



Afcu

*American
& Foreign*

Christian Union

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

2007 promises to be an exciting year for the member churches of the AFCU. In Vienna, the Vienna Community Church (VCC) will celebrate its 50th anniversary on the 9th of September. In Paris, the American Church in Paris (ACP) will be celebrating its 150th anniversary on the 14th of October. In Berlin, the American Church in Berlin (ACB) will be celebrating the signing of the papers and the official reception of possession of the Luther Church as our permanent church home on the 25th of November. The AFCU will be a proud participant in each of these special events. As part of our commitment to “Partner relationships with our churches,” members of the AFCU Board are actively participating with respective members of all three churches for the success of these events. I thought it would be appropriate at this time to briefly place each of these events in a historical context.

VCC: The founding meeting took place on August 19, 1957 at the American International School; the Constitution was adopted, a Board

was elected, and the Vienna Community Church was established. On September 15, 1957, after receiving a formal invitation from the Austrian Evangelical Reformed Church, the VCC worshiped at their current residence, the sanctuary of the Reformierte Stadtkirche. The AFCU/VCC partnership was formally agreed to in 2005 with the understanding that the new relationship would work together to find a permanent Senior Pastor and infuse growth in the congregation. This past December, the congregation of the Vienna Community Church elected the Rev. Randall Mundt as its new Senior Pastor. Rev. Mundt will arrive in Vienna the week of Easter Sunday and lead the worship service on April 15th.

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

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for its minister. In 1926 Construction of the current American Church in Paris building on the Quai d'Orsay was begun and was completed in 1931. With a multi-faceted mission, the ACP is a community center as well, providing space and resources for a variety of community activities and groups. (On the web see http://www.acparis.org/facc_activities.htm — Editor) The church facilities are used by more than 2000 people each day. The AFCU partners with the ACP for the selection and employment of the Senior Pastor as well as the maintenance of the buildings housing the ACP.

ACB: The American Church in Berlin traces its roots to about 1865 when an American Chapel was founded. Changing its name to the American Church in Berlin in 1886, it made first contact with the AFCU in 1889. The American Church in Berlin was housed at the "Alte Dorfkirche" in Zehlendorf from 1964 until November, 2002.

In November 2002 the ACB moved to the Luther Church on Dennewitzplatz in the Schoeneberg district of Berlin. Not only was this a major geographic move from one side of Berlin to the other, it was also a significant movement in faith as the small congregation committed its resources for a 5-year period of renovation and reconstruction with considerable financial risk. The AFCU agreed to partner with the ACB in this relocation into the Luther Church by assisting in the financial underwriting through its endowment and fund-raising efforts in the United States.

I would encourage all who are able (Board members, alumni and

friends) to support and attend these three significant events.

Gregg Foster, AFCU President

THE HERITAGE SOCIETY AND PLANNED GIVING

The Heritage Society Testimonial written by James and Cindy Craig in this issue of "The Bridge" is an inspiring letter that tells us why they have chosen to support the work of our member churches through planned giving. Their future gift to the AFCU, along with the like gifts of others, help ensure that the missions of The American Church in Paris, The American Church in Berlin and the Vienna Community Church are carried forth in future generations.

This is the time of year that tax preparation and planning occupies our time and our thoughts. By having a sound plan of charitable giving, we can support charities and can also reduce current income tax as well as future taxes on our estate. One giving opportunity that my wife and I have found useful is a Donor Advised Fund set up with a municipal foundation. Most large cities in the United States have a municipal foundation that has legal and financial people that will work with you to set up a fund of your choice that will meet your objectives.

The value of a Donor Advised Fund mechanism is that an individual can donate appreciated property such as stocks and real estate at their fair market value. The donation can then be used to obtain an income tax write-off at the time the property is donated. The proceeds from the sale

of those assets by the foundation go into a fund that is held and invested by the foundation in the name of your Donor Advised Fund. You, as an Advisor to the Fund, can then make requests to the foundation to disburse monies from your Fund to various charities of your choice at the time you want the charities to receive those funds. To protect the tax deductibility of the donor's contributions to the Fund, the Foundation must approve all disbursements.

Timing is a very useful tool, since assets can be donated to the fund when market values are high. Funds can be disbursed at a later time when you wish to make your contributions.

At the death of the surviving Advisor, a variety of options can be specified. You may elect to recommend that a portion or all of the assets of the fund be granted to a charity such as the AFCU. If not all of the assets are granted, the balance may remain in a permanent named Fund of the Foundation and disbursed over time leaving a Permanent Family Legacy. You may also specify how you would like those funds to be used to support charitable causes.

Please visit our web site at www.afcubridge.org to learn more about opportunities for giving to the American and Foreign Christian Union. If you have questions, please contact us by e-mail at AFCUHeritage@afcubridge.org.

Russell J. McNaughton
Heritage Society



The American & Foreign Christian Union would like to thank all of those who made donations in support of our ministries during 2006. Your support is valuable to the ministries we serve: The American Church in Paris, The American Church in Berlin, and the Vienna Community Church.

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During January, 2006 donor statements were mailed to all those for whom we have current addresses. If you made a donation during 2006 and your name does not appear on the above list and/or you have not received a year end giving statement, kindly contact one of our development committee chairs: Russ McNaughton at (512) 261-9725 or russmacton@aol.com — Jerry Burns at (937) 427-3899 or jepaburns@aol.com

AFCU BRIDGE HERITAGE SOCIETY TESTIMONIAL

In the fall of 1994 Cindy and I agreed to move to Paris for our assignment with PPG. Little did we realize what a significant move it would be in our spiritual lives. Having spent a career in the corporate world, our family had moved numerous times. Some stays were longer than others but for the most part we were domiciled in the US and Canada. In fact we were living in Canada when the call came to go to Europe.

A lesson learned through all of those moves was that one of the first orders of business was to find a church home. So the move to Paris immediately prompted our search for a church to worship God. It was an easy find. We immediately were called to the American Church in Paris. Here was a great structure in the heart of this beautiful city, a wonderful music program led by Fred Gramann, an inspiring pastor and bible teacher in Larry Kalajainen and warm and gracious fellowship with Christians from all parts of the world. All of this, in the middle of Paris under the AFCU tradition of a non-denominational service using the English language. What a blessing; our home away from home!

How did this happen? Who had the foresight to fund this, build this and sustain this spiritual pillar so that we could enjoy the fruits of their labor? The answer is even more remarkable because it all started almost 150 years ago. A group of "Saints" led by providential spirit, prayer and counsel decided to build a church on foreign soil. Founded in 1857, by a group named the American and Foreign

Christian Union (AFCU), the American Church in Paris has been a haven for Christians ever since. Through the power of God's grace and wisdom, encapsulated by the love of Jesus Christ and enabled by the Holy Spirit, men and women of good faith came together to build a place of worship for future generations.

It also took the abilities of a committed organization, the AFCU, working in concert with a group of Christians from the reformed church in Paris to get it done, but through it all, their efforts were not in vain. Some 137 years later, in the fall of 1994, Cindy and I were able to worship God in the heart of Paris using our native language. Through the hard work, efforts and resources of many people in the middle of the 19th century, the American Church in Paris became their heritage, their gift to us, at the end of the 20th century.

In Bible study we are taught that we have been blessed to be a blessing. Surely the forefathers of the AFCU understood that message. Cindy and I struggled with that call. How can we use our blessings to help perpetuate this great spiritual institution of the American Church in Paris and how can we further the work of the AFCU? The answer was rather obvious. Get involved, give our time talent and resources to insure that the American Church in Paris and all the other churches supported by the AFCU; The American Church in Berlin (ACB) and the Vienna Community Church (VCC) are alive and well for the next hundred years. While we can devote our energy and resources during our lives we wanted to find a way to insure that our commitment lived on after us. Thus it was through the AFCU Heritage Society that we

found our way. Using our estate planning with a future gift to the AFCU we could support the work of this great organization for future generations. Following prayerful consideration, Cindy and I have made our commitment of continuing support for the work of the AFCU through our wills. We have become thankful members of the AFCU Heritage Society. Knowing that our gifts will somehow perpetuate God's work in another place and time, after we have departed this great life, is a wonderful and peaceful thought. Perhaps, another couple in 2094, like Cindy and I in 1994, will find their spiritual home away from home and be inspired to carry on the tradition. May God's work be praised!

Cindy & Jim Craig

THE AMERICAN & FOREIGN CHRISTIAN UNION MAILING ADDRESS INFORMATION

The American & Foreign Christian Union wanted to let our dear friends and donors know about recent difficulties we had in receiving our mail to the 475 Riverside Drive address. During November, we heard from four of our faithful friends, that their AFCU mail had been returned to them from the US postal service. When we researched the problem, it became evident that a new mail carrier, unable to locate our suite at 475 Riverside Drive, returned some of our mail. The people at the Interchurch Center (475 Riverside) who handle our mail, have communicated with the mail carriers, and our mail is now arriving as in the past.

We certainly wish to apologize to anyone who was inconvenienced by these mail delivery problems. We also wish to take this opportunity to remind each of you to place return addresses on all mail you send to our New York

addresses. We will also update our donation envelopes to include a place for your return address.

Finally, if anyone, who has not yet contacted us, believes that their

mail may have lost by the Postal Service, please contact the Secretary of Board of the AFCU: Mr. Richard Bright, via email: dickbright@prodigy.net or phone: 1 (352) 751-7599.

Paris Connection



IN OUR END IS OUR BEGINNING

Dear Friends in Christ,

A decade ago a pastor from another international church introduced me to the thought that the season of Lent has a strong theological connection to one of T.S. Eliot's poems entitled *East Coker*. The poem ends with these thought-provoking lines:

*Home is where one starts from.
As we grow older
The world becomes stranger,
the pattern more complicated
Of dead and living.
Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after;
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old stones
That cannot be deciphered.
There is time for the evening
under starlight,
A time for the evening under lamplight
(The evening with the photograph album).
Love is most nearly itself
When here and now cease to matter.*

*Old men ought to be explorers
Here and there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold
and the empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry,
the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise.
In my end is my beginning.*

When we gather together for worship on the evening of Ash Wednesday we will be reminded of our mortality, of our finiteness, when we receive the imposition of ashes on our foreheads with the sign of the cross and also hear the words, "You are dust, and to dust you will return." It is a sobering reminder that our days on earth are limited, and that each of our lives will have a definite ending point. Perhaps if we pause and reflect on the inevitability of our own death, then our contemplations may lead us to remember that we all have an ever-decreasing number of days to live and love as Jesus' followers in the church and in the world. Perhaps the reality of our mortality coupled with the Lenten season's call to repentance will impress upon each one of us that we do not need to stay as we are. By God's grace, we can change. By God's grace, we can grow up more and more into the fullness of the stature of Christ. By God's grace we may more fully experience the truth of spiritual transformation, namely, that "in my end is my beginning."

Beginnings and endings are always a part of the fabric of community life at The American Church in Paris. People are always coming and going. A person's new beginning at The American Church automatically implies that there has been some sort of ending in another part of the world, while an ending at The American Church foreshadows a beginning in another part of God's creation. Sometimes the persons leaving

are the pastors who seek to shepherd the congregation. In such times of transition, it is equally true for both the pastor and the congregation that “In our end is our beginning.” The end of the pastoral relationship signals the beginning of a new stage of life and ministry for both parties to the covenant relationship. Yet from a faith perspective, one reason that Christians can declare, “In our end is our beginning,” is because the Lenten season that begins with ashes reminding us of our death and concludes with Jesus’ death on the cross serves as a cosmically planned prelude to the new life and resurrection hope of God’s death-defeating power revealed in Easter’s empty tomb. You and I can declare, “In our end is our beginning,” because every day of every year we stake our lives on the truth and the power of a Risen Lord of Hope, whose death is the End of the End and whose resurrection life is the Joyful Beginning of All Beginnings.

*In Christ,
Barry Dawson, ACP Sr. Pastor*

SESQUICENTENNIAL UPDATE

The Sesquicentennial committee has been meeting regularly and has finalized the following calendar of Celebration events:

- Friday March 2 – Kick Off – ACP film “A Glimpse of Heaven”
- Saturday April 21 – Cabaret evening with Joan Minor (tickets)
- Saturday – April 28 – Habitat Dinner (tickets)
- Sunday May 27 – African Fashion show
- Saturday June 9 – Radio Show

- Sunday June 17 – Bateaux Mouches church picnic
- Saturday June 30 – Filipino choir

If you would like to have more information about ticketed events, please contact me, Kathie Eppert, at AFCUeditor@afcubridge.org.

Plans for the Celebration weekend, October 12 through 14, are being finalized. The celebration will culminate in a wonderful Festival Service at the American church.

*Kathie Eppert
AFCU ACP 150 Liaison*

FROM MANY NATIONS GATHERED

The 150th Anniversary of The American Church in Paris

Tune: Aurelia, Samuel Sebastian
Wesley - 1864

The tune is “The Church’s One
Foundation”

1. From many nations gathered,
we worship Christ our Lord.
Though languages may differ,
we sing with one accord.
To all who have not seen it,
the light of Christ we bear.
We are Christ’s servant people,
faith, hope, and love to share.
2. Reborn in Christ’s own image,
through water and the word,
We strive on earth for justice;
let God’s good news be heard.
Christ’s body broken for us,
new life through bread and wine,
May God’s own people witness
to love and grace divine.
3. To feed your starving people,
to heal a world in pain,
To cease from all our conflicts,
a peaceful world regain,
Lead us your servant peoples

in paths of unity,
So we may serve you gladly;
your new creation be.

4. As we fulfill our calling from
Christ the Word made flesh,
Let justice, peace and mercy
flow through our lives afresh.
United as Christ’s servants,
shared laughter and shared tears,
We celebrate our journey,
one hundred fifty years!*

* (Alternate ending for v. 4 following the celebration: “We follow Christ our Savior through all the coming years!”)

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After hearing Barry Dawson describe the various symbolic meanings that were captured in the development of the 150th Anniversary Logo, I was struck by the idea of writing a hymn that would express both the varied meanings of the logo as well as the people and ministry of the American Church in Paris. Never having written a hymn before, I set out with fear and trepidation.

The first thing that strikes anyone who worships at ACP is we come from many nations. One summer Sunday, I asked people to raise their hands as I named the various areas of the world. Virtually every major inhabited area was represented, even in the middle of the summer! Languages are symbolic of our different cultures. As people came to affiliate with the church, I always said, “While our interpretations of what it means to be a Christian may differ, we are united in our belief that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Though we come from many different cultures, Christ is the unifying force of

our life together. Barry mentioned the anniversary committee had chosen as the anniversary theme, "Bearing the Light into the world." These three elements (nationality, language, and light bearers) became the focus of the first verse. It was important to me to signify how we bear the light of Christ as one can do it in various ways and with varying attitudes. My belief is we are servants of Christ grounded in what Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Now faith, hope, love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love."

In the second verse, I felt it important to express how we become Christ's servant people using the three means by which the gospel is proclaimed, namely the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and preaching. These acts of the church both form us and nurture us as Christ's servants in the world today. For me, preaching must always reflect a sense of what we are called to do and who we are called to be today as a servant people. All this

is encapsulated in the word "justice." As we witness to love and grace, we recall God's gift of love which came to us through the broken body of Christ. So our servanthood will also include sacrifice.

That said, I asked myself, "What are the major issues facing Christians today?" In the third verse, starvation is symbolic and expressive of human suffering occurring daily in virtually every inhabited area of the world. Real starvation exists in the United States as well as in Africa, Asia and Europe. Symbolic starvation means different things to different people, but it reflects our human need for a lasting food. There is no question that the world is in great pain and is struggling to find solutions. The final solution is not universal death, but hope in Christ for a peace that passes all understanding, a hope that leads to eternal life. So I lift the vision of healing pain and ceasing from conflicts, namely, "a peaceful world regain." The way to world peace is unity in Christ

through which we become God's new creation.

In the final verse, I asked myself what are the great symbolic words of our faith today. For me, those words that hold everything together are justice, peace and mercy. As we live these out, we fulfill our calling to be Christ's servant people. We become a united people recognizing times of great joy and times of great sorrow. Both joy and sorrow inevitably are part of our Christian journey no matter how long the road ahead may be. So I concluded the hymn with two endings, one for our celebration, "We celebrate our journey, one hundred fifty years!" and the other for the future, "We follow Christ our Savior through all the coming years!" Together they express our joy in celebrating the path ACP has trod as well as the journey that lies ahead.

Thomas E. Duggan

Berlin Connection



WHAT IS GRACE?

This afternoon I sat with some special people at ACB. The devotion for the day came from John's

Gospel in which he says: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ". An excerpt was read from Philip Yancey's book *What's so Amazing About Grace?* "Grace is Christianity's best gift to the world, a spiritual nova in our midst exerting a force stronger than vengeance, stronger than racism, stronger than hate."

As I reflected on this truth I began to think of our ministry at ACB. It has been my privilege to see the grace of

God at work in the hearts and lives of countless people. As the Spirit of God has come in the Word, prayer, worship, song, community, and Sacrament, I have been seen God's grace at work in mighty ways.

Last week a member of the Laib und Seele leadership team gave me the statistics for the year of 2006. Over 17,458 people received food that filled hungry stomachs and made life a bit more graceful. Over 40.65 tons of quality food was distributed to people in need. Hundreds of hours of volunteer service by members and friends of ACB provided a song in the servant heart of the giver. Businesses experienced the joy and

grace of giving to people in need. Languages of English, Turkish, German, Greek, Arabic and others I don't recognize provided the opportunity to experience the grace of the warmth of a smile, handshake or arm around the shoulder. I, for one, get on the train each Friday night late heading for home with a song in my heart having experienced the gift of God's grace to me in serving and in being served!

This Saturday 9 young people are sharing their winter break from school to venture into a new and challenging experience. On Saturday they leave along with 3 adult sponsors for Romania to share with children and people in need the grace and love of God in Jesus Christ. In their suitcases they will be carrying pencils, paper, crayons and paper. But greater than these things, they will take their hearts filled with the love of Jesus to share with other young people.

There will be the struggle of trying to communicate without the luxury of the same language. There will be the reality of sleeping in a new place that is not the familiar warmth and security of their own home. There will be the uncertainty of being in a culture that is very different from what they are used to. There will be the challenge of being confronted with the fears and anx-

ety of one's own heart as adjustments will have to be made daily, hourly! But, there will also be the hope and joy of God's grace that travels with us. The grace of God will shine through these young hearts and faces. The grace of God will radiate in their risk taking. These young people will return home to Berlin a changed and blessed group of young people.

In February we launch out into new waters – I suspect that they will be deep, rough and challenging. We begin our "Learning Café" – an outreach ministry to children 6 – 12 years old in the immediate community. Volunteers from ACB will provide a warm meal for the children as well as tutoring in German and English. The difficulty many children face is that their parents do not speak German or English and therefore can be of little assistance in helping them with their school work. As these children come into Luther Church, people that want to share the grace of a loving and ever present Lord will greet them. This will provide for many children a warm place to be accepted and celebrated for who they are. Trust, hope, joy, comfort and some warm food will be gifts of grace shared.

There is so much more that could be shared. You have your grace experiences too. I invite you to share

them with one another. The grace of God is not something that can be hidden! Remember the wonderful news: Grace is Christianity's best gift to the world!

We are looking forward to celebrating another graceful and wonderful celebration the weekend of November 23-25, 2007. We will celebrate the signing of papers in which the American Church in Berlin will have a permanent home – after 64 years of being an "orphan" following that horrendous night in 1943 when our church home in Nollendorfplatz was destroyed by fire bombing. We are grateful and thankful to God for his faithful leading and guiding.

We say thank you to AFCUers – people who have supported us in prayer, encouragement and financial support. You have been a bright light of God's grace through some of the dark nights of despair we have experienced. Thank you for your continued grace that gives us hope and encouragement on the slow, but steady journey of mission and ministry sharing the grace of our wonderful Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To God be the Glory,

*Pastor Ben H. Coltvet
Berlin, Germany*

THANKSGIVING AT THE AMERICAN CHURCH IN BERLIN

**"Voices of Gratitude
A Cornucopia of Music"**

The motto: Let us all give thanks and praise and show gratitude for what God has so graciously given to us, by sharing these gifts with others.

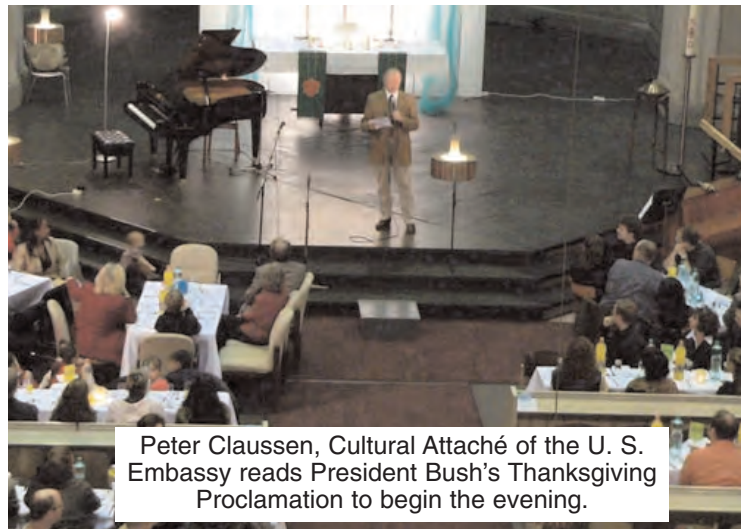


ACB's Luther Church is ready to be a banquet room and concert hall for the 4th Annual Thanksgiving Event!

Over 300 people, including many invited guests from needy families, enjoyed a traditional American Thanksgiving meal. Around 400 people attended the overall Thanksgiving events and concert.

A truly unique transcontinental program followed the banquet. The program ranged from Russian Polkas and Tangos to Latin blues, and Crossover Country, all on the same stage. Performers included an internationally acclaimed pianist, original Hawaiian hula dance and song, and several "Divas."

Denise Banks-Grasedyck



Peter Claussen, Cultural Attaché of the U. S. Embassy reads President Bush's Thanksgiving Proclamation to begin the evening.



Pastor Ben and guests enjoying the meal.



CORRECTION

In the Autumn 2006 *Bridge* an article in the **Berlin Connection** stated that the *Cultural Vereign* had been formed. The correct name is the *Cultural Bridge International Berlin (CBIB)*.

The Editor

Vienna Connection



FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends of VCC,

As I write this, the manse is being painted and I am staying in a friend's apartment. Thanks to all of you who contributed to making the painting possible. Because of your generosity, we were able to bring two pastoral candidates to Vienna. The VCC has a new pastor-elect, the Rev. Randall (Randy) Mundt.

Randy will arrive in Vienna the week after Easter; his first Sunday in the VCC pulpit will be April 15. I have agreed to stay until April 10; there will not be one Sunday on which the VCC does not have a pastor in residence. Randy's wife and 13-year-old daughter will arrive in June, after the current school year is over. Randy will attend the AICEMEA (Association of International Churches in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa) Conference, which is being held in Budapest this year.

Several important things have happened in the church during these past several months. We have said goodbye to people who have returned to their homes in different places in the world; we have said hello to others who have come from

different places in the world. Such is the nature of the international church. We have a nursery, staffed by an 18-year-old man, who is studying to become a kindergarten teacher. Yes, we too wondered about an 18-year-old man in the nursery; he has turned out to be a fantastic choice.

We have prepared a revised Constitution and By-laws, which will be presented to the congregation for approval on Sunday, February 18.

This has been a good year in Vienna. The VCC is a good congregation. I wish you could meet them and know them. It will be hard to say goodbye; it will also be good to be home again.

Rev. Ross Robson

JUST WHAT I NEEDED

One Member's Experience of the Vienna Community Church

Although I moved to Vienna in 1973, I first came to the Vienna Community Church in 1986, when I was nearly 34 years old and a recent convert to Christianity. I had been baptized as an infant; but I had become an atheist in my teen years, and it was only after a 20-year journey that I had found the open door. The friendly, ecumenical spirit of the VCC and the prospect of singing in the choir persuaded me to stay.

Actual VCC membership numbers vary considerably. The annual turnover is about 25%-30%, with the result that there are former

members on six continents — accumulating for nearly 50 years now! — who like to stay in touch with us. Omar Khayyam's famous line "The moving finger writes and, having writ, moves on" reflects the daily reality of VCC life: the conundrum of permanent change is one of our church's defining characteristics.

In a situation such as ours, where continuity is in short supply, leadership is an ongoing challenge and new volunteers are always in demand: more quickly than I would have imagined possible, I found myself not just singing in the choir, but being swept up into all kinds of church activities. I participated in the planning of music, worship, church retreats, and the World Day of Prayer services, to name just a few items. Stepping into whatever gaps presented themselves, I was no longer on the outside, but completely involved, in the thick of the action, and continually wondering (in the first years, at least!) how I had come to be there. I have sometimes thought that if I wrote an account of my faith journey, I would have to call it (with apologies to C. S. Lewis) "Surprised by Commitment".

The Vienna Community Church has been my definitive experience of life in a Christian community; I see myself as having undergone profound spiritual growth in this setting. When I was married here in 1994, the floral arrangements and my wedding reception were given by the VCC women's group, showing me the extent to which the VCC considered me to be a member of its family. A similar demonstration of Christian fellowship supported my recovery from an automobile accident in 1996. It is perhaps not sur-

prising that when I moved back to the United States, I was unsuccessful in my search for a church community that might in some measure be a replacement for the VCC.

Communication is another ongoing challenge at the Vienna Community Church. Recent years have seen some turmoil at VCC, and among the casualties was the church newsletter; when I decided to spend more time in Vienna, I began thinking about what I could do to meet that challenge. In view of my unreliable health, it would have been unrealistic for me to offer to produce and distribute a paper document; but I hoped that a document distributed online would serve the church and still be within my ability; and so I volunteered in May 2006 to try to revive the VCC Newsletter.

I am still working on a strategy for making the Newsletter available to those in our congregation who have no Internet access. My “vision” for the VCC Newsletter is that it should provide a real communications network, so that primarily the local community, and secondarily the VCC’s international contingent, can be informed regularly about what is happening here. I also think that people will be encouraged to become involved in church activities if they know what activities are going on and what the congregation’s leaders are thinking, saying, and doing.

I have spent the last ten years finding out how many things I can’t do. The positive response I have received suggests that the new version of the VCC Newsletter — imperfect though it is — is indeed contributing to the life of the

Vienna Community Church. In giving me the ability to give something to the church, God has richly blessed me.

Brenda H. Fox
Editor VCC Newsletter

HAPPENING!

At the Vienna Community Church, so many things have been going on in recent months that even a brief summary can't include them all: what follows should be regarded as something like a few verbal snapshots picked out of an album. Readers who would like to see more are referred to the VCC's website, <http://www.viennacommunitychurch.com>.

As of January 2007, an attractive, new bulletin cover greets arriving worshipers: sadly, the color photograph is so expensive to reproduce that the Church Board has reluctantly decided to use it only for special occasions. For general use, there is a black-and-white version of the same layout.



VCC's new Bulletin Cover

Electronic Bridge

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

Thank you,

Kathie Eppert,
Editor *the Bridge*

Thursday Night Downtown is a new mid-week event for all Members and Friends of the Vienna Community Church. Our host church has given the VCC permission to use the Fellowship Hall on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month, from 19.30h to 21.00h (7:30-9:00 p.m.). The first Thursday Night Downtown was held on 11 January and featured a soup supper. The small group in attendance decided that future Thursday Nights would have varied programs to address the diverse needs and interests of our congregation. On 25 January, accordingly, the program was Family Fun; participants brought snacks, formed teams, and played games. I wish I could have been there for Playdough-Pictionary!

In mid-January the Vienna Community Church finished the long and complex task of choosing its next Pastor: the Church Board extended a call to the Rev. Randall Mundt. Rev. Mundt will arrive at Easter-time; his wife and daughter will remain in Hawaii until the end of the school year, and will then join the new VCC Pastor in Vienna. The Mundt family are sincerely committed to international ministry, a qualification that suggests they

will be a good fit for the Vienna Community Church. That said, there seems to be a widespread impression that our current Interim Pastor, the Rev. Ross Robson, will be a hard act to follow and will be greatly missed. There is more than an impression that we have a great deal for which to thank Ross and his wife Peg.

Other vivid signs of growth at VCC include our new Nursery and our expanding Sunday School. A Young Adults group meets regularly for dinner and conversation.

Longstanding VCC member Georg Vohryzka, who represents the Property Committee on the Church Board, has been ordained a priest in the Czechoslovak Hussite Church. His ordination took place in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 9 December 2006; fifteen members of the VCC congregation were able to be present at the ceremony, and a special reception was held in January to honor Georg and to celebrate his achievement.

*Brenda H. Fox
Editor VCC Newsletter*

More images from the Thanksgiving Celebration in Berlin.



Layout - J Gail Designs

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 2060, 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.



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