



Afcu

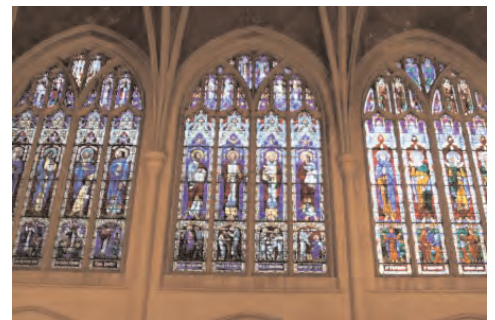
American & Foreign

Christian Union

FAITH INTO ACTION NEWSLETTER No. 2

motorized projection screen used for the new contemporary worship service initiated in January 2008.

Greetings to our faithful donors whose generosity has made possible some of the greatest material challenges which we have had to face. The success of the FIA campaign has already allowed the following initiatives to be financed:



1. The second and final phase of the gymnasium renovation under the sanctuary is completed. The work involved relocating the Youth & Young Adult Pastor's office, sound proofing the ceiling in order to allow simultaneous use of the Sanctuary, a new hardwood sports floor, new ventilation system, new lighting, renovated showers, new storage area, new built in benches and coat racks. It was inaugurated on October 17th 2007 during the 150th Anniversary celebration weekend which many of you attended.
2. The refurbishing of the Associate Pastor's apartment on the 4th floor including (electricity, painting & new carpeting) has been completed.
3. The renovation of the main Jean Nicot staircase & 4th floor hallway has been completed.
4. The restoration of the Sanctuary was completed on schedule and inaugurated on March 23rd 2008, Easter weekend. The work involved the cleaning and restoration of the stained glass windows, the cleaning and repair of the stucco walls and brick arched ceiling, improved lighting with hidden wiring, a new sound system, and a

5. The renovation, cleaning and retuning of the Beckerath Organ was completed on schedule during August of this year in time for its 20th anniversary.
6. The conversion of storage area on the 4th floor into a new 1-bedroom staff apartment is complete.
7. The Christian lending Library, the main reception area, the staff offices and all of the garden level meeting rooms and common areas have been freshly repainted.
8. Additional projects to be undertaken when the funds are available include:
 - Restoration of the Steinway grand piano and the Pleyel grand piano
 - Replacing/renovating the wood floors in the Church building
 - Redesign and soundproofing between the sanctuary and the theatre to enable simultaneous theatre performances & film projections
 - Exterior cleaning of the Church spire and sanctuary (legal obligation)
 - Sound proofing the ceilings of the Library and the Thurber rooms on

In This Issue

FIA Newsletter1
 AFCU President's Message2
 AFCU Development Committee ...2
 The Heritage Society3
 Your Church Memories3
 Ever Changing Congregation4
 Going Green4

Berlin Connection

The Good Ship ACB5
 "Come and See"5
 Voicews of Gratitude6

Vienna Connection

News from VCC6
 50 Years of Ecumenical Life8

Paris Connection

ACP Pastor8
 "It doesn't get any better than this" 10
 A Riddle10
 A Short Story for the Young at Heart11
 Paris Remembered11
 Other Important Info.12

the 2nd floor in order to preserve the staff living quarters above

9. Statistics

- FIA receipts as of Sept.: 711.000€ (\$960.00 USD) at 1€ = \$1.35 USD
- FIA expenditures: 868.000€ (\$1,172.00 USD)
- Shortfall to be covered by year end: -157.000€ (-\$212.00 USD)
- Anticipated pledges by year end: 147.000€ (\$198.00 USD)
- Shortfall at year end if all pledges are honoured: -10.000€ (-\$13.50 USD)
- Advance payments: ????

God Bless you all for furthering the heavenly kingdom on Earth!

*Respectfully submitted,
William Johnston
Property & Development Chair*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As President of the AFCU, I had the privilege of participating in the installation service for the new ACP Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. R Scott Herr on the 21st of September. Don Eppert, Chairperson of the AFCU Human Resources committee, also participated in this service. The service was inspirational in both word and music. I encourage you to read Don's article covering this event in more detail. I also want to acknowledge and thank Kathie Eppert, another AFCU Board member, for her presence at this service.

Perhaps the most common word people are hearing in church these days is stewardship. It is at this time of year that churches send out their appeal to their congregations, friends and alumni. The three partner churches, American Church in Berlin, the American Church in Paris and the Vienna Community Church are currently running their stewardship campaigns. In addition, the AFCU is also conducting its annual Thank-A-Thon to reach out to our friends to thank and acknowledge the support given to all four organizations. In this way all four organizations are working in general for the global ministry of Jesus Christ and specifically for the local communities in which the three churches reside.

Given the current economic climate we find throughout the world many of us will perceive a more intense challenge to meet or exceed our financial commitments. God knows our strengths and our weaknesses. He gives us opportunities (challenges) to overcome our weaknesses as well as expand our strengths. As we each examine our individual financial commitments for this year I would encourage everyone to seek God's help in this decision process. I would offer the following two passages from The Message (bible translation by Eugene Peterson) as ways in which God can work in us:

One poor woman came up and put in two small coins – a measly two cents. Jesus called his disciples and said, “The truth is that this poor widow gave more to the collection than all the others put together. All the others gave what they’ll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn’t afford – she gave her all.”

There was a certain official from the king's court whose son was sick. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and asked that he come down and heal his son, who was on the brink of death. Jesus put him off: “Unless you people are dazzled by a miracle, you refuse to believe.” But the court official wouldn't be put off. “Come down! It's life or death for my son.” Jesus simply replied, “Go home. Your son lives.” The man believed the bare word Jesus spoke and headed home. On his way back, his servants intercepted him and announced, “Your son lives!” He asked them what time he began to get better. They said, “The fever broke yesterday afternoon at one o'clock.” The father knew that that was the very moment Jesus has said, “Your son lives.” That clinched it. Not only he but his entire household believed.

No matter how little we have, no matter how much is at risk, we always know that God bestows his blessings on the faithful. In these times of uncertainty and change let us focus our

attention on God's needs of us rather than perceived needs for ourselves and let the faithful rejoice.

Gregg Foster

AFCU DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Atlanta, Georgia was the site of our fall AFCU Development Committee meeting. The one-day meeting was held October 18, 2008 at the Embassy Suites Hotel-Airport. A total of eighteen members attended the meeting along with two guests. All members are volunteers and pay their own travel expenses. Bill Sewell, the newest member of the board, attended the meeting and immediately became active in representing the Vienna Community Church.

Reports were received and discussions took place under the leadership of six of the eight Champions of our major activities. The other topics of donor recognition and annual funds solicitation were also covered.

The thrust for delivery of “The Bridge” by electronic means continues as a cost saving move. This will be pursued during the annual “Thank-A-Thon” calling campaign currently underway in November.

The annual solicitation envelopes accompanied by informational letters from the pastors of ACB, ACP, and VCC are scheduled to be sent out in mid-November. This year we will also continue our custom of sending out Christmas cards.

It was mentioned that recent (October 3, 2008) legislation changes under “The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008” provide renewed opportunities for charitable donors. Tax-free annual distributions of up to \$100,000 from IRAs can be made for charitable purposes through December 31, 2009. This provision previously had expired at the end of 2007 and is in effect for those over 70 1/2 years of age at the time the donation is made to a charity.

One especially interesting feature of our meeting took place with an interactive video discussion via Skype between our location in the Embassy Suites Hotel and the American Church in Paris. Pastor Scott Herr and Bill Johnston participated in the discussion from Paris along with all the members of our committee in Atlanta. Everyone was brought up-to-date on activities at the ACP as well as the results of the Faith into Action capital campaign. The quality was very good and the interactive nature made it feel like we were all together in the same room. The concept will be used more in the future to reduce travel expense and involve individuals who otherwise may be unable to attend the meeting in person.

The next meeting of the AFCU Development Committee will take place in Vienna, Austria on Saturday, April 18, 2009.

*Russell McNaughton
Chairperson, Development Committee*

THE HERITAGE SOCIETY AND PLANNED GIVING

Many of us find it difficult to face the reality that life is uncertain and planning for death is difficult and not a very pleasant experience. While most people have considered preparing or have actually prepared a will, doing comprehensive, estate planning is something that we all tend to put off until tomorrow.

Chances are that you may have a taxable estate, and if you do, you probably have assets that need to be directed to various people and organizations when you pass away. Assets can be sent to one or more of three places; your relatives or friends, to charitable organizations or to the government in the form of taxes. In planning for that distribution, the best assets to give to your friends and relatives are those that are not taxed or taxed very little. The best assets to give to charities are those that are highly taxed.

One example of the application of this approach is to give appreciated stock to your family because of a step-up in the basis value of the stock to 100% of

market at the time of transfer. Assuming you want to donate some assets to a charity you can maximize the benefits to your heirs by giving a qualified retirement plan to the charity rather than the reverse approach. When you are doing your planning, it is important to keep this in mind and discuss the options with your estate planning professional.

Remember that planned gifts to a charity can save taxes, provide a legacy, and assist charitable institutions in carrying out their mission and assisting people that are less fortunate than we are.

Planned giving opportunities in support of the AFCU and our three member churches have appeared in "The Bridge" publication and can be reviewed by going to our AFCU web site at www.afcubridge.org.

The AFCU has a 501 (c) 3 status with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a not-for-profit charitable organization. In all cases it is important to obtain the assistance of a legal or accounting professional while doing your estate planning.

If we can be of assistance, please contact us at afcuheritage@afcubridge.org

*Russell McNaughton,
Heritage Society*

YOUR CHURCH MEMORIES & FUNDING SOURCE SUGGESTIONS, FUEL AFCU DEVELOPMENT

Greetings to our member churches and friends around the world! So many of you are faithful supporters and have been generously giving to our beloved churches in Berlin, Paris, and Vienna for years. We know that these are difficult times and that market volatility has put many of us to the test.

To ease the financial needs of our churches and their supporters in a climate of challenging financial markets and unfavorable currency exchange rates, the AFCU board is increasing its development focus on institutions – foundations, churches with outreach

budgets, and any other grant-making bodies that you might suggest! This past summer, I researched more than 750 grant-making foundations and narrowed that population down to about forty groups that should be receptive to grant requests and proposals from our member churches. The key criteria isolated for this purpose are: Christian mission, evangelism, youth ministry, Christian visual and performing arts, and urban ministry.

To facilitate the often cumbersome proposal-writing requirements and supporting-document filings necessary to pursue larger grants, a "boiler plate" questionnaire has been compiled that each of the member churches will be asked to complete and submit to their AFCU church champions before February 1, 2009. In the interim, we will be contacting selected churches with outreach budgets and the forty targeted foundations to request their guidelines, applications, and deadlines. Once the electronic versions of completed individual church questionnaires and supplementary information are received, we can begin to submit proposals.

The process of seeking institutional funding sources is obviously more arduous and time-consuming than approaching individual friends who already know the value of the faith communities that we are seeking to support. The work required to seek significant grants is initially demanding, but it is also cumulative. Together, we can build a foundation that your current AFCU board and future development champions can build upon. We welcome your suggestions about this process, about past efforts to pursue grants, about potential funding sources to contact, and about your treasured memories of the churches in Berlin, Paris, and Vienna.

Once any given foundation's guidelines and proposal requirements are met, it is most often the stories of personal and/or communal transformation that distinguish applications when board members must choose which ones to fund. Please share the faith legacy and promise of the church you love with organizations capable of providing significant financial support to

our member churches both now and in years to come. We look forward to hearing from you!

Karen Halac Sinniger

Contact: karenhalac@aya.yale.edu

(As some of you may know, I had the joy of serving on the pastoral staff of the American Church in Paris in 2004/5. ACP is also the church where I was baptized and where my husband and I were married 25 years ago. www.yale.edu/divinity/homepage/grad_s_halac.shtml)

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 and fifty 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 wasn’t any longer the same: it had 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 ministry/ worship style or staff/member ability has changed, but the congregations have stayed the course. The scope and enhancement of membership variety 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. AFCU will provide substantial support. Thank the Lord!

What kind of changes and challenges can be projected for the years ahead?

- 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 “internationalist” 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.

*Arthur Bauer,
past NIC Director*

GOING GREEN

What is 12 pages long, full of important information and a few black and white pictures? The Bridge, sent by snail mail. What is more than 12 pages long, full of important information and lots of pictures in color? The Green Bridge, sent electronically!

The American and Foreign Christian Union is going green! We would like to encourage our Friends to help us by asking to receive the Bridge electronically. While this will mean a little more work for you, since you will need to update us on your email address changes and not send us to Junk mail, it will allow us to save trees as well as money on postage and printing costs.

If you currently receive the Bridge though email you do not have to do anything. If you are not receiving it through email, please send your email address to:

AFCUEmail@afcubridge.org

with a note saying that you would like to go green with the electronic Bridge.

Of course the hard copy of the Bridge will continue to be sent to anyone who prefers it. All of our Friends are important to us. The American Church in Berlin, the American Church in Paris and the Vienna Community Church need your continued prayers and support.

And to all of you our sincere thanks.

*Kathie Eppert
Editor the Bridge*

Berlin Connection



THE “GOOD SHIP ACB!”

In the past few weeks the radio, television, newspapers and daily conversation have focused on the economies of the world. Bailing out financial institutions, tightening of credit availability, diminishing investment funds and increased unemployment – the list goes on and on.

The last few weeks have been a very challenging ride in the economic market place that is affecting our emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual life significantly. I have been likening this time to a very serious journey, not in the calm waters of the harbor, but rather out on the open sea. The “Good Ship ACB” is getting tossed about with a violent wind, huge waves, frightening swells and fantastic free falls. This is of great concern for all of us. It is serious.

As a congregation, ACB is struggling financially. We are going to adopt a budget on November 9 for the year 2009. The request from all of the committees to carry out our mission and ministry in 2009 exceeds the recommended income projection by 34,000 Euros. The finance committee has made this recommendation to the Church Council and all committees:

- 1) Cut programs or activities to meet budget.
- 2) Increase donations – but this can only be done with concrete solutions and actions, not just hope that the increases will come in.
- 3) Draw extra from AFCU funds – this is an option, but NOT

recommended from the finance committee. We strongly believe that drawing more than the interest is dangerous and irresponsible.

All of the committees and the Church Council are working hard to present a budget for the congregational meeting on November 9 that will be realistic and hopeful. It will take all of us as the community of ACB to work with this challenge. The proposed budget will be available Sunday, October 26 at the church for your prayerful reflection.

At the time of writing, ACB is 24,000 Euros behind in our financial commitment in our mission and ministry for 2008. The “Good Ship ACB” is being tested! Are we exuberant about this? NO! Hopeful? YES! The “Good Ship ACB” is certainly being tested. Yet, in the midst of all of this uncertainty we move forward in the assurance that we are doing what we are called to do – being a lifeboat, a source of hope, a shining light and a secure transport in a very dangerous time in the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore we do not despair as those who have no hope. It is our task to be faithful and obedient “deck hands” following the direction of our Captain, God in Jesus Christ.

As each of us reflect on our relationship to God and his gifts to us during this discerning time, we are invited to be faithful “deck hands” following the direction of our Captain, God in Jesus Christ! We need your help!

Thank you, ACB’ers, for your continued prayers, volunteer services, support, love and financial sacrificial giving. Without you, we could not be out on the open sea doing what God in Jesus Christ has called us to be – an ecumenical home for people from diverse nations sharing God’s love in Jesus Christ!

*To God be the Glory,
Pastor Ben Coltvet*

“COME AND SEE” INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN BERLIN, GERMANY

On the dry, cool afternoon of 12th October 2008, the Berlin public was invited to the first Inter-Religious Fest (“Come And See”) by seven churches/mosques in the Schoeneberg and adjacent Tiergarten district: a German Lutheran church and American Church Berlin (ACB), two Islamic mosques (Turkish background), a Catholic church, a Syrian-Orthodox church, and a Protestant free church (not part of the German Protestant organization EKD).

They presented their mission at information booths; food stalls served as additional attraction. Each church/mosque briefly introduced itself and gave a 20-minute musical performance on the stage at the center of the church yard where the Fest took place. The children's program was coordinated by representatives of all seven organizations and remained busy the whole afternoon. The event also served as an opportunity for the religious leaders to get to know each other better.

The inter-religious dialogue process, that this Fest served to make public, began in early 2007 at the invitation of the district administration, Quartiers management (QM) Schoeneberger Norden. This QM-type of local administrative body is similar to a Dutch model that dates back to 1985. It was introduced in various German states from 1999, as implementation deficits of public administration at the local level became evident. An attempt to encourage citizen participation 'from above', it aims to stem the decline of rather anonymous inner-city districts whose multicultural setting lacks cross-cultural contacts. The inter-religious initiative in Schoeneberg-Tiergarten is a first in Berlin, as administrators admitted that nobody had yet thought of working with religious organizations to enhance community life.

The inter-religious dialogue is conducted by a steering group composed of two-to-three members of the participating churches/mosques. On 30 August

and 5 September 2007, the QM had invited that steering group to a 4-hour Futures Conference that aimed to integrate the different concerns and to jointly develop a vision for the future of the district. The declared aim of the QM representatives is to overcome the gap between cultures and religions, to promote exchange and to invite these religious institutions to take more responsibility for the community at their doorstep.

The conference was led by a professional facilitator who set out the principles:

- seek a joint perspective that integrates the concerns of all participants,
- work in self-steering groups,
- develop concrete measures once a consensus is reached.

In this process, all ideas are to be accepted as legitimate, all sides listen to the others, everything is written down for future use, the emphasis is on joint initiatives. The same facilitator continues to support the ongoing dialogue process, he prepares the meetings and is paid by QM. The idea for a neighborhood Interreligious Fest emerged as a result of that conference.

A major concern for all dialogue participants is the situation of youths in this rather poor neighborhood, how to offer them better education, meaningful leisure activities and practical intercultural interaction. Asked to cite deficits, some Christian representatives deplored the absence of interaction with people of other religions and cultures. A Muslim pointed out that their members had to cope with very limited space and an environment of street prostitution and drug dealers in front of their doorstep. Members of the mosque are mostly not well-off, many first-generation migrants struggle with the German language, and they lack the funding that the German churches receive from state-collected taxes. ACB was cited as positive example of outreach into the community: the weekly food distribution to those eligible for welfare benefits, and the annual Street Fair geared mainly to the children of the neighborhood. The bigger of the two mosques has also had a youth fair, which it hopes will reach

beyond its immediate membership in the future.

The participating organizations agree that closer contact with schools and political representatives will be part of their ongoing dialogue. Several members of the steering group also expressed their desire for a truly religious dialogue at a very personal level, explaining to each other what our personal faith is about.

*Dr. Sabine Grund
ACB, Berlin*

“VOICES OF GRATITUDE – A CORNUCOPIA OF MUSIC”

ACB'S 6TH ANNUAL THANKSGIVING
BENEFIT DINNER AND CONCERT
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22

If you have been shopping recently, you may wonder what all that “Lebkuchen” and “Stolle” in every store aisle is trying to tell us in late September. Yes, the real message behind the marzipan madness is that it is high time to get ready for Thanksgiving at ACB!

We have so much for which we want to give thanks. ACB has been welcoming worshippers and seekers to Berlin and sharing God's love and the light of Christ since 1865! Please join us on November 22 when once again we welcome about four hundred members, friends and friends-to-be for fantastic

food, fascinating fellowship and magnificent music in our home, the historic Luther Church on Dennewitzplatz!

For the 6th year the American Church in Berlin presents a special combination of a dinner and concert. First enjoy a family-style traditional Thanksgiving Dinner prepared to perfection by our own Dinner Team. The dinner includes homemade pumpkin soup and roasted turkey complete with all the trimmings! After treating your taste buds, you can feast your ears on select musical morsels from classical to contemporary, instrumental and vocal: Opera, Gospel, Christian contemporary, Soul, Jazz and more.

The benefit will be held on Saturday, Nov. 22, 2008 at 18 hrs. The concert will follow the dinner and begin at 20.15 hrs. Tickets for this complete event, including dinner and the concert will be available beginning Sunday, October 19. Tickets cost 20 Euros p.P. full price. Reduced price for children and students as well as those with social benefits I.D.s is 8 Euros, proof of eligibility is needed. Children five years old and younger eat free of charge, but still need a reservation. If you are able, we kindly ask you to buy an extra full price ticket which can be given to someone who might otherwise not be able to attend this wonderful family event.

The ACB Newsletter

Vienna Connection



NEWS FROM VCC

Greetings from Pastor Randy Mundt and Vienna Community Church

Being a pastor at VCC continues to be an amazing and humbling experience. Gail, Katrina and I are honored to be a part of so many people's lives from all over the world. Each week we hear remarkable stories of personal experiences, careers, ministries, families and faith.

VCC continues to have vibrant and faithful worship of our risen savior, Jesus Christ. We look forward to the Advent season of the church year and I admit, to the



Advent season celebrated in Vienna with the “Christkindlmarkts”, beautiful decoration and twinkling lights that brighten these long winter nights. Advent will culminate with a very special Christmas Eve candlelight service of Lessons and Carols, choir music and ‘O Holy Night’ sung by Johan Botha. We would love to have you join us (through your presence and/or through your prayers)!

In this newsletter, I will highlight “opportunities of connection” within VCC. Offering points of contact, a pace of comfort and chances to interact with other Christians is the intentional focus of our ministry.

Bible Study/Confirmation: Before worship, we have between 10 – 12 adults meeting at the Chattanooga Café for a Bible Study on the Gospel of Luke. After worship, we have several children and adults taking a Ten Week confirmation class to learn and be refreshed by an overview of God’s love throughout history.

Children’s Sunday school: New volunteers stepped forward this summer to help lead and teach the VCC Sunday school class. We appreciate the dedication and interest that these teachers bring to our children. We have approx-



imately ten children on any given Sunday and enjoy having their presence in and around the church!

Music Ministry: The choir continues to grow under our youthful and enthusiastic choir director, Sabine Humber. Singers are encouraged to participate for however long they are here: a season, a month or a week. With practice being held on

Sundays before and after the service, this allows for instantaneous participation. The choir is very welcoming to all from the very experienced to the youngest member who is about 12 years of age. VCC is very blessed to hear some of the best voices in the world, but more importantly, we hear music sung from the depths of faith and commitment.

Rainer’s Tours: Rainer Zimmerman’s



reputation as being an excellent tour guide and the spirit of fun he always incorporates into his tours has caused these to become a VCC monthly event. They are highly anticipated and well attended. Following the Sunday wor-

ship and coffee hour, the group dines at a local restaurant near the tour destination. We’ve visited the gardens of Tulln, the Vienna Arsenal museum with the theme: “Wars belong to the museums”, the Zentralfriedhof cemetery, the Imperial furniture museum, and most recently the Bible Museum. For those of you attending the AFCU meeting here in Vienna this next spring, you will have the opportunity to experience a “Rainer’s Tour”.

Sweet & Savory: Another monthly



event at VCC, the Sweet & Savory is no ordinary ‘potluck’. Our fellowship hostess planned themed luncheons based on the home countries of our members. I distinctly remember the French Sweet & Savory which was blessed by donations of scrumptious cheese and wine by our French members. A very special Sweet & Savory featuring heavenly Indian cuisine was hosted by Dhory Edward and her family in memory of her husband, Dr. Robin Edward. These events have proven to be successful fund-raisers for the church and various charities.

Youth & Young Adults:

The Young Adult group continues to be hosted for Sunday evening dinners at the manse. The autumn group is smaller in numbers than the winter/spring group, but every bit as faithful and interesting. We have students studying finance, music, law, psychiatry, etc. We have career young adults who are working here (the OBB, in the Bio-tech field, as au pairs, etc.). Some of the nationalities represented are Austria, Germany,



South Africa, Honduras, Japan, China, United States, and Canada. Sunday evenings are exciting when this group comes to dinner!

Our own teenager (Katrina) has connected with the youth group of the International congregation in Bratislava to attend the AICEMEA 2008 Senior Youth Group at The Hague in the Netherlands. She has travelled to Bratislava for fund raisers as well as group building activities. Last Sunday four of their youth attended VCC and helped with the Sweet & Savory. This S & S had the theme of "Teenagers!" and all the money raised went towards their trip. VCC very generously supported the teens by donating € 594.09.

Ladies' Luncheon: The ladies of VCC and their friends have enjoyed a monthly get-together at various and interesting restaurants in Vienna. Sundays are so busy, that it is nice to have another opportunity to visit and catch up with each other's lives.

As you can hopefully see, there are many things going on at VCC. As always, we hope that you can visit us, or at least, drop us an email.

*In His Advent grace,
Pastor Randy, Gail and Katrina*

"THE VIENNA COMMUNITY CHURCH – 50 YEARS OF ECUMENICAL LIFE IN VIENNA"

...tells the story of the VCC from its beginning in 1957. The story actually begins in 1955. After the signing of the State Treaty on 15 May 1955 and the departure of the American and British Armies as well as their chaplains in the following October, the small English language congregation lost its minister. The only remaining English language Protestant worship service was in the British Embassy church. Rev. Dr. Joseph F. Bartak, an American citizen and minister of the Czech language congregation in the Methodist Church in Vienna, offered the small, active congregation of about 30 families his willingness to hold, on an interim basis, worship services in English

every Sunday in his church. With great joy and relief, this generous offer from Rev. Bartok was gratefully accepted.

Since Rev. Bartak planned to retire at the end of 1957, he asked the American Methodist Church and the National Council of Churches in the USA to assist him in finding a minister to take over the congregation. The National Council of Churches in the USA sent Dr. Otto F. Meinardus to Vienna to find out if there was a possibility of founding an English language Protestant Church in Vienna. He arrived on 4 July 1957 and preached in the "Third Methodist Church". He held meetings with representatives of the congregation and on 29 July 1957, in a meeting of those interested in founding a church, an interim Church Board was elected. The members of this board were delegated the responsibility of conducting an exploratory pledge drive to determine the financial possibility of supporting a church. They were to draw up a constitution for the church and above all were to find a church building where services could be held on a regular basis.

During his search for an appropriate place for the Sunday worship services of the VCC, Rev. Meinardus came upon the Reformierte Stadtkirche in Vienna's Inner City. It was a church building dating from the 18th century with a central location near St. Stephan's Cathedral. On 30 July 1957, Dr. Meinardus decided spontaneously to visit the church and met Rev.

Alexander Abrahamowicz in the church office. Rev. Abrahamowicz after hearing what Dr. Meinardus had to say, agreed to talk with his church board about the matter. The presbytery of the Evangelical Reformed Church Vienna inner city extended an invitation to the newly founded congregation that was accepted with joy and thankfulness. The first worship service of the VCC in the Reformierte Stadtkirche took place on 15 September 1957. The Minister of this celebration worship service was Rev. Theodore Althoff, minister of the "Third Methodist Church" in the 17th district who had lead the first service of the newly founded VCC in his church the previous Sunday.

The saying "All good things require time" can be applied to this book. A commercial artist friend volunteered to put the text and pictures in the form required for printing. To date, over half of the material is in the printing format. Unfortunately, there is little hope of having the book available by Christmas as was originally planned. We hope that our effort to tell the history of the VCC, an ecumenical congregation in a predominately Roman Catholic country - a country that was over 90% protestant until the Counter Reformation - and how it fits into the history of Protestants in Austria will be enjoyed by all who know and love the VCC.

*Louise Pickart,
VCC*

Paris Connection



Dear Members and Friends
of the AFCU,

Thanksgiving is an American holiday I have celebrated regardless of where I've lived in the world. Wherever I am, I find it meaningful to take time to reflect on the many blessings God has given. As I look back on this past year I am humbled at the lavish gifts and mercies the Lord has poured out on me and my family. The events in my life around my recent call to serve at the American Church in Paris are a great source of joy and thanksgiving for me and my family this year.

Hearing Don Eppert's voice communicating in January that I was being considered as a final candidate for the position of Senior Pastor of the American Church in Paris, interviewing with the combined AFCU and ACP search team, then meeting in Fort Collins over the weekend of Palm Sunday with the interview team of Peggy Smithhart, Peter Bannister, Don Eppert, Ted Ziemann and Norm Findley (and unofficially, Adrienne Findley as well!), and finally flying to Paris with my wife Kim for a week of meetings with the entire ACP search team, the Council and many other members of the congregation, was all a very moving experience of God's providence.

Eunice Raar and I laughed together about how the first Presbyterian pastor friend she called to "check me out" happened to be the Charlotte Somers, a member of the youth group my parents led and the daughter of the Pastor who baptized me at the First Presbyterian Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Tom Duggan asked one of his friends in Claremont if he knew of me in Mexico. Of all the people he could have asked in the state of California, he happened to ask John Watts, who with his wife Rita were some of my dearest friends at the Union Church in Mexico City and witnesses at our legal wedding! Then, despite the amazing diversity and varying denominational and theological perspectives of the ACP, there was the unanimous vote to call me. Back in Colorado, I remember driving home from work after receiving the news. Through tears of joy I wondered out loud, "Why me, God?"

And now, after a very warm welcome and smooth transition to life and ministry in Paris since July, and a moving installation service in September where Gregg Foster and Don and Kathie Eppert were in attendance, and thoughtful notes of congratulations were received from our sister churches in Berlin and Vienna, more recent meetings with the Findley's, David Moore and Geoff and Misun Lu and correspondence with Dick Bright and Ted Ziemann and so many others of you, and a Skype meeting with the Development Committee members in

Atlanta, I am flush with a sense of gratitude for the way in which God has made it clear that I am called to serve here and that God will provide the support and encouragement I need to serve the ACP with joy.

Serving with the Friday mission lunch teams, the various Council and committee leaders, the amazing staff and worship leadership team members, the wise and caring pastoral colleagues has been a delight. Every time I step into the pulpit and see a "glimpse of heaven" in the wonderfully colorful faces of the members of this congregation, each time I meet to counsel and pray with people from around the world, or visit those who are suffering in the hospital and offer encouragement and loving support, or speak at a new members' class or the Bloom Where You're Planted program or the Family Retreat and hear people share their stories in pastoral counseling, I am reminded what a tremendous gift and privilege it is to be here.

It is moving to sing the communion liturgy at the Lord's table, or to baptize children and adults from around the world and to spend time helping people to understand more deeply God's love for them and to respond in ways that are faithful and life-giving. I am thankful after each worship service to greet people on the way out and for those brief moments of pastoral contact with visitors whose lives are touched by this special congregation and the fullness of the presence of God's Spirit in our worship together.

I am thankful when I think of my wife, Kim, and our four children and how they have also enthusiastically pursued God's call to this new adventure of life and learning here in Paris. I am grateful for the many people who have helped to welcome and support us as a family, and who have taken the time to show us how to go shopping and discern the best schools for our children and the tutoring they are receiving four nights a week to help them with their homework in French.

It brings us joy to hear Daniel, Christopher, Rebecca and Matthew all say after a recent weekend holiday in

London that "It's good to come home to Paris!" To see Kim and the kids joining in worship and realize the ACP is our new faith family, that this is our new church home, brings me a deep sense of gratitude for God's goodness and generosity.

As you look at the newly restored and cleaned window that is part of the "missionary window" over the balcony at the back of our sanctuary, you can see the Risen Christ making the sign of peace. On either side of Christ's head is the Alpha and the Omega, the symbolism for the beginning and the end. I am thankful for the many beautiful personal and visual reminders of God's renewing peace and blessing offered here at the ACP and trust that God's Spirit will sustain me from the beginning to the end of my tenure here.



Looking back over this past year, I am so thankful to the Lord for all of you and your part in my life and the life of this congregation. This year, as I celebrate Thanksgiving in Paris with our new ACP family and friends, I will be thanking God for the many blessings I have received through you. In the words of my favorite Thanksgiving hymn,

"Now thank we all our God With heart and hands and voices, Who wondrous things hath done, In whom this world rejoices; Who from our mothers' arms, Hath blessed us on our way With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today."

I remain gratefully yours in Christ,

*Scott Herr
Senior Pastor
The American Church in Paris
November 2008*

“IT DOESN’T GET ANY BETTER THAN THIS”

These were the emotional words that Sr. Pastor Scott Herr pronounced just prior to the closing benediction to the September 21 worship and installation service. Pastor Herr was referring to how he felt and giving thanks to God for this opportunity to lead the American Church in Paris.

And what a celebratory service it was! The sanctuary and side chapel were completely filled, as there was only one service that day. Fred Gramann’s musical direction complimented the festive service with choral, hand bell and instrumental offerings. The choir anthem “Blest Are The Eyes That Have Not Seen You” was composed by Fred in honor of Pastor Herr. The choral introit “Lead On, O King Eternal” text was composed by the Rev. Ernest Shurtleff, associated with the ACP from 1906-1917 as pastor of American students in Paris.

The sermon was delivered by the Rev. Richard Davis, Sr. Pastor of the International Protestant Church of Zurich, a church formerly served by Pastor Herr.

Those participating in the Service of Installation were Gregg Foster, AFCU President; Peggy Smithhart, Chair of

the ACP Search Team; Francios Pierre, Vice-Chair of the ACP Search Team; Don Eppert, Chair of the AFCU Search Team and Carolyn Bouazouni, ACP Council Chair. The Charge to Pastor



Herr and the Congregation was delivered by the Rev. Richard McDermott, Sr. Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Fort Collins, CO; the church most recently served by Pastor Herr.

During the reception following the service, the Herr family was entertained by a play involving their call and relocation to Paris. Following that, the Herr fami-

ly was presented welcoming gifts from the many ethnic groups that comprise the diverse ACP family. Scott, his wife Kim and children Daniel, Christopher, Rebecca and Matthew were overwhelmed by this outpouring of friendship and love.

As an observer and participant in the day’s festive events I must say that Scott Herr’s end of the service comment was right on the mark. “It Doesn’t Get Any Better Than This” and we thank God for this auspicious beginning of Scott Herr’s ministry at ACP.

*Don Eppert,
AFCU*



A RIDDLE

What weighs 18 tons, has six lungs and is coated with several inches of dust?
Answer: The American Church organ prior to last July.

The great clean-up took place from July 1st through mid-August. Following the installation of scaffolding which extended to the top of the 11-meter case, Rolf Miehle and Sigmund Tessmer from the Beckerath Company of Hamburg went to work removing all but the largest pedal pipes. Responding to a call for volunteer pipe cleaners, a veritable mob of ACP helpers turned out to assist, reducing the expected 2-week time period to clean over 3,000 pipes to just several days.



“Organ Innards”

With the case free of pipes, the two organ builders cleaned the wind chests (the organ’s lungs), fine tuned all the mechanics, oiled the oak case and put a shine on the magnificent façade pipes. Then each of the 47 sets of pipes was reinstalled, voiced and tuned, one at a time. The final result is much more than just a badly needed cleaning, without which the pipe-work risked

serious damage. The instrument now sounds better than when it was new, thanks to the expertise of Rolf and Sigmund.

Don and Nancy Hamilton help clean pipes.

Fred Graham



Don and Nancy

Photos by Fred Gramann

A SHORT STORY FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

Once upon a time signature, in the north German city of Hamburg lived a large, lonely pipe organ named Rebecca Hauptpfeiffer auf Ratenzahlung. Rebecca had two problems, the first of which was her name: Rebecca Hauptpfeiffer auf Ratenzahlung. It was so long that nobody could remember it. So she simply shortened Rebecca to Becca, and auf Ratenzahlung to Rat, and from that time was known as Becca Rat.

Her other problem was that she had a hard time deciding what to do with her life. Her long line of ancestors dating back to 250 BC had fulfilled various functions, such as playing for Roman banquets where they announced the serving each new course, or providing background music for the gladiators battling in the Coliseum, or playing for medieval mystery plays on the front steps of the churches, and finally being accepted as "the" instrument for worship inside the great cathedrals and churches. Her more recent relatives in the entertainment industry had found their way into silent movie theaters, skating rinks, baseball games and even pizza joints.

But Becca had a very different sort of pipe dream. She felt called to contribute her music to the worship of God. One day while scanning the want ads in the Daily Pipe Cleaner, Becca noticed that the American Church in Paris wanted a new pipe organ. Becca got so excited that she popped her tremolo button and began to shake all over. The American Church in Paris! That was where she wanted to be, making music for worshipers from many different denominations and parts of the world.

But how would they raise the funds? After all, she cost \$600,000. Not that she wasn't worth it with her six large sets of lungs, 3,328 pipes, solid oak case with hand carved ornaments, and the detail Becca was quite sensitive about: despite faithfully attending Pipe Watchers, she still weighed in at 18 tons.

She suggested that the folks in Paris could find two or three donors who

could cover the cost. But alas, nobody came forth. But then Becca thought, "What if lots and lots of people each contributed just a little money? That would take a huge amount of faith put into action, but it just might work."

The amazing thing is that the idea did work! The total amount was raised and Becca came to Paris in 1988 to provide music for worship at the American Church.

You may be wondering just how many people made Becca a reality. 120 corporate gifts and over 500 individual gifts from members and friends of this church made it possible to place Becca in the front of our sanctuary where her music has been a vital part of the music ministry for the past 20 years, and will continue to be for decades to come.

*Fred Gramann,
ACP Director of Music*

JOSEPH & PATRICIA BRUMIT

Recently, we lost our parents, Joseph & Patricia Brumit, and in the process of celebrating both of their full and rich lives, I was reminded how important the American Church in Paris was for the two of them and for our family. Both Joe and Pat were from small farming communities in the Midwest. Joe was born on October 19, 1918 in Marshall, Missouri. Pat was born on April 23, 1919 in Corydon, Iowa. Both were the first in their families to graduate from college with Joe graduating from the University of Missouri and Pat graduating from Missouri Valley College. In 1950, Joe Brumit, working with Trans World Airlines, was transferred to Paris in order to establish the airline's financial systems in Europe. Joe, Pat, four year old daughter Marcia, and six month old son Scott flew via a TWA four-engine Constellation airplane from Kansas City, Missouri to Paris - a very long flight, with stops to refuel in New York and the Azores.

This move to Paris was their first in-depth exposure to a new culture. They were fascinated by the art, the music, the history, the food. Their excitement with exploring the world began here and took

them on TWA assignments to Ethiopia, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, and New York before settling into retirement in Sun City West, Arizona. As Pat wrote in her memoirs for her grandchildren, "We thought Paris was our town". In later years, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary by bringing their children and grandchildren back to the city they loved.

During the family's six years based in Paris, Joe and Pat were very involved in the community at the American Church in Paris. Pat participated in the women's division activities and served as treasurer for that group. Joe served as Church Treasurer and Elder. When they returned to the U.S. in 1955, Joe was asked to serve on the Board of Trustees for the Overseas Christian Union which oversaw the church in Paris. I can still remember my excitement, at the age of 10, when I was old enough to be an angel in the church's Christmas pageant.

They became very good friends with Dr. Clayton Williams and his wife, Ferdinan. As Pat wrote, "Clayton and Ferdinan occasionally invited us to a dinner party in the pastor's apartment on the top floor of the tower beside the church. Ferdinan prepared very good traditional French dishes. Clayton had a good wine cellar and began instructing Joe about French wines. Their grown daughter was Marcia's Sunday school teacher. My parents and the Williams stayed in touch over many years and found ways to get together in the U.S. and in Hong Kong.

Pat also wrote that "Edmund Pendleton, organist and choir director, came to Paris from America as a young man and had great promise as a musician and composer. He liked Joe's bass voice when he heard him speak at church and invited him to sing in the Choeur Philharmonic de Paris which he directed."

Joe passed away on January 1, 2008 at the age of 89 and Pat soon followed on April 22, 2008, on day before her 89th birthday. They remembered their years in Paris and their relationship with the American Church throughout their lives.

Marcia Brumit Kropf

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, PO Box 1254, Summerfield, FL 34492.

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.

NEW Postal Address for AFCU Donations

We have elected to implement a new post office box for donations, replacing the prior service at the Riverside Drive location in New York City. We had a few unfortunate instances of lost mail last year and determined to have total control within the AFCU Board of mailings to the Treasurer.

The new address is:

American & Foreign Christian Union
PO Box 1254
Summerfield, FL 34492

If you have any questions, write to that address or email me:
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11-08

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The Bridge Deadlines

March 10, July 10, November 10

A "Greener" Bridge

Due to increasing mailing and printing costs, and to be more environmentally friendly, the AFCU is making greater use of e-mail. If you wish to receive the Bridge electronically please respond to us at AFCUEmail@afcubridge.org If not, you will continue to receive the Bridge by regular mail. The newsletter is also available on our web site, www.afcubridge.org.

Thank you,

Kathie Eppert,
Editor *the Bridge*



Photos by: Francois Piderre, Fred Gramann, Kathie Eppert