



Connecting Our Churches and Friends around the World



### Annual Meeting

The AFCU Annual Meeting was held in Naples, Florida on March 29, 2004. We had 25 of the 28 members in attendance as well as the Senior Pastors and lay representatives from The American Church in Paris, The American Church in Berlin and the Vienna Community Church. The commitment, dedication and energies of this group are to be commended.

In addition to our normal course of business, there were some changes made in assignments and focus that will be the topic for this letter.

**Mission** — As reported in the last Bridge article, we are in the process of redefining our Mission Statement. The current one does not adequately cover the scope of our overall purpose. In order to clarify our role with the churches and our alumni we feel the need to clearly define our reason for being. Thus a task force has been established to write a new Mission Statement for the AFCU. We will report the approved version in our next letter.

**Committees** — In order to improve the effectiveness of our standing committees we have asked each one to establish their own mission, purpose and goals. The goals should be both short term and long term. With this discipline in place, each committee will then report on their progress at the Annual Meetings. Thus, we should be able to monitor the overall effectiveness of the AFCU by the work and accomplishments of our committees. At the present time we have nine committees working for the fulfillment of the AFCU objectives. A Board Member chairs each committee. Their membership is made of up Board Members and other selected representatives from alumni, church affiliations and consultants. The current committees and their chairs are listed as follows:

| <u>Committee</u> | <u>Chair</u>               |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Executive        | James Craig                |
| Heritage         | Russell McNaughton         |
| Finance          | William McArthur           |
| Audit            | Henning Egner              |
| Development      | Jerry Burns<br>Jerry Krupp |
| Communications   | Katherine Eppert           |
| Personnel        | Don Eppert                 |
| Archives         | Eunice Raar                |
| Search           | Norm Findley               |

**Task Forces** — Task forces have a different scope and purpose than committees. They have a defined objective to accomplish and when the work is done the task force is dissolved. In order to focus our attention on increasing the total endowment fund of the AFCU we have initiated an Endowment Task Force. The role of this group will be to establish the goals, along with developing and implementing the action plans that will have a significant impact on increasing the overall endowment fund. In order to accomplish the overall mission of the AFCU we will need to make a significant increase

in the endowment funding. The work of this Task Force will play a major role in assuring that we meet this challenge.

The ministries of the three churches in Europe under our tutelage were described in our last edition of *The Bridge*. We have made the above changes to our organization to improve our support of those ministries.

*Jim Craig, AFCU President*

### AFCU Development Committee Report

The AFCU Development Committee meeting in Naples was attended by 30 devoted volunteers, all focused on how we can assure the valuable ministries of our three European churches can flourish well into the future. The challenges are great, but the enthusiasm of these dedicated volunteers promises that they will be met. On the morning before our regular all-day meeting, we met in sub-groups focused on each of the three churches.

Each of our Champions is in place with a supporting sub-committee to plan and execute the activities in their respective area of focus.

#### These leaders along with their focus area are as follows:

**Database of Church Alumni Coordinator**  
— Megan Foster

**AFCU Website** — Bob DeLuryea

**Heritage Society/Estate Planning**  
— Russ McNaughton

**Friends Receptions** — Rita Krupp

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**Communications** — Kathie Eppert

**Annual Solicitations** —  
Calder Ehrmann

**Donor & Volunteer Recognition**  
— John Rogers

**Capital Funds Campaign  
Coordination** — Mike Simpson

*Jerry Burns & Jerry Krupp,  
Co-Chairs of the AFCU  
Development Committee*

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## “Friends” Carry On

TV’s well-known “Friends” may be history but the AFCU Friends Program continues to be a vital link between the 3 American churches and returning members. It has been difficult to keep in touch and coordinate activities with Alumni and friends from Paris, Berlin and Vienna who are spread throughout the U.S. Now, with 12 geographic Regions being developed, we hope to provide grass roots connections and support.

We’re identifying “Ambassadors” (helpers) in each region that will welcome expats upon their return and let them know they have friends here who have shared common experiences abroad. It will give us an opportunity to connect Friends living in nearby areas to share past experiences and build new friendships. We plan to continue the regional social gatherings tied to cultural events.

In March, an evening social was enjoyed in Naples, FL with many AFCU Board members attending from all 3 churches. In April, Friends attended a Bell Choir Concert conducted by Fred Gramann in NYC and socialized afterwards.

Upcoming events are being planned for this fall in Atlanta, Wash. DC, Seattle and other locations. Stay tuned to the AFCU website for dates and details.

We need your ideas and support to help us grow. Please contact Rita Krupp at rkrupp16@aol.com with ideas, names and addresses.

*Rita Krupp, Friends Champion*

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## News from the AFCU Finance Committee

The AFCU finance committee is responsible for the financial management of the AFCU funds and for honoring the intent of donors and Friends who support this organization through their generous giving.

The AFCU finance committee is chaired by William MacArthur, committee members include: Robert Dunlop, Hening Egner, Jim Hicks, Dominique Soret, and Julie Voskuil.

At the recent AFCU board meeting, the committee identified their key responsibilities as:

- Oversight of the AFCU’s investment portfolio.
- Setting investment strategy and Asset allocation.
- Timely reporting of financial performance.

Currently the AFCU financial reports are being audited by our independent auditor for the years ending December 31, 2002 and 2003. Also, our new Assistant Treasurer, Julie Voskuil, is assuming

greater responsibility for financial reporting and management.

At the recent board meeting, the budget for 2004 was approved. The AFCU budget for 2004 anticipates revenues of \$141,000 from stewardship giving, \$136,800 from Friends and other designated giving, and \$150,000 in investment income. Expenses budgeted for 2004 are comprised of expenses for ongoing commitments, like the Senior Pastor salary at the American Church in Paris, giving for capital improvements as requested by the churches, and grants which return stewardship giving to the various congregations based on historical levels of stewardship receipts, other expenses relate to the management of the AFCU. Due to the significance amount of volunteer effort, expenses for running the AFCU are less than 6% of total expenses. Many charities target administrative expenses of 10% of total expenditures, the AFCU operates at nearly half of this targeted level.

*Julie Voskuil, AFCU Asst. Treasurer*

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## Heritage Society Testimonial

Our years in Paris were magical. There were many moments of discovery, wonder, and excitement...at the same time, there were also moments of frustration, loneliness, fear. Where can one turn as a foreigner in a foreign land? What keeps one grounded when floating in a city of such splendid beauty and maddening challenges?

We turned to the American Church in Paris. There we found friends who were experiencing the same highs and lows. There we found a church family to be with us in times of joy and times of sadness. There we found meaningful worship and spiritual guidance that provided the anchor we needed during our sojourn abroad.

When we returned to the United States, we left behind one of the most memorable eras of our life. We greatly missed those years in Paris, the stimulating opportunities and dear friends with whom we had shared a moment in time like nothing before or since. Because the American Church in Paris was such a vital part of that entire period, we welcomed the opportunity to stay connected and to return in part all that the church had done for us by

agreeing to serve on the Board of the American and Foreign Christian Union.

The Heritage Society is an important piece of the work of the AFCU. By designating a portion of our financial legacy to the American Church in Paris through our wills, we have joined this society. We do so because we realize how necessary the work of the church will be for the legions of English-speaking Christians to pass through its doors in the years to come and we want to be sure those doors will always be open to them. We do so because that church is part of our heritage and we feel by so doing, we are able to be a part of its heritage.

If the American Church in Paris touched your life, we invite you to also join the Heritage Society by remembering the church in your estate planning. You will be returning a gift freely given to you and playing an important part in its continued future.

*Lynda and Bob DeLuryea*

*If you chose to take this step, contact Russ McNaughton for information and to be entered on the rolls of the Heritage Society at russmacton@aol.com*

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## “Let There Be Peace On Earth”

*“Let there be Peace on Earth and let it begin with me.”*

The skies above Naples, Florida, were darkened with planes, the roadways were clogged with cars, as 25 out of 28 Board members from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and pastors and lay-leaders from all three European churches, descended on that lovely resort town for the American and Foreign Christian Union Annual Meeting. They brought files, power point presentations, reports, a brass seal, but most of all, words of peace, fellowship, outreach, love and joy.

“With God as Our Father children all are we. Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.”

Work began on Friday, March 26 with Development meetings, and concluded Monday with the full Annual meeting. But it was not all work, joyful and productive as that work is. There was time to catch up with old friends and make new ones. On Saturday Jim and Cindy Craig hosted the Board members for a cocktail party, followed by dinner and a Recognition Ceremony. Jim welcomed everyone and introduced Rev. Dr. Tom Harp and his wife Carol. Dr. Harp is the pastor of Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church, which hosted the meeting.

After giving special recognition to those members who had traveled from Europe Jim turned the microphone over to Jerry Burns, Jerry Krupp and Rev. John Rogers, who presented the Recognition awards.

Board members who had served for 7 years were Calder Ehrmann, Jerry Burns, Jim Craig, Henning Egner, Charles Lindholm and Donald Eppert. Dale Raar has served on the AFCU Board for 12 years, while Gregg Foster, Bob DeLuryea, and Lynda DeLuryea have served for 14 years. The AFCU has benefited from the expertise of Dick Bright for 15 years, while Bob Dunlop, Russ McNaughton, and Tom Wilson are in a 3-way tie at 16 years. Current Treasurer Jim Hicks has served the AFCU in many capacities during his 20 years. John Chambers has retired from the Board this year after 20 years of service. The evening was capped off with cake in honor of Jerry Krupp’s birthday.

On Sunday Jim and Cindy hosted a Friends’ reception at their lovely home. Rita Krupp, Friends’ champion, welcomed the visitors and Board members and thanked Jim and Cindy for their hospitality. She reminded us that 2007 would be a year for anniversaries: 150 years for the ACP and 50 years for the VCC. Guests included Steve and Marge Hall, and Don and Ruth Campbell. Steve has been Asso-

ciate Pastor at the American Church in Paris, and regaled us with the story of his first Sunday in Paris. He has promised to re-tell it in a future edition of the Bridge. Don and Ruth Campbell have served in Paris and Vienna and also had many wonderful stories to share.

“Let Peace begin with me, let this be the moment now. With every step I take let this be my solemn vow...”

The words of this contemporary hymn echoed through the four-day meeting. If there is one thing we all have learned from our ex-pat experiences it is that peace must begin with each of us. When we extend the hand of Christian fellowship to people in Berlin, Paris, and Vienna we are taking that first crucial step toward universal peace. And it is such a joyful, hopeful experience that many of us feel committed to support these agencies, the American Church in Berlin, the American Church in Paris and the Vienna Community Church, with our prayers, our time and our offerings.

“Let there be Peace on earth and let it begin with me. “

*Kathie Eppert, editor the Bridge*



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## Ever Changing Congregations

Prior to my 13+ years with the Network for International Congregations, I had numerous and varied contact with international congregations around the world. And then, with NIC, I came to know over one hundred other such international congregations. The most consistent and inescapable reflection one can have for such congregations, beyond their impressiveness, is caught in the word “change” — within a few years of meeting a congregation, you discover it just isn’t any longer the same: it has changed, and continues to change.

Happily my associations with the three churches related to AFCU are among my favorites and the most impressive. It has been a delight to know these communities of faith and to learn much from a series of effective and dedicated pastors. The observation of “change” cannot be missed with ACP,

ACB and VCC — “change” is a key factor in knowing and planning for each of them.

The very first thing to be said is: “Change is not a problem, an issue, something to fear.” Change is a part of life, a fact of existence, an aspect of service. The challenge is to face change, to flow with the situations in which the congregation lives and works. The glory of ACP/ACB/VCC is that they have moved at each turn in their journey. The core focus of their ministries has not changed, only how it is done. These are strong ecumenical, English-language, international communities — they know who they are and what they are about.

From the 19th Century “colonial” approach, to the early 20th Century “American church model” emphasis, to the “inclusive” scope of the late 20th Century, to the exciting possibilities of the 21st Century, changes kept and keep the churches alive and relevant. The economic base or style or ability has changed, but the congregations have stayed the course. The scope and enhancement of membership variety only reflect the Kingdom of God most clearly. A strong relationship with the local/national church is extraordinary.

The 21st century promises changes beyond our imaginations, changes that will demand all the creative and faithful attention that was called for in the past. Beginning with conviction of ministry, with gifts for addressing the emerging “world,” and with impressive leadership, ACP/ACB/VCC will be powerful centers for Christian witness and service. Thank the Lord!

What kind of changes can be projected?

- Lowering the “American” focus or emphasis.
- Maintaining and funding buildings and programs.
- Incorporating the multi-ethnic dimension of the congregation.
- Re-thinking and re-designing the presentation of the Faith.
- Establishing strong worship models to confront and hold a diverse community.
- Conceiving new patterns or models for ecumenical and inter-faith relationships.
- Providing meaning and reality to a global fellowship of “internationalistic” congregations.
- Confronting the increasing rise of fanatical conservatism surfacing in all religions.

The road promises to be tough, but creative ministry has addressed such issues in decades past. With God, all things are possible.

*Rev. Art Bauer, AFCU friend and consultant*

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## AFCU 2003 Donors

The following is a list of Friends who made donations to the AFCU in 2003 on behalf of one or more of the three churches we support. These donations are vital to these churches in order to carry out their mission in these important European cities. Each and every gift is appreciated and will be granted in full to the designated church. Thanks for your support!

### List of Donors to the AFCU For the Year 2003

|                               |                                |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Charlotte Aderberry           | Sally Finger                   | Al & Suzanne Liebetrau        | David & Linda Schmidt              |
| Susan Aller                   | Russell Fisher                 | Charles & Nancy Lindholm      | Mattie Sharpless                   |
| Linda Andersson               | Gregory & Megan Foster         | Kathryn Lindquist             | Sharon Simmons                     |
| William & Monike Andrews      | Judith Foulke                  | R.D. & Dolores Lindstrom      | Robert & Jacqueline Benton Simpson |
| Annalouiza Armendariz         | Jacquelyn Fournier-Clark       | Doug Lippoldt                 | Mozelle Sims                       |
| Margaret Atwood               | Kenneth & Janet Friedman       | Darrell Lowe                  | Robert Slonaker                    |
| Jim & Marilyn Ault            | R. Gardiner & A. Wilkes        | Cory & Julia Lupinacci        | Edgar Smith                        |
| Gilbert Austin                | Charles Gay                    | Joseph Luquire                | Lynn Smith                         |
| James Baehr                   | Rosemarie Gift                 | James Lyon                    | Roberta Smith                      |
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| Charles Beach                 | Margaret Graham                | Lita MacDonald                | Richard Sokoll                     |
| Gary & Jane Beard             | Fred & Nancy Gramann           | Marvin Marlatt                | Richard Sommers                    |
| Linda Biel                    | Marjorie Green                 | Roger & Grace Marquis         | Stephen Sours                      |
| Tina Blair                    | LaNeil Gregory & Dick Kassatly | Robert & Carol Martin         | Paul & Julie Steege                |
| Kathryn Bogie                 | Nathaniel Groves               | Jean Mattson                  | Ralph & Susan Steinke              |
| Ahmed & Carolyn Bouazouni     | Wade Gugino                    | Linda May                     | David Stephens                     |
| Dan Bourland                  | Tony Guisinger                 | Alonzo McDonald               | David & Audrey Stewart             |
| Edgar Bowers                  | Fritz Hager                    | Robert McGregor               | Beverly Stickle                    |
| Ellis Bradford                | Jim Hammond                    | Douglas McLaughlin            | David Stitley                      |
| Alan & Gretchen Bray          | Delores Heller                 | Russ & Carol McNaughton       | Alastair Stone                     |
| Richard & Donna Bright        | Doug Hepper                    | Russell & Janet Melby         | Janis Stover                       |
| Philip Brown                  | Richard Herodes                | Calvin Mew                    | Stacy Stratton                     |
| Barbara Buchar & John Andrews | James & Stephanie Hicks        | Nancy Miller                  | Darrell Strobel                    |
| William Bumpas                | Martha Hill                    | Francois Musiak & Anne Hayek  | William & Mary Ann Stoker          |
| Jerry & Pat Burns             | Galen Hodge                    | Charles & Laurana Michelmore  | Richard Style                      |
| Robert Calder                 | Richard Hogan & Carron Sherry  | David & Laura Moore           | Donald Sutherland                  |
| Elizabeth Caldwell            | Mary Jean Hogg                 | Richard Morehead              | Dean Swanson                       |
| Donald Campbell               | Alan Holzhausen                | Gary Mutz                     | Dorothy Swanson                    |
| Guy Caruso                    | John & Elizabeth Hubbell       | Donald Myers                  | Charles Swarts                     |
| Thomas Caulfield              | John Humber                    | Crosby Nash                   | Vandoster Tabb                     |
| Gulye Cavin                   | Jack & Helen Hustad            | Thomas Nation                 | Paula Taquet-Woolfolk              |
| Wayne Cerullo                 | Ann & Ernest Jackson           | Amie Nelson                   | Elkin Taylor                       |
| John Chambers                 | Robert Jackson                 | Joseph & Linda Nelson         | Curt Thies                         |
| Jose Charles                  | Albert Jadot                   | Karen Nix                     | Guerry Thornton                    |
| Selwyn Chua                   | Richard Johannsen              | Elizabeth Oettinger           | Robert Tokarz                      |
| Daniel Coats                  | Kenneth Johnston               | Edmund Ollmann                | Frank Twyeffort                    |
| Ronald Collins                | Dorothy Jones                  | Mary Owen                     | James Vedder                       |
| Ben & Margit Coltvet          | Russell Jones                  | Ellen Parker                  | Jon & Julie Voskuil                |
| Jim & Cindy Craig             | Judith Kaaua                   | Frank Parker                  | Rank & Anne Waldburger             |
| Wilbur & Donna Crim           | Larry & Carol Kalajainen       | Sally Pease                   | Marcus Wall                        |
| Earl Cummings                 | David Kanally                  | John Peed                     | Kim Webber                         |
| Margaret Cunley               | George Kellogg                 | William & Teresa Peters       | Johannes Weertman                  |
| Peter & Diane Curwen          | Alice Kern & Shem Krey         | Bryan Peterson                | Karen Rae Weir & Joseph Blackburn  |
| Hiroshi Daifuku               | Richard Kipp                   | Steven Peterson               | David Weisz                        |
| Karl Dasher                   | Kirby Taylor                   | Mary Madeleine Philbin        | Robert Wells                       |
| Lucinda Davis                 | Charles Kitchen                | Norm Philcox                  | Andrew White                       |
| Jonathan DeGaynor             | Eric Knachel                   | John Phillips                 | James & Luray Wiberg               |
| Bob & Lynda DeLuryea          | Paul Knouse                    | Curtis & Kristin Plyler       | Gardiner Wilkes                    |
| Charles Dickinson             | Clinton Knowles                | George Pope                   | Jean Pierre Williams               |
| Robert Dietz                  | Vernon Kordahl                 | Maurice & Marilyn Prevost     | Leslie Williams                    |
| Elizabeth & William Dixon     | Andrew & Sally Krey            | Edna Quin                     | Jerriann & Donald Wilson           |
| Paul Dobel                    | Don & Sharon Krump             | Dale & Eunice Raar            | Peter & Diane Wilson               |
| Tom & Gail Duggan             | Jerry & Rita Krupp             | James Reed                    | Tom Wilson                         |
| Robert Duncan                 | Elaine Kruse                   | William Reichenbach           | Richard Wiltshire                  |
| Kurt Edwards                  | Susan Kugler                   | Lloyd Reuss                   | Gerry Winckler                     |
| Henning Egner                 | Stanley Landry                 | Michael & Barbara Ann Ridpath | Raymond Winkler                    |
| Calder & Glenda Ehrmann       | Robert Lange                   | Wesley Roberts                | Wendy Winters                      |
| Earl Ellison                  | Elaine Langley                 | Ross & Margaret Robson        | Richard Witherspoon                |
| Don & Kathie Eppert           | Howard Larsen                  | Kenneth Rock                  | Courtenay Woods & Noel Jackson     |
| John & JoAnne Eusden          | Robert & Anita Lawe            | Carol Rodland                 | Elizabeth Worthington              |
| James & Marsha Fall           | Gladys Leithauser              | John Rogers                   | Ted & Betty Ziemann                |
| Ms. Drue Ferguson             | Michael Lenehan                | James Ruffner                 | Karen Zumbunn                      |
| Norm & Adrienne Findley       | Delbert & Eleanor Leonard      | Marlene Sartipi               |                                    |

### How You Can Contribute

The American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU) supports the American Church in Paris (ACP), the American Church in Berlin (ACB), and the Vienna Community Church (VCC) through grants to help their programs. Gifts to the AFCU help to increase our support of these churches. Contributions may be sent to the American and Foreign Christian Union at AFCU, 475 Riverside Drive, suite 2050, New York, NY, 10115.

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

# PARIS CONNECTION

## From the Youth Pastor

### This Train is Bound for Durham; or So Long and Thanks for all the Prayers! —

Easter greetings to you in the Lord Jesus Christ. We hope this Spire article finds you all well — celebrating the resurrection of our Lord, and looking forward to a sunny and warm spring (if it ever comes)!

As you know, the Sours family will soon be moving back to the States on June 1. We moved to ACP in June, 2001 for a two year term, which we then extended an extra year. Last fall we announced that we would not extend our contract a fourth year. But we still have lots of time before we leave, actually, since winter is just ending, and June comes in the summer (can you tell we're still in denial)! Where are we going, you ask? I'll get to that, but first, it's high time to dispel some of those nasty church rumors that have begun to fly.

First, no, it is not the case — based on our international reputation as pizza chefs — that Sarah and Isaac and I have taken a position in Manhattan's Little Italy to be the town's Pizza Kingpins. The offer was tempting, but there were no good bakeries in the neighborhood.

Second, no, I have not decided to give up my pastoral job and become a professional marathon runner. I only run to support my eating habit, and there's nothing to eat in the States anyway. Third, yes, Sarah and I have decided to leave ACP to join a cult — we're moving back to Durham, North Carolina, the heartland of our new religion — Duke University basketball!!

O.K., so that's not exactly true, either, but we are returning to school at Duke in Durham, NC, the heartland of Methodism.

We are very sad indeed to be leaving and to have to say good-bye. It has taken us nine months to accept it, and we've hardly begun to think about it yet! As I shared then with Church Council, there is surely nothing here that is pushing us away: we will miss the friends and the church we have come to love so dearly. But there are some factors which are pulling us to return: going back to school for more study in theology; being more closely associated with The United Methodist Church in which we serve; and living closer to family members.

On a serious note: it is surely hard to express in one short article all the feelings and emotions pulsing through our family. From the day we arrived, we have been grateful recipients for your hospitality and care.

From being thoroughly exposed to a new culture and seeking to share God's love in it, to raising Isaac to speak French in a safe and loving community of Christians, to learning the rhythms of life in parish ministry, our time with you has been for us a tremendous blessing.

At the same time, it is our earnest hope that we have been faithful ministers of God's saving grace among you. ACP has the gift of hospitality, and we have been the recipients of your graciousness. Without a doubt, our time with you has shaped us in deeply permanent and positive ways. I urge you to continue to share this gift with all those who come to this church, for it is a distinguishing and invaluable mark of God's presence in our midst.

Before we moved to ACP and throughout our time with you, we have been upheld and enfolded by your prayers. Thank you. We ask you to continue to do so — to send us off with your blessing and your prayers—in order that our lives may be all the more strengthened and grounded in the One who keeps us eternally safe in him, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Stephen Sours. ACP Youth Pastor*

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## Music at ACP

A recent poll showed that the second biggest reason people attend the American Church in Paris is for the music. Fred Gramann, the Musical Director, and Bonnie Woolley who heads up the children's choir and hand chime ensemble are responsible for the outstanding quality of this music.

Fred, an icon of the American community in Paris, has been running the musical program at the ACP since 1976 and is the source of an important element of continuity there. In addition to directing the adult choir, the two adult hand bell choirs, selecting (and sometimes composing) the music, and organizing the weekly Sunday afternoon concerts, Fred is known internationally as a handbell director and clinician.



One of the secrets of his success is memorizing every piece of music he directs in order to maintain complete contact with the singers or handbell ringers during the performance. He meets the challenge every director has to face of getting his singers to look at him by giving them pencils marked WATCH FRED! He relishes having free reign to choose his musical selections.

Most everyone who wants to sing in the choir is accepted and members appreciate the fact that he is "so patient, so kind". He wants the choir members to enjoy what they are doing and tries to make the music interesting.



### Quoting the pastoral staff:

—"He has to work with outside (visiting) choirs and integrate them into our worship...he does that well.

— His knowledge of "seasonal" church music really enriches our worship throughout the year.

— He backs up everyone — visiting choirs, our dancers, pastors, folks getting married here, etc. with such grace and patience.

— We can trust that for any service/event in the sanctuary the heat will be on, the pews in order, the flowers placed and watered etc. He is our valuable behind-the-scenes person.

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— His ability to get the best performance from those in the choirs (singers or ringers) is phenomenal!”

The excellence of Fred’s music is equaled only by the extent of his modesty. And added to this is his wonderful sense of humor.

Fred first came to Paris in 1972, after obtaining a degree from Syracuse University, to study with the organist, Marie-Claire Alain. He had never been out of the United States and was newly married to a classmate, Nancy. Armed with supreme confidence and high school French, he was “not smart enough to be apprehensive” and encountered his first realization (shock?) of the difficulties ahead when the stewardess on the flight over made an announcement in French and he understood nothing!

The secretary of the ACP helped them to find a one-room apartment in the 20th arrondissement without heating and without a fridge. The concierge took pity on them and lent them a wood burning stove and allowed them to forage for coal in the basement. He and Nancy alternated going to the Alliance Française, and when it was Nancy’s turn to go, she would go home, take an aspirin and teach Fred what she had learned. (This apparently was good training since she subsequently found a job organizing the teaching of English with a large company where she remained for 28 years)

Fred sang in the choir at St. George’s and was allowed to practice the organ there. Not being able to afford metro tickets, he would walk everywhere. At the end of nine months, he obtained a scholarship to live in the Cité des Arts across from the Ile Saint Louis. During this time, Fred also studied organ with Maurice Duruflé. It was with a certain regret that Fred left Paris for Michigan where he worked for an advanced degree. But when Mr. Pendleton, director of music for the ACP, retired after 41 years, Fred applied for the job and was taken on to replace him in 1976.

The choir at the time had about 20 members most of whom were paid. Fred doubled the number of members who then worked on a voluntary basis. He also developed his signature handbell choir program. Fred’s son, Benjamin, was born in 1978 and currently works for an architect in Santa Monica, CA.

You can often spot Fred taking a brisk walk with Zoé, a Jack Russell/Yorkshire terrier rescued by Benjamin after having been abandoned in the Invalides gardens. The challenge was to get Zoé to cohabit peacefully with the cats. You might also

run into Fred in the market on rue Cler or less often at an antique market accompanying Nancy who has given him a good dose of endurance training (his record being nine hours in one day).

Obviously Fred loves living in Paris and not only for the five week vacations. He likes the fact that appreciation of culture is evident in all levels of French society and those who attend his concerts are astute listeners. Being in Paris is “like living in museum where walking down the street is a cultural experience.”

Bonnie Woolley is a “basic ex pat” from Chicago whose major in college was, not surprisingly, French and music. Her first trip to France was during her junior year when she came over for an exchange program where she accompanied American children to a French school in Montmorency. It was during the time Mitterand was elected president, and she remembers the conservative family she was staying with shedding tears while the liberal teachers in the school were drinking champagne! The experience was a success and after graduating, Bonnie went on to work for “Classes d’Amérique” helping French school children to get settled in the States.



Eventually Bonnie made her way to Paris where she performed extensively as a soloist both in concert and on stage as well as founding various musical groups. Among other activities, she directs the children and youth choirs at the ACP. There are about 25 young people in the youth choir representing 15 different nationalities from various social, cultural and religious backgrounds. The choir’s reputation has grown bringing new members through word of mouth. Seeing Bonnie teach a class of children for the first time demonstrates her instant rapport with her students and her ability to generate interest in what she’s teaching.

## **The following quotes from parents are typical remarks:**

“The health of mind that the experience of this choir can [give] is a value that is not even measurable in the life of youth these days. The family environment that Bonnie manages to create while giving them the highest of technical skills is a unique gift that I do not imagine finding anywhere else.”

“The choir has attracted a lot of children and youth to the American Church who probably would never have come to a Bible study or Sunday School class. It has become an important part of our outreach program...”

Bonnie’s approach to working with young people is “to enrich their spiritual lives through music and community.” Working with groups outside the church is an opportunity to develop spiritual growth in the members without being in a formal religious context. To her, “what matters...is that people experience the love of God even if they don’t initially define it that way themselves.”

Bonnie heads several choirs for children aged four up to college; she also started a handbell ensemble for French music teachers and is in the process of writing a manual on hand chime teaching for French schools. Between May 11th and June 23rd, she will be directing eleven concerts and on June 18th she is organizing a fund raising concert for the Youth Music program of the ACP.

She has taught communication courses in French companies using hand chimes and she teaches French and music at Middlebury College during the summer. Fifteen years ago she founded an association of independent teachers and does work in cross cultural training. She is writing a doctoral thesis for the University of Bordeaux in language teaching methodology.

A self professed “techno-nut,” she also created and maintains the ACP website. In her free time she likes to go scuba diving and is a “monitrice” for this activity in the Paris area. Her musical tastes range from Hillary Hahn playing Bach through Rai to Léo Ferré, Barbara and Linda Lemay. At home she tends her Bonsaï collection, empties her e-mail box of spam, and color coordinates her clothes (when they’re not lying on the floor).

All in all, we feel very fortunate having Bonnie with us, and for her, “working with the children at the ACP is a privilege and has really centered me more than any other activity I’ve ever undertaken. Keeps me right in line — makes one remember what we’re here for.”

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*Continued on page 7*

# News From my Sidewalk Café



*Continued from page 6*

## Other ACP news

In the meantime, the ACP has been working hard to bring in funds. Sharon Tynan and Emmanuel Blazkov have given concerts, and Sarah Dixon organized a quilting party to contribute something to the upcoming silent auction. Michael Etheridge has formed a dynamic Stewardship committee that is reaching out to all church members. Kathy and Greg Turner opened their newly refurbished apartment for a gala dinner attended by over 100 guests who enjoyed a gourmet dinner prepared by Michel Emmery. The Church Council is working over time to find solutions for our budget. And we are all keeping the ACP in our prayers.

*Cobi Camberlin, ACP correspondent*

Tulips, Primevera, Jonquils et oui chestnuts in blossom are everywhere in Paris for the last couple of weeks. They're so beautiful from my sidewalk café that I've been spending more time than usual reading my paper, writing notes and drinking café au lait! Or maybe, I've been sitting much longer because of the gentleman watching me daily from across the street. There he is each morning when I arrive and still there when I leave. He's been peering around a corner always with a pipe in his mouth that seems to give him a gentle look. He's definitely middle-aged, with wavy hair and a very determined expression. I wanted to go over and invite him for a good chat and café au lait until I realized that he was everywhere looking at me as I wandered around Paris this week.

Wanting to report to you the latest changes in Paris, I wandered down the Champs-Elysee past the refurbished Drugstore at the top by the Arc de Triomphe. There He Was Again peering out at me. Perhaps, like me, he was just fascinated at the tubular, metal grasshopper shapes reaching several stories high on either side of the glass-paned Drugstore. They definitely dominate the building especially when they light les Madames Sauterelle (grasshoppers) at night, so you won't miss seeing them.

Further down the avenue, across from Fouquets restaurant, on the old Air France building space, I stood in amazement looking up at the new Louis Vitton building. The entire building has been designed to look like a 5 story high Louis Vitton, brown and gold valise, unmistakably with the LVH pattern, brass rounded corners, and light brown leather handle. And, again, unmistakably on the corner watching me was my pipe smoking gentleman.

I hurried down the avenue noticing that the beautiful Guerlain building is closed up with a large A LOUER (for rent) sign marring the exquisite façade. It is a glaring "sign" of our down turned economic times in Paris on the left hand side of Le Champs and LVH must be doing something right on the right hand side of la rue. Les Cinemas all seem to continue to do good business as does McDo and Quick. But, other boutiques and restaurants come and go so fast, I can hardly keep up with them especially at the Gallerie 56 near the Rond-Point.

Les Fleurs des Printemps are amassed on the gentle hills on Le Rond Point. My gentleman was strategically placed, peering again, between Le Rond Point and the renovation taking place on the Grand Palais. While a portion of the Grand Palais has been opened for exhibitions, most of it remains closed while the roof is still being installed. The web-like metal arches of the open Grand Palais have given photographers a wonderful new artistic look at the Grand Palais. They're daily on the site recording the sunrise, sunsets, misty fog, bright sunlight or dark shadows produced through the open rooftop.

Dominating the streets of Paris are now double decker, open-top (English style) tour buses. They're everywhere in Europe and I admit enjoying them when I travel to other cities. I suppose they were fated to become part of the French landscape but somehow they don't fit "le look" Parisien. Maybe, if they had insisted they were all painted "Wallace Fountain Green" or given an impressionist look but alas they're red or yellow with lots of ads on the sides.

On avenue de l'Opera, Starbucks opened kitty-corner to Brentano's Bookstore. Starbucks has taken Paris by storm as les branchers (literally plugged in) place to be! Les queues, c'est longue. (long lines) The locals love the fact they can emporter (take-away) their coffee in a paper cup. Most astonishing to most French! And, the tourists love sitting as long as you like in the Paris environment, sipping your coffee and buying a Starbucks-Paris mug to take home.

I bought my café au lait and looked for a spot to enjoy it when I saw Him, on the far wall toward the back. I spotted a place next to Him and decided it was time for le verity (the truth). As I approached, sat down and drank my coffee it became evident that He wasn't watching me. It was himself he was looking at as He peered around the side of his canvas looking into a mirror, painting his self-portrait. Norman Rockwell is everywhere in Paris highlighting the Exhibition of "Auto portraits du XXeme Siecle" at the Musee du Luxembourg. While somewhat disappointed it wasn't me he was stalking, I felt a certain pride that this American in Paris, for the moment, was dominating the Champs-Elysee, the buses, and every corner sidewalk café. Vive L'Amerique!!!

*Ellen Soret, Paris correspondent*

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# BERLIN CONNECTION



## ACB Pastor's Report

*The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.*

*Matthew 13:31,32*

May I begin by saying on behalf of the American Church in Berlin, Thank You! Thank you for your prayers, financial support, good wishes, interest and willingness to walk with us in the journey of faith in mission and ministry of Jesus Christ in Berlin. Since you were last in Berlin for the last annual meeting, much has happened at ACB. I want to share with you some of these exciting and challenging events.

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed — it is the smallest of all the seeds...about the size of the point of a pen or pencil. But it grows to be the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree...hard to believe that from something so small something so big can come. But, it is more than big. It provides a place so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

Try reading this parable with the seed being God's Word at work. One of the great joys of my life at the American Church in Berlin is being able to gather with people from different denominations (15+), from diverse nations of the world (30+), from Ambassadors to Asylum Seekers, from newborn baby to 87 year old saint, from "seeker" to "faithful", from north to south, from east to west, from opera singer to monotone. My joy is not that we are so different. The joy is that we gather to cel-

eborate God at work (God's Word) in our lives in worship, prayer, music, study, fellowship, and community. While the Word may seem ever so small, it is doing mighty things in the hearts and lives of countless people. The Word of God has changed my life. It continues to shape and mold our lives at ACB. We are not the same community of faith that we were a year ago. God has been at work molding, chipping, cleaning, sanding, polishing, repairing, and grooming us. It is our fervent prayer that He will continue to do His powerful work of convicting, forgiving, strengthening and empowering us. We are on a mission. We cannot do it on our own. We must be obedient to His call. We are honored to be used by Him. God's Word — Jesus Christ — is at work in our midst!

Try reading this parable with the seed being an individual Christian witnessing and serving in the world. Let me illustrate this by telling you about Maike and Magda (permission has been granted to use their real names). Maike shared with me one evening at an art showing that she had been bringing a friend, Magda, to church with her. Maike shared that some exciting things were happening in Magda's life. Magda shared that on Christmas Eve, as we were lighting the candles in the dark sanctuary and reading the portion from John 1 about Christ the light coming into the world chasing away the darkness, something happened in her life. The light of Christ cast its light on her darkened spirit. Magda comes to ACB from Egypt, from a non-Christian background. I wish you could see the radiant glow in Magda's face each Sunday as she now comes to worship. We have been meeting in Bible study. She is going to be baptized on Easter Sunday, along with 10 other people. She eagerly is looking forward to that day.

The seed as the individual Christian witnessing and serving in the world is evident as Maike has shared her faith in Jesus Christ with Magda and Magda has come to faith as the hearing of the Word, Jesus Christ, has gone to work in her life.

Try reading the parable with the seed being the Church witnessing and serving in the world. ACB is a part of the great church of Christ here on earth. You, as AFCU, partner with us in being that church on earth. ACB is that church witnessing and serving in the name of Jesus Christ in Germany, Berlin, at Dennewitzplatz. How I wish you could see the gradual and steady transformation that is taking place in Dennewitzplatz. The presence of ACB in word and deed is slowly bringing about positive change and growth. The immediate plot of land the church sits on has been transformed from "needle place and prostitute village" to a beautiful park with new grass, walks, lighting, safety, shade, and beauty. People of the neighborhood now walk safely through Dennewitzplatz. The Confirmation class has adopted the park as a servant project in which they regularly "clean up" the park. Landscaping is being completed with flowers, bushes and shrubs. Graffiti is being removed from the outside walls.

Inside, an old building that stood empty is being transformed into a home for worship, study, music, community and people. It is a slow process. Much of the work that is being done at this time is not seen by the naked eye — like masonry work, structural beam work, underground plumbing work, electrical work — all being done to better serve with efficiency and safety. We are launching out in faith this next year beginning the painting process of the interior of the church. You will remember that the inside paint is "post-war gray" — not that bright or inviting.

While we are seeing a building being transformed slowly but surely, the important thing is that lives are being touched with the Gospel. That is what is important. Buildings do not change the hearts and lives of people. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is what changes lives, behavior, and relationships. The facilities are very important as a vehicle to better enable us to be about this life transforming mission and ministry.

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Try reading the parable with the seed being Jesus Christ redeeming the world. I have been asked many times if I have been frustrated in ministry at ACB. I have honestly answered, "YES!" It is hard for me to be patient with the endless negotiating, getting permission, signing this document or that one, putting everything in writing, and negotiating again and again and again... I think you get the picture! (By the way, I am not talking here about the ACB leadership or congregation. They are anxious to move forward — it's the "regulations of government process" I am referring to). Yet, when I get frustrated and down hearted I am reminded of why we are in Dennewitzplatz. I am reminded that we are about God in Jesus Christ redeeming the world — recreating it to be what he would have it become. We are but agents of his to be used by him for his will to be accomplished. So, when I am able to focus on this fact, the frustrations of the process begin to melt away.

I sat in a "negotiating meeting" not long ago becoming more frustrated with the process as the moments went by. As I began to "cook inside" I became aware that I was not the redeeming presence of Christ in that place at that moment. I was more like gas around a spark. In later reflection and meditation, it became evident that even in these "negotiating times and places" we at ACB are called to be the redeeming presence of Christ to a hurting and confused world.

Frustrated? YES! Do we give up hope? NO! As our focus continues to be on the redeeming power of God in Jesus Christ for a hurting and confused world, we become energized with new hope and possibility.

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed...

AFCU Board members and friends, ACB has been planted in the ground of Dennewitzplatz in the heart of the city of Berlin, Germany. As we are obedient to the calling God has called us to, we will grow, mature, bloom, become stronger and provide a nesting place for the birth of children of the kingdom. We would ask that you continue to be a vibrant partner with us in this endeavor.

Blessings and Joy,

*Rev. Ben H. Coltvet, ACB Pastor*

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## From the Intern

Some years I struggle with a feeling of dismay following Easter Sunday. So Jesus has been raised from the dead. That's awesome! But Jesus did not stay around; for a few weeks, he visited his disciples, but then he ascended to God. From this point on, we have left the realm of Jesus the guy and entered into something beyond our understanding.

It would be really comforting if Jesus had stayed around, taught the disciples for at least another year, and then graduated them to ministry. It would be even better if he had stayed in human form on earth so that we could always get his answers to the dilemmas of life. But he ascended, so we lack that luxury.

Jesus ascended. His human form left us. (And oh, Jesus, why did you have to leave? In your absence, we the Church, your own Body argue and fight over how to live out your will, and we have caused much trouble, too. And our world is difficult; we need you here and now!)

Walter Wangerin, Jr. writes about childbearing as having two parts: The mother puts aside much of her own life to meet the needs of her child. She sacrifices. And then she must struggle to send her child out into the world. "Go away from me — in order to be." In order for her child to reach adulthood and fulfillment, the mother must let go, fully aware of the dangers of the world, but also aware of the greater danger of clinging.[1]

I think that this is what Jesus' leaving is about, too. Like a mother, Jesus realizes that his children must confront the world on their own, and he frees — and forces — them to do this. Jesus leaves so that the disciples can grow into spiritual maturity. (Remember: when Jesus was with them, the disciples fought over how to live out his will, and they caused him much trouble, too. Fully-grown adults squabbled like children.) By leaving, Jesus says, "I am leaving you so that you can fully be."

And being is not easy. We must face the temptations and dangers of the world. We must make decisions, and sometimes choose between the lesser of two evils. To be as Christians often involves choosing the hard way of suffering so that we can grow rather than the comfortable safe road of the status quo.

We are left to grow up, but Jesus does not leave us alone. Jesus does not abandon, but sends the disciples — and us — a gift. We celebrate this gift at Pentecost, when Jesus' promised Spirit enters the disciples and the Church is born. We are given the

Spirit, the giver of life, and the same connection to God that Jesus had. Like a good mother, Jesus has connected us with his source for strength, love, joy, and hope. Jesus has connected us with the very Source of all, so that we as individuals and as the Church can grow together into God's kingdom here on earth.

Thanks be to God for the mothering love of Jesus!

*Intern Beth, ACB, May 2004 newsletter*

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## Luther Church Development Campaign

### The Big Picture: Strategic issues

During the 4-1/2 day AFCU conference held in Florida the ACB had the opportunity to make several presentations about our ministry in Berlin as well as the Development Project and Campaign. Pastor Ben Coltvet presented an overview of the ministry and outreach work. Denise Banks-Grasedyck presented the current status on the project as well as on the capital campaign and Henning Egner presented a status update on the work cultivating the ACB alumni. In addition to the updates, a list of ways in which the AFCU might continue to support ACB in both ministry and the development project was presented. The AFCU conference was underscored by a very cooperative mood. The AFCU board was positive and encouraging about the project and campaign and very excited about supporting our ministry and the opportunities to strengthen its ties to ACB.

*May 2004 newsletter*

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## President's Report

One devotional booklet I use is Our Daily Bread. In the last quarterly issue I was struck by an entry that was based on 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31. This is the text relating to the church being composed of those with different talents and even points out in verse 22 that those members that seem weaker are necessary. Dennis De Haan, the author of the devotion, said to imagine a church where each member uses his or her strength to make up for another's weakness. When each member fulfills its function, the entire body benefits. It then closes with a poem by Bosch:

*Continued on page 10*

*Continued from page 9*

*God can take a lowly vessel,  
Shape it with His mighty hand,  
Fill it with a matchless treasure,  
Make it serve a purpose grand.*

ACB has grown significantly in this past year in terms of members. New people are joining committees and lending a hand where they can. It is my hope that each member seeks and finds the area or areas where God can use him/her in supporting the mission of ACB to be a church home to all people. Our challenges continue to be large, but through the efforts of everyone and God's guidance and grace, each challenge can be met and overcome. I am so thankful for the many who are already using their strengths to work us through the "growing pains." As the campaign motto says, one euro or more per person can provide the development team with the monetary means to make some of the necessary changes so our facility can meet our needs. Our intern's project sets goals for ACB to become more visible and involved in the community surrounding the Luther Church. Let's jump in and reflect the light of Christ to those around us!

If you have not yet found your niche, I encourage you to pray for help in discerning whether your eyes can help ACB see its vision, your ears can hear of ways we can reach out, your voice can sing praises or speak to others, your hands can work, your feet can move ACB forward, your head can help plan for the needs or serve on a committee or council. Each part is essential. YOU are essential!

Changes that can be seen include the city's work on the park and the parking spaces, repair to the roof, a better sound system, altar paraments for each season in the church year, a children's choir and gospel choir in addition to the regular choir, increased number of adults attending Sunday morning adult forum. We can look forward to improved sanitation, our landscaping around the church building, removal of the graffiti, an even better sound system, and some painting inside the building to make it have a more cheerful atmosphere. We continue to take one step at a time in working through the needs and continually assessing what must be done.

*Ruth Bakke, ACB Church Council President,  
Annual Report*

# VIENNA CONNECTION



## Does God see your "smoke signal"?

These can be difficult days for many in this time of war and terror. I am often heartened in my own faith by the example of John who continued to write on his island prison on Patmos, even though he was separated from all those whom he loved. Nevertheless, in all of our difficulties, God promises to be with us, often in ways that we can neither imagine nor understand.

This story of a man on a shipwrecked island is one such example. He was the only survivor of a shipwreck and was washed up on a small, uninhabited island.

He prayed feverishly for God to rescue him, and every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none seemed forthcoming. Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood to protect him from the elements, and to store his few possessions. But then one day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames, the smoke rolling up to the sky. The worst had happened; everything was lost. He was stunned with grief and anger. "God, how could you do this to me!" he cried. Early the next day, however, he was awakened by the sound of a ship that was approaching the island. It had come to rescue him. "How did you know I was here?" asked the weary man of his rescuers. "We saw your smoke signal," they replied.

It is easy to get discouraged when things are going bad. But we shouldn't lose heart, because God is at work in our lives, even in the midst of pain and suffering. Remember, next time your little hut is burning to the ground — it just may be a smoke signal that summons grace of God.

For all the negative things we have to say to ourselves, God has a positive answer for it:

*You say: "It's impossible"*

*God says: All things are possible (Luke 18:27)*

*You say: "I'm too tired"*

*God says: I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28-30)*

*You say: "Nobody really loves me"*

*God says: I love you (John 3:16 & John 13:34)*

*You say: "I can't go on"*

*God says: My grace is sufficient (II Corinthians 12:9 & Psalm 91: 15)*

*You say: "I can't figure things out"*

*God says: I will direct your steps (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

*You say: "I can't do it"*

*God says: You can do all things (Philippians 4:13)*

*You say: "I'm not able"*

*God says: I am able (II Corinthians 9:8)*

*You say: "It's not worth it"*

*God says: It will be worth it (Roman 8:28)*

*You say: "I can't forgive myself"*

*God says: I FORGIVE YOU (I John 1:9 & Romans 8:1)*

*You say: "I can't manage"*

*God says: I will supply all your needs (Philippians 4:19)*

*You say: "I'm afraid"*

*God says: I have not given you a spirit of fear (II Timothy 1:7)*

*You say: "I'm always worried and frustrated"*

*God says: Cast all your cares on ME (I Peter 5:7)*

*You say: "I don't have enough faith"*

*God says: I've given everyone a measure of faith (Romans 12:3)*

*You say: "I'm not smart enough"*

*God says: I give you wisdom (I Corinthians 1:30)*

*You say: "I feel all alone"*

*God says: I will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13: 5)*

*Rev. James Wiberg, pastor VCC*

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# God Always Takes Care Of Us

Life is a series of transitions, one leading to the next, some are joyous, some so comfortable that we barely even notice them, others as exhilarating as the deep plunge of a roller-coaster and then there are those that are so frightening that we can scarcely believe we went through them once we are on the opposite end. And through all of these transitions, be they of the thrilling or the terrifying sort, we must always remember that God is with us. I know that God has been with me through mine and I rest assured in the knowledge that he will be with me in all those unforeseen pathways yet to come.

In the past year, my life has been filled with changes. Last March, Saint Patrick's Day to be exact, I opened with trembling hands a thin envelope from the Fulbright Commission. I was waiting on news about the Fulbright grant I had applied for the previous fall and, judging by the thinness of the envelope, I was sure that it was a rejection. A lump was forming in my throat — studying opera in Vienna was such a beautiful dream and I was almost certain now that it was not going to happen. I could hardly get the letter open — my hands were shaking so badly as I stood in the kitchen, my mom standing breathlessly in front of me, not daring to ask what the letter said. I finally was able to get the letter out and read it and to my great surprise it started out with the words, "I am pleased to inform you..." We were going to Vienna!

I say "we" because in addition to taking my comprehensive exams for my Master's Degree in German Literature and getting ready to graduate, I was also planning a wedding with Greg, (then my wonderful fiancé now my wonderful husband of course). It was a great time, extremely busy, but great. So many changes were happening all at once and so wonderfully that you couldn't help but feel God's presence all around you. It was as if blessings were raining from the sky. I was singing Violetta in La Traviata at my University that March, the same week that I was taking my comprehensive exams, planning showers and other wedding things as well as being a bridesmaid in another wedding. I look back and know that there is no way I could have gotten through all of that on my own. What wonderful plans God makes for us when we let Him have the control. In addition to doing all of the things that normal couples have to do when they get married, Greg and I were now trying to find a home in another country, which was an ocean away (and a seven-hour time difference).

We wanted to make sure that we had a place to live, but more importantly, we wanted to find a spiritual home. I was beginning to get very anxious about this, but then my wonderful Greg stopped me and said, "Why are you worrying? God always takes care of us — you know that." His words reminded me of 2 Corinthians 9:8 "And God will generously provide all you need" and couldn't have been more true. A quiet calm began to enter my heart, after all this whole trip to Vienna was just another blessing, so why should I worry? After that, things just seemed to fall into place.

Greg was out on the Internet, looking for an apartment that would fit into our budget, when he came across a webpage that had links for all sorts of things in Vienna — one of the most important being English-speaking churches. For although I could understand a German service, Greg did not yet speak German and we both knew that going to a church where only one of us understood what was being said would not work. Greg showed me the page and I began looking for a church. To my surprise, there were several choices and at first it seemed that it would be very difficult to choose between them. We began checking the individual web pages and sending out e-mails. We went to the Episcopal Church in Texas, but for some reason, the English-speaking Episcopal Church in Vienna didn't seem like the right place for us. When I came across the Vienna Community Church web page something caught my eye. It was the mission statement of the church.

"The congregation of the Vienna Community Church being international, interracial, and interdenominational in composition, and ecumenical in spirit, is broadly tolerant of liberal, traditional and conservative theology. We seek to provide an atmosphere in which all people, native English speakers and those who speak English as a second language, may be renewed to meet the challenges of living in a cosmopolitan community. Called by the Grace of Jesus Christ through Baptism and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we, the people of the VCC share a commitment to nurture personal spiritual growth and to spread God's Word through: worship, witness, service, study, stewardship, fellowship and fun."

This sounded like the sort of church family Greg and I wanted to belong to. I sent an email to Pastor Wiberg, and soon shortly afterwards he sent a friendly reply and offered to introduce us to other

members of the church. We were very excited our first Sunday in Vienna as we headed to the church. We found the lovely Reformed Lutheran Church with its traditional Viennese-yellow exterior and charming copper green steeple in the heart of Vienna's first district and were taken with its beauty. The interior of the 'Reformierte Stadtkirche,' the host of the VCC, is equally beautiful — its lofty interior domes painstakingly decorated with rows of ornate flowers, but it was the beauty of the people inside the stunning church that made Greg and I feel that God had led us to our new church home. We were greeted with warmth and a sense of community that is precious and rare. The love of Christ radiated from the congregation and its pastor.

After our first Sunday service, Greg and I were invited to go out to eat with a group from the church at a local restaurant. We got to know Pastor Wiberg and Luray, his wife who also directs the choir, as well as several members of the church, one of which was an outgoing Fulbright Student herself, celebrating her last Sunday with the VCC before she returned to the States. We felt immediately accepted by all and before the meal was over Greg and I had made new friends, and gotten recruited for the church choir. The unconditional loving acceptance that we found that day and every day since is probably the quality of the VCC that we most cherish because it so truly reflects the love of Christ. When Christ ministered to the people, He treated the Gentile and the Jew, the rich and the poor and the men and the women and children all with the same unconditional love and acceptance.

I truly believe that to mirror this amazing non-judgmental love in our lives and communities is the greatest and most important role the Christian Church has to play in this world. We have members from many different cultures, races and denominations in our congregation and together we form a beautiful and diverse group of believers, united by our faith in the Most High. When I look down from the choir loft and see the wonderful mixture of people that God has brought together in His Name, it gives me hope that we will some day achieve peace in this world torn by war, terrorism and strife.

It has been almost a year since Greg and I first came to the VCC, and our experience here has been so positive that Greg and I have decided to

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*Continued on page 12*

## Project Centipede- The Personal Experience

(Al and Sue Liebetrau were members of the Project Centipede team that traveled from Vienna to Romania in May 2001. The following is the last in the three-part account describing their experiences. The group of 20 adults and teenagers left Vienna on a bus loaded with nearly 10 tons of food, clothing, and educational supplies. The Project supports training workshops for mentally handicapped youth and assists 3 grade schools.)

We also delivered some medicine to a needy woman, and then headed to Pastor Hegyi's school, where we handed out Easter candy and more colorful boxes to a room of elementary age children. Next, at a technical school, we delivered some computers. The teachers were quite knowledgeable, but very short of supplies, especially current books and journals. From there, it was back to Hegyi's for dinner.

By 9:00 the next morning, we were checked out of the hotel. The weather was foggy. Our first stop was Olteni (Old River). There, we visited a school where slightly handicapped (mentally) children could get a good education and learn trades enabling many of them to make a living.

As we unpacked the bus, a group of about 80 gypsies, mothers, fathers and children, gathered around. This "gypsy picnic" was a planned event, so our leader formed the children in a circle to play games as we unloaded supplies for the school. Following that, we placed a pile of colorful boxes in the middle of the circle and began passing them out, one to a child. However, one mother saw that someone had two boxes, and sent her child to get another — or something. We aren't sure exactly what happened, but suddenly there was a melee in the center, with pummeling, crushed boxes, etc. Of course we stopped everything — no more handouts — although we did make sure that every child present received a box.

The gypsies were interesting, beautiful people, especially the children. They are very different from the children in the school and, being outside the system, we suspect they are very self-reliant. After our school visit, we nervously returned to the bus, (in a tight group), but the gypsies only stood and watched. We wondered what would happen next time, or whether there would even be a next time. Sad.

Back at Csikszereda, we intended to distribute colorful boxes to Pastor Hegyi's school children, but because of a school holiday no one was around. Instead, we walked around the small town, where we saw beautiful old buildings in great need of renova-

tion, and a beautiful new church, where Pastor Hegyi serves a congregation of more than 1000 people!

Around 9:30 pm, after dinner, we said good-byes and headed out. We held our breaths at the borders, but there were no incidents. When we crossed into Austria, the bus load cheered! Since the boxes were gone, we could spread out, so the back was set up as a "party room" and we celebrated a successful trip. We finally reached Vienna about 5:00 pm, very tired and somewhat overwhelmed by the immensity of our experience.

Even now, nearly three years later, we remember the generosity of the Romanian people. Despite the poverty, we were always served refreshments wherever we went. Unfortunately, government support for schools and orphanages was minimal, so leaders had to be creative to find necessary resources. In this regard many of the items provided by Project Centipede were vital. However, we also noted that many of the supplies can now be bought in Romania—the folks just lack the money to do so.

Considering the difficulties of crossing borders, the bureaucratic stumbling blocks placed in our way, and the problems of the school closing, we suspect that in the future, Project Centipede will evolve into a different form of support.

*Al and Sue Liebetrau, VCC*

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stay in Vienna for another year. We have made many wonderful friends experienced wonderful moments of music, fellowship and worship and we both know that the VCC is one of the greatest gifts the Lord has given us here. However, even in times of great contentment transitions must occur and one such change will take place in August when Pastor Wiberg and Luray will retire and the VCC will bring a new pastor into our church family. Although the part of me that likes to worry might try to wonder anxiously how we will ever find another Pastor and his wife to take their place, I must remember that God will be with us through this transition — just as he always is.

*Rebecca Babb-Nelson, VCC correspondent*



**The Bridge Editor**  
Katherine Eppert  
eppdk@aol.com

**American & Foreign  
Christian Union**

475 Riverside Dr., Suite 2050  
New York, NY, 10115  
[www.afcuconnections.org](http://www.afcuconnections.org)

**AFCU President**

James Craig  
jwccraig2@aol.com

**American Church in Berlin**

Onkel-Tom-Strasse 93  
14169, Berlin, Germany  
[american.church@berlin.de](mailto:american.church@berlin.de)

**American Church in Paris**

65, quai d'Orsay  
75007, Paris, France  
[secretaty@acparis.org](mailto:secretaty@acparis.org)  
[www.acparis.org](http://www.acparis.org)

**Vienna Community Church**

Dorotheergasse 16  
A-1010, Vienna, Austria  
[james.wiberg@chello.at](mailto:james.wiberg@chello.at)  
[www.ViennaCommunityChurch.com](http://www.ViennaCommunityChurch.com)

## AFCU Web site

Check out the AFCU web site at [www.afcuconnection.org](http://www.afcuconnection.org) for the latest information.

*Bob DeLuryea, AFCU Web master*