thriving congregation.](#)

[Ensuring that worship and critical ministry continues.](#)

[Building, strengthening, and expanding our leadership capacity for now and the future.](#)

### **THESE ARE THE ACTIONS OVER THE PAST 60-70 DAYS THAT ALIGN WITH THAT FOCUS:**

We are focusing on increasing transparency and building stronger bonds of trust. We have had dozens of crucial conversations with members and friends, dozens of hours asking questions, listening, responding, extending the invitation to come to the table and take an active role in transforming ACB.

We have activated our internal ministry capacity and our network of guest pastors and lay ministers to offer meaningful worship, increase pastoral care, continue Christian education, and even expand our prayer fellowship, as we finalize plans to onboard an interim pastor.

We have welcomed and utilized internal and external special expertise from within the congregation and our network including the AFCU, ELCA, human resources, legal expertise, fundraising, and more.

In all this, we have leaned heavily on the guidance of Thessalonians 2: 3-5 asking the Lord to direct our hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance, throughout this time of change, challenge, and opportunity.

### **THESE ACTIONS THAT HAVE LED TO THESE HIGHLIGHTS:**

**GUEST PASTORS:** Six guest pastors (four from ACB) helping provide amazing meaningful worship experiences, even though we must currently condense services to a 40-minute limit (even including Holy communion!) due to pandemic regulations. This will continue through the end of the year.

**NEW EXPANDED WORSHIP PLANNING TEAM:** In addition to the six guest pastors, the response from our leadership and congregation to the call for support in providing worship services and pastoral care, during this period, has been strong and positive. We have now created an extended Worship Planning Team, comprised of our pastors, deacon, council members, our praise band leader and the chair of Music and Worship. The worship schedule is in great hands through the expected arrival of our interim pastor in January 2022. We plan to leave this team in place as a support system for the interim pastor as well as our next pastor on call.

**CONTRACTING AN INTERIM PASTOR:** Contracting an interim pastor: With the support of the ELCA and the AFCU, ACB has decided and is in the process of finalizing the arrangements for our interim pastor, Rev. Peter Rogness and his wife, Gerry

Rogness to join ACB in January 2022! Rev. Rogness is an ELCA pastor and retired bishop with strong interim experience and a positive reputation that precedes his highly anticipated arrival. We are thrilled by the conversations that have already taken place and our confidence that this is the right decision for ACB at this time, is bolstered by the overwhelmingly positive affirmations of his work from many trusted advisors who know Peter.

**PRO BONO SERVICES:** Our members have opened their personal and professional networks, helping us to secure pro-bono legal counsel for employment issues, as well as legal and notary services from a different office.

**SPONSORS:** ACB's beloved yearly Advent Caroling and Hymns Service usually held at the Berlin Cathedral, teetered on the brink of cancellation due changes driven by the impact of the pandemic. The changes included finding new venue as well as creating an entirely new format for the service. Through the connection and relationships built by one of our dedicated members, Beulla Vasanth, and her family in Orange, California, St. John's Lutheran Church in Orange stepped in with a generous donation covering the costs of the service which will be live-streamed. The sponsorship of St. John's as well as a local sponsor, Go-Heller GmbH, means that 100% of the donations made during the live-stream and to this 38th Advent Caroling and Hymns service on December 1, 2021 will go to ACB's local and international mission projects!

We are so grateful for these highlights of the past several weeks, reminders of the promises that God will provide, and He will make a way, when we cannot see or find a way.

As we move forward, this is what our focus for the next 30 to 60 days looks like:

#### [Advent & Christmas Season](#)

Advent Caroling and Hymns Service, Children's Pageant, Advent/Christmas /New Year services in live offline and online formats, plus one pre-recorded full Christmas service including communion

#### [Onboarding Interim Pastor, Rev. Peter Rogness](#)

Settling the pastor and his wife in Berlin, meeting with ACB congregation, meeting with leadership to map out the work of the planned 6- month interim

#### [Laying Solid Administrative/ Operational Foundation](#)

Strategic Planning – starting 2022 together with the interim pastor

#### [Calling Our ACB's Next Pastor – starting 2022](#)

In reading my bullet-point accounts, you might be thinking, "sounds like a lot of change, indeed like a time of transition, so where does the transformation come in?"

I have come to believe that what turns transition into transformation is your focus on the right thing. And while the outpouring of support from you and others around the world and the action we are taking is important, it is our focus on the cross that has the power to take ACB from transition to transformation, and we have every confidence in that power and promise.

# VIENNA COMMUNITY CHURCH

## A NEW VENTURE AND PARADIGM

Every church is finding it a challenging time to provide support, hope, and leadership during these times, and the Vienna Community Church is no exception. Early on, as the pandemic progressed, we committed to doing whatever we could to build community, in person when possible and online when practical, and that has proved to be a wise course. It has required much of our most committed volunteers, and we know that some are finding it difficult to keep up their commitment to church tasks. But we have been strongly encouraging people to pay attention to life/work/church balance, and to take sabbaticals when necessary. We do not want our committed volunteers to become casualties.

And that commitment means we continue to struggle with both the necessary person-power to carry on our essential functions, and to search for and commit to new directions and new ministries. That's challenging, but it is also part of our commitment to be a healthy church for all, including our most committed. We celebrate our diversity, even when it creates difference (Question: When is Thanksgiving? No, not necessarily in November!) But those are the quite ordinary tasks of being the People of God in this time and place.

Austria is now, as most people know, entering "Lockdown IV" but the churches have always been in close conversation with government and health officials, and we are given clear guidelines that allow us to meet safely for worship on Sundays. Of course it's different ... we have shifted from hymnbooks and printed bulletins to a service projected on a screen; we pass the peace by offering the "sacred hello" (namaste) with hands pressed together in front of the chest, and a bow that recognizes the presence of the divine in each person. We have had worship services where people are encouraged to "hum along inside your masks" to the music of the hymns, and where we end each service with the "Prayer as I Put On My Mask." But we have made these into sacred moments of acknowledging our responsibility to care for others as we care for ourselves.

Soon, the members of the church will be asked to approve the recommendation by the Board and Pastoral Search Committee to call Rev. Parker as VCC's permanent pastor in a Special Congregational Meeting on 5 December. A

covenanting service will take place in the New Year, as the pandemic restrictions allow. Rev. Parker looks forward to a long association with the church in Vienna. After two years serving at the VCC, Rev. Parker has settled in to Vienna and is in the process of obtaining his residency. He continues to serve the VCC on a part-time basis, and is using the other part-time availability to do consulting and teaching work. He has recently been named to the faculty of the Interim Ministry Network, an organization that trains intentional interim ministers and transitional ministers, and is hoping to provide consultancy to interim ministers in Europe.

He has recently completed a term as Commissioner to the General Council of the United Church of Canada, and remains an active member of the UCCan. During the spring and summer, he was able to provide worship services to two rural congregations in Ontario by video-conferencing, sharing with them resources prepared for worship in Vienna, and often sharing music from the VCC's choir and soloists.

Peace be with you all.

### REV. DR. NEIL PARKER

Interim Pastor, Vienna Community Church



# 2021 TAX BENEFITS

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**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](https://AFCUbridge.org)

## FINANCE UPDATE

# AFCU PROVIDES SUPPORT

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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](http://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

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