



Afcu

American
& Foreign

Christian Union

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

At last year's board meeting I appointed a committee of three (Don Eppert, Geoff Lu and Jerry Burns) to review and propose updates to the AFCU Constitution and Bylaws. This effort was driven out of the recognition that some sections have become out-dated, some sections needed to be removed and some new sections needed to be added. For example, work is needed to define our financial structure, our support for each of our member churches and guidelines for special committees.

Just as our forefathers saw the need for a process to modify the U.S. Constitution to reflect the changing needs of the people, the AFCU also has a process to ensure that our Constitution and Bylaws will continue to reflect the changing needs of the AFCU Board.

The American and Foreign Christian Union was formed in 1849 upon the merging of three complimentary missionary societies: the American Protestant Society, the Foreign Evangelical Society and the Christian Alliance. The first constitution was drafted in 1851 and the first amendments

were created in 1882. Subsequent changes have occurred through the years, but some out-dated language still remains. Article II reflects the 19th century usage of an Object to describe the activities of the AFCU instead of a Mission Statement. The Board members of the AFCU created and adopted a Mission Statement in 2005.

These three gentlemen have worked diligently throughout the year and will be presenting their work to the Board at the April Board meeting. The belief is that it is appropriate for the board to review this work-in-progress and to discuss/accept the changes that are currently being proposed.

One of the proposed changes will be the replacement of the current language in Article II with the Mission Statement. In addition to revisions of the Constitution and Bylaws the committee has created an Appendix to the Constitution. This document will contain descriptions of the relationships between the AFCU and its member churches as well as the purpose and duties of special committees established by the Board and/or the President. The appendix document is completely new

and designed to contain items that are more likely to need updating from time to time. Our intention is to structure this so we do not have to go through legal channels unless we are amending the actual Constitution and Bylaws document itself.

In all this work the emphasis is and will be on relationships – the relationship of the AFCU to its member churches, the relationship of the AFCU to the Senior Pastor of the ACP and the relationship of the AFCU to the people and organizations providing support for its mission through the member churches. But above all we are striving to ensure that the relationship of the AFCU to our Lord Jesus Christ is reflected in our actions and obedience to His will.

Gregg Foster, AFCU President

THE HERITAGE SOCIETY AND PLANNED GIVING

Planned Giving opportunities exist for donors interested in leaving a legacy and aiding charities that have significant ongoing financial needs. These are very turbulent times in our economy and the needs of the non-profits are now greater than ever. Remember that, in times like this, the challenges have expanded and it is important that the organizations continue to carry out their missions and serve their constituents. The Heritage Society of the AFCU consists of members who have included the American & Foreign Christian Union in their estate plans. Current financial gifts as well as future gifts are welcome and are greatly appreciated.

Planned giving opportunities in support of the AFCU and our three

member churches in Europe are listed on our web site and in earlier copies of “The Bridge”. They can be found by going to 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 professional legal and accounting assistance of a qualified person while doing your estate planning.

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

*Russell McNaughton,
Heritage Society*

GOING GREEN

What is eight pages long, full of important information and a few black and white pictures? The Bridge, sent by snail mail. What is more than eight 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!

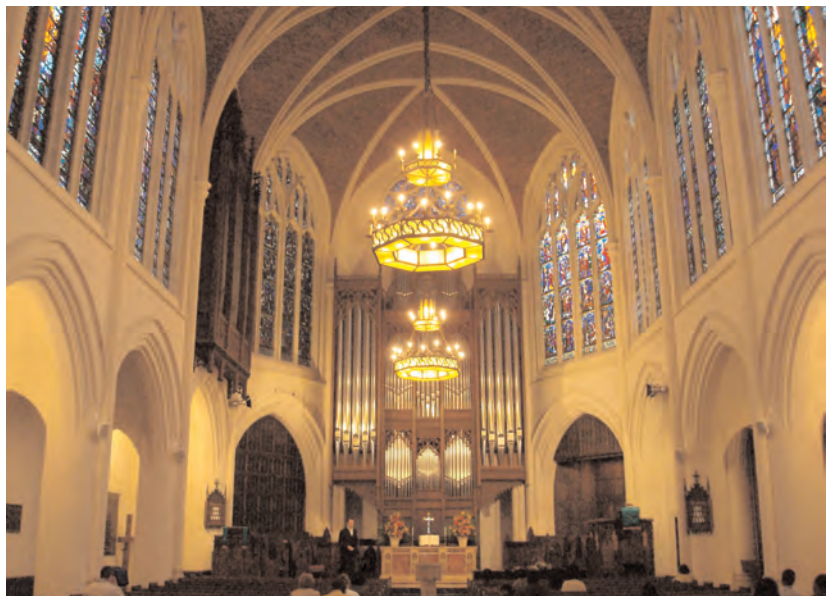
We would like to encourage our Friends to help us by asking to receive the Bridge electronically. While this will mean a little more work for you, since you will need to update us on your email address changes and not send us to Junk Mail, it will allow us to save trees as well as money on postage and 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



The American & Foreign Christian Union would like to thank all of those who made donations in support of our ministries during 2008. Your support is valuable to the ministries we serve: The American Church in Berlin, The American Church in Paris, and the Vienna Community Church.

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Mr. & Mrs. Norm Findley			And other donors who wish to remain anonymous
Mr. Gregg & Ms. Megan Foster			

During January, 2009 donor statements were mailed to all those for whom we have current addresses. If you made a donation during 2008 and your name does not appear on the above list and/or you have not received a year end giving statement, kindly contact the Development committee chair, Russ McNaughton, at (512) 261-9725 or russmacton@aol.com

Berlin Connection



HOLDING ON FOR DEAR LIFE

The most recent Time magazine arrived in the mail a couple days ago. Guess what the “title” of the issue was? Yes, you guess it right: Holding On for Dear Life! Next to this bold type is the picture of a frayed rope having only a few strands yet connected. Two hands are grasping the rope with a tight grip. It gives the impression that the rope could break at any time.

As you read the articles in this issue sobering words and phrases are forthcoming: “U.S. Economy In Trouble”, “Global Economy Suffering”, “Foreclosure”, “Nationalized Nonsense”, “Money Worries”, “Hyperleveraging Came Unraveled”, “Stimulus Package”, “Bail Out”, “Unemployment Hits New High”, “Paradise Lost?”.

As one reads the articles and listens to the news there is some hopeful dialogue going on and there is great concern and anxiety expressed. As I went to bed last night I thought to myself, “What can I say to the readers of The Bridge after reflecting on this rather “grim” situation in the world?” I am sure that all of you readers have been touched with the world situation in some significant way. Margit and I have just

returned to Berlin having been in the States on “home assignment” for two months. In our extensive travels it did not take long for the conversation to turn to the concern and anxiety of economic woes.

In our morning devotion this morning the writer caught my attention: “God’s blessings always trump even the most horrible tests we must endure in life – even death itself.” (Christ in our Home; March 10/09) Margit and I were directed to the account of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:1-19. I encourage you to read the account. It is a very sobering event in the life of a Father, a Son and God.

God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Remember how Abraham and Sarah desired a son. God speaks to Abraham in Genesis 17:16: “I will bless (Sarah), and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations..”.

I laughed with Abraham when he responded to this news: “Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, ‘Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?’ But, the seeming impossible happens – a son is born to aged old Abraham and Sarah – and they name him Isaac (which in Hebrew means ‘he laughs’).

And now God (chapter 22) tests Abraham saying: “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offer-

ing on one of the mountains that I shall show you.” So Abraham rose early and set off with Isaac.

Isaac becomes concerned – they have the wood and fire but no lamb for the burnt offering. Abraham responds: “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering.” The story goes on to tell that Abraham built an altar, laid the wood in order and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar. But before Abraham can do harm to Isaac an angel of the Lord called to him and said, “Abraham, Abraham! Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” Abraham saw a ram caught in the bushes and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

Verse 22:14 concludes this portion of Abraham’s life saying: “So Abraham called that place ‘The Lord will provide’, as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.’”

What can I say to the readers of The Bridge as we reflect on the rather “grim” situation in the world? As I reflect on the account of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac I am reminded that everything we have is given to us by God and belongs to God. God is gracious. The gift of a son is given. The life of this son is spared. The writer of our morning devotional said: “God’s blessings always trump even the most horrible tests we must endure in life – even death itself. That’s grace. And we have the life of God’s only Son to prove it!” (Christ in our Home; March 10/09) As you and I journey through this “grim” time of life, reflect on the faithfulness of God, the grace of God, the mercy of God and the

hope of God that comes even in the most difficult trials! We do not despair as those who have no hope!

Blessings and Joy,

*Rev. Ben H. Coltvet
American Church in Berlin*

MUSIC AT ACB

One of the blessings of being in an International Church is the presence of a variety of music. Our Worship and Music Committee faithfully plans each worship service. On our Staff we have Anna Shefelbine, our Chamber Choir Director who has brought out the gifts of many of our members to sing and make beautiful

music to the Glory of God on a weekly basis. Mike Beck faithfully leads our Contemporary Choir to sing much loved songs. And Vera Gitschmann, our organist continues to lead our congregation in hymn singing and bless us with her Preludes and Postludes. Being in the heart of the city of Berlin, we also have professional opera singers and string players who freely share their gifts with us and are willing to perform during special concerts throughout the year. But our congregation never tires of hearing the gifts of music from all our children as well as many other amateur musicians and international groups who love to share their love of God through music.

During this Spring time ACB will host several visiting groups from the United States. In late March, Watermark, a contemporary group sponsored by Youth Encounter will spend the weekend with us, and work especially with our youth. On Good Friday we will be honored to have an orchestra from Miami Florida play during out worship service as members contemplate the 15 Stations of the Cross. In June we will host the Youth Symphony of Sante Fe, New Mexico.

The exciting news is that ACB has a new Grand Piano - a 'Wendl and Lung' Model 2, 18 m. long with a black glossy finish. The instrument was provided by "Die Klavier Etage" for the Thanksgiving/



Advent/Christmas season and the ACB Church Council voted unanimously to purchase it after receiving high marks from respected pianists and listeners.

The cost of the piano for us is €17,000 Euros (the listed price was €19,800 Euros) To date we have raised 65% of the cost of the instrument. The remainder of the cost (€6,000 Euros) we hope to raise with further donations as well as a benefit fundraising concert scheduled for later in 2009.

Should your wish to donate to this exciting addition to our worship and music ministry you can do so by simply making your gift to the AFCU with 'for the ACB piano' on the memo line. A tax deductible receipt will be forthcoming. Recognition of donors is planned. For those who wish to be anonymous, their request will be honored. Thank you for your interest in our music program at ACB.

Margit Coltvet

OUR NEXT ACB STREET FAIR

It is that time of the year again: time to begin planning for our big annual neighborhood celebration, planned this year for Saturday, June 6 from 1-6 p.m.!

1. We need PR talent, tent coordinators, sponsors and performers for 14+ different booths or tents, depending on who signs up and what YOU want to suggest and contribute. See the Street Fair Worksheet on the back page of this newsletter for suggestions. Updates will be published weekly on the back page of the Sunday bulletins in April and

May. You can also mail ideas or suggestions or offers to our Street Fair email address at: acbstreetfair@gmail.com.

2. There will be many opportunities to put your faith in action! Volunteers are needed to compose flyers and press releases as well as get invitations out to neighborhood and community organizations or vendors, perform or invite performers (singing, dancing or musical groups), organize the flea market, the moon walk or bake sale, help with working the game booths/tents in shifts, take care of set up and break down of tents and decorations, do acoustic engineering, bring donations for the bake and savory plate sale, or financially sponsor materials for booths (e.g., prizes for the game tent or supplying nourishment for our performers). So please prayerfully consider your gifts, your contacts or resources. Everyone should please feel the call to participate and HELP!

*...and the streets of the city will be full of boys and girls playing....
Zechariah 8:5*

A VISION OF A FUTURE REALITY

The Year 2006, was my first visit to the Laib und Seele, (Bread and Soul) program at the American Church in Berlin. This project distributes food every Friday to the needy in the Turkish community surrounding the church. The volunteers are committed to the task at hand.

At that time I asked my good friend, Kumar, "What can I do to help your program and what is your greatest



Charles Lindholm, Kumar Vasanth,
Lon Penna

need?" He answered without hesitation; "We need our own van to pickup and deliver food rather than renting a van every week." As he was thinking quietly, I was already planning how to apply for a Rotary Matching Grant. But we needed a host partner in Berlin, a Rotary Club to commit to the plan and to provide leadership to complete this big project.

As I was visioning the possibilities before us, I thought of Berlin, following WW II, lying in shambles and in the rubble of war. Care packages of food and clothing from America and other countries were gratefully received. Now in 2008 the American Church resides in an area of Berlin where many families are experiencing a lack of work and food. To find a Rotary Club in Berlin, open to partnership in giving aid to families (many are Turkish of the Muslim faith) and individuals in need, would be very special.

I visited two Rotary Clubs seeking their assistance. The first club simply said, "No, it is not in our plans for this year." The second visit was

to the Berlin Rotary Club, the oldest club in Germany, asking of its President, Dr. Helmut Lecheler, whether he and his club would be interested in partnering with our Glenville Rotary Club to apply for the Rotary Foundation Matching Grant?" He and his Board gave a most positive response. The American Church was able to show need for a van and a budget was formed. In April 2007 our application was submitted.

Unfortunately, the Rotary Foundation concluded that the application was not complete. Then Dr. Lecheler and I were given a final date of 31 October 2007 to complete the application. We complied with each of the procedural requests of the Rotary Foundation and submitted our application before the deadline. According to Foundation guidelines, the project must be completed in six months following the approval of the Matching Grant.

The purchase was a challenge because the total contribution of \$46,450 from two clubs, their respective Districts and the

Matching Grant of the Rotary Foundation, lost considerable value by a weakened dollar and a strong Euro. That meant that the dollar figure was worth €31,000 Euro having less buying power. Alan Benson, a lifetime member of the church and with the support of Wolf Weyermann from the Berlin Rotary, he found a better van for less money, which allowed us to buy the new van.

The budget items like expensive car insurance, and upkeep (oil changes etc) costs in the first year of the van had to be dropped. But God granted the church leaders strength and his blessing to complete the project in full. That came through a partner church, Augsburg Lutheran, in the state of North Carolina, who are paying these expenses not covered by the Rotary Matching grant making this van a very special gift. We offer our thanks to everyone who have made this van possible, the members of the Berlin and Glenville Rotary Clubs, the Rotary Foundation's Matching Grant, the Church's Rotary van committee, Augsburg Lutheran Church and two

AFCU Board Members, Don and Kathie Eppert, who expedited the gift from Augsburg Lutheran.

I firmly believe that God has planted and greatly blessed this congregation in the Luther Kirche at Dennewitz Platz, and that he has blessed them as they helped their neighbors in need. The church has now received their multi-purpose Rotary van for their outreach ministry, which includes the Laib und Seele, OCEP (a cultural exchange) and the Leaning Café (learning assistance for local children).

The Rotary Van was delivered Rotary's representative, Herr Weyermann, to the American Church in Berlin, the Pastor Dr. Ben Coltvet and the outreach organizations that make use of this van every day. We thank God and his people for turning a vision into a reality! The van is no longer a vision of the future, but a reality among us right now.

Rev. Charles D. Lindholm

Paris Connection



FROM PASTOR HERR

It's been a wonderful year for snow in Paris, but even I am starting to look forward to Spring. Ash

Wednesday on February 25th begins the season of Lent, the Christian spiritual Spring. The word "Lent" is actually from the Old English word *lencen*, which refers to the lengthening of days of Spring. Lent is a season for renewal in the Christian calendar when some enter into traditional disciplines of fasting, praying and alms-giving. I have often struggled with the purpose of self-denial, and sure understand why Mardi Gras gets so crazy!

Some have asked why the Christian tradition seems to get so "negative" in Lent.

One may legitimately ask, "What is the point is of withholding from oneself any pleasures?" For example, I get downright irritable if I haven't eaten for a while. Why stop eating for a day (or days on end)? We all have so much more work than our schedule allows, why stop to pray? And what difference can the little extra added to the offering plate make in terms of the hungry and homeless of the world? Is Lent just another anachronistic tradition?

If you find yourself lamenting Lent, I share a couple quotations from Thomas Merton's reflections on Christian self-denial that have been particularly helpful for me in entering into the season of Lent again, even with much hope and joyful expectation:

Merton writes, "The call to 'do penance' is based not on the fact that penance will keep us in trim, but on the fact that 'the Kingdom of God is at hand.' Our penance - metanoia- is our response to the proclamation of the Gospel message, the kerygma which announces our salvation if we will hear God and not harden our hearts. The function of penance and self-denial is then contrition, or the 'breaking up' of that hardness of heart which prevents us from understanding God's command to love, and from obeying it effectively" (Seasons of Celebration, p. 130).

Furthermore, "St Gregory Nazianzen speaks of the Christian as an 'instrument played by the Holy Spirit.' The aim of asceticism is to keep this instrument in tune. Mortification is not simply the progressive control of instinct by deadening the appetites of the heart. That is too crude a view. It is rather like the tightening of a violin (or guitar!) string. We do not just go on twisting and twisting until the string breaks. That would not be sanctity, but insanity. No: what we must do is bring the strings of the delicate instrument, which is our whole being, to the exact pitch which the Holy Spirit desires of us, in order that He may produce in us the exquisite melody of divine love that we were created to sing before the face of our heavenly Father" (Seasons of Celebration, p. 139).

In these texts, we are reminded that the main goal of any of our Lenten disciplines is more fully to receive and share God's love. Love is the intended "fruit" of our endeavors in this season, and probably not so much because we are able to churn it up through what we do, but rather because we open (or empty?) ourselves to be filled more with the Holy Spirit. And "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

What will be your Lenten harvest? To where will your Lenten journey lead? The point of this season is to allow ourselves to be crucified again with Christ; that dying with him to sin, we may be raised again with him to new life. We are called to make way for receiving and multiplying that great grace which God has provided through the death and resurrection of our Lord.

It is Christ's love which marks the resurrection community, and Christ's love which spreads through our lives into the lives of those around us. Remember that the monastic vows of poverty were only made so that the monastic community could show greater material compassion and love to the widows, orphans, and other needy in the community through increased giving. In other words, deprivation and sacrifice is never the end, but rather the means through which blessings may be multiplied.

Hence, the association of the Lenten season with the new life of Spring. Will we, like those first Palm Sunday crowds, shout out hallow Hosanna's, or will we humbly submit ourselves to follow the One who leads us to new life via the Cross? I encourage you, in the free-

dom of your own conscience before God, to undertake such discipline and acts of self-denial as will truly free you to die to self and live again in the Spirit of the Risen Christ. With you in Lenten learning, I remain sincerely yours,

*In Christ,
Scott*

A MISSION LUNCH - A MISSION OF LOVE

Paris is widely considered to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

And yet like in every big city there are those on the edge; many in need, without homes or jobs. In the current economic situation this has become even more evident. And like other big cities Paris provides what it can. There are shelters and soup kitchens to help ease the hardship, yet there is one here which offers a special ingredient, it's the Friday Mission Lunch Program held at the host church, The American Cathedral, located at 23 Ave George V just across the Seine from The American Church in Paris.

The FML is a local community outreach ministry which runs every Friday of the year including those that fall on major holidays. The program was conceived over 15 years ago but what made this program different from other soup kitchens at the time was the concept that, in addition to the food that was being offered, hospitality and fellowship were considered equally important. For this reason all who come to share this meal are seated at tables with tablecloths and real dishes while being served a healthy three-course meal. Each

person is treated individually with dignity and respect and is shown the hospitality of an honored guest.

Every week more than 60 needy and homeless men, women and children come to part take of this free hot nutritious meal. In addition many of our guests are elderly who are trying to survive on limited budgets and who also come for the company and to socialize with others. Each meal is prefaced by grace and a blessing. When it's brought to our attention birthdays or other special occasions are acknowledged. It's this personal sense of community and fellowship that first attracted my heart and interest to the program eight years ago and continues to make me stay involved.

Many of our other volunteers feel the same way. They are a very diverse and dynamic group! Some are students, some are trailing spouses and some even come with professional chef experience. Most are currently living in Paris but we



have also had traveling groups from around the world who stop by to lend a hand including a visiting Korean Church, a youth group from Sweden and a University Fashion Studies group from Atlanta who comes every July.

The program is also very much an interdenominational effort as there are four local churches: The American Cathedral, The American Church in Paris, The Vintage Church and St. Joseph's Catholic Church who each take the responsibility to provide the meal one Friday per month.

While these organizations are in charge of the menu and shopping, help from individuals or other groups is encouraged and appreciated! The set budget for each meal is 150 € which works out to just 2 € per person. The American Church holds an annual Food Drive each Thanksgiving which helps to bring in many of the staple items we use regularly, allowing us to stretch our budget. For the past 2 years we've had the support and partnership of Windham

Presbyterian Church in Windham, N.H. who has underwritten the costs of the meals when there is a 5th Friday in the month. If you or your group is interested in becoming involved in an overseas ministry please contact www.acparis.org

As one of our guests recently stated each meal is prepared with a generous serving of love. And that's definitely the ingredient that makes this program so special.

Kristie Worrel



A SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE LIFE OF MARVIN D. STEINMETZ

A service of Thanksgiving was held on Saturday, January 10, 2009 to celebrate the life of Marvin Steinmetz, beloved husband of American Church in Paris former Associate Pastor Rev. Tina Blair. The Rev. Dr. R. Scott Herr, Senior Pastor of ACP presided, assisted by two former Pastoral Assistants, Rev. Charlie Brown, and Rev. Will Dixon. Rev. Dixon gave the homi-

ly, Marvin Steinmetz: A Man of Faith. Peter Bannister served as organist. Special music was provided by Paula Taquet-Woolfolk and Nicole Primmer, vocal soloists, and Tad Brown, clarinet. The photo of Marvin on the cover of the bulletin, unfortunately not included here, was courtesy of Rev. John Rogers.

The congregation of about one hundred friends gathered to hear inspirational scripture, lovely music of Bach and Dvorak, and moving hymns of faith. After the service everyone was invited into the theater for refreshments and to speak to Tina and other family members. One could easily imagine Marvin leaning on his stick and smiling approvingly at everyone.

The following is a reflection about Marvin from his good friend Cobi Camberlein:

Marvin Steinmetz was mentally sharp and creative (up to the very end). He lived his last days as though they would continue forever. He was eager to discuss politics and religion & social/cultural issues with anyone who was willing to engage. At the same time, there's no one who ever loved to party more.

Marvin is often remembered to be the life of such gatherings. He knew how to discover joy and celebration in most every aspect of living. He found meaning in tasks many of us would only describe as drudgery. Always creative, he would dream up new ideas for his famous "radio shows" which were so popular at the ACP. He loved music and reveled in finding others who enjoyed the same kinds of music -- classical, pop, folk, country/western.

He cared deeply for Tina and Gillian. His fondest wish was for

Gigi's well-being and success. Marv, the name he preferred to be called, harbored a "lover's quarrel" with the Church. He knew and loved the Church well enough to recognize how short we oft-times fall from what God would have us be and do. He touched many lives with his quick wit, as well as with his sensitivity for the needs of others. His was an heroic struggle with debilitating disease during his latter years. His body finally succumbed, but his Spirit never surrendered.

CORRECTION

The first name of Dr. Clayton Williams' wife, Fernande, was misspelled in the Autumn 2008 issue of the Bridge. The editor regrets the error.

Vienna Connection



FROM THE PASTOR

When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.

If you like one liners like I do we can find much truth in them. John Fischer wrote the one above, and as much as I don't like it, I believe it contains some Biblical truth. In fact, when it comes to personal

growth, having everything go your way is probably less to be trusted than feeling like you're driving into oncoming traffic!

This is an important concept as we experience the church season of Lent — the forty days that end with Holy Week. Why?

Well, as I read the Bible, I do not often (if ever) see God doling out ease and convenience. His business lies more in the areas of refining and shaping us to conform to the image of Christ, and none of that comes easy. Scripture indicates that the process by which this comes about includes, among other things, trials (James 1:2-3), suffering (Romans 5:3-4), discipline (Hebrews 12:7), and a growing

sense of our own mortality (2 Corinthians 5:4-5).

In one illustration, Paul uses the metaphor of an earthen vessel to explain our human condition and how God uses us (2 Corinthians 4:7). To think about an earthen vessel (a piece of pottery) is to get an accurate picture of what we can expect from this life.

A pot begins as a lump of clay that is kneaded and slammed until all the air is out of it — then it has the right consistency to be formed into something useful. Then it is placed on a potter's wheel where the potter molds and shapes it, spinning it in his wet hands, until its sides are stretched out and up into a shape that can hold something. Then it is set on a shelf and allowed to dry before the real "fun" begins — the firing — after which it is glazed and fired yet again.

Finally, it is ready to be used, and that usually includes some pretty rough treatment — a seemingly endless pattern of getting dirty and being cleaned only to get dirty again. Over time it ages and cracks with use, but according to Paul's illustration, this only lets more of what it contains out.

So maybe one of the questions we should ask during Lent (I believe Lent is the season of questions) is: "When we are 'cracked' by life, what flows from us?" Anger and resentment, or grace and understanding? Our response to the problems and hardships of life can and will show others what really is at the center of our lives!

Pastor Randy

VIVA VIENNA!

(As you can tell, my German is still not very good.) We at Vienna Community Church are so excited to host the AFCU meeting here April 18-21! Below is the schedule of events – from necessary meetings to even more necessary food and fellowship – to the most necessary, our coming together to worship our Lord.

We have so much planned, from a reception at the Manse, to hearty Czech food, meetings in the new Lutheran fellowship hall, a typical Viennese evening of local food, international worship on Sunday (with special music), plus a walking tour of downtown Vienna, Greek food, greetings from our Austrian host church organizations, to ending on Monday with a traditional Heurigen evening in the vineyards. (And if that is not enough, you are invited to go to Bratislava, Slovakia on Tuesday for a half-day trip - less than an hour by train)! For those of

you who cannot come to Vienna this year, we want you to know that this is a "standing invitation" to come, see our city, hear its music, drink its wine/beer/mountain water, and worship at VCC. We are a gateway to central Europe with its many interesting cities and quaint towns. The motto of VCC says it best: "Many Cultures, One Faith"!

Keep in touch! And remember, prayer reaches around the world.

Pastor Randy

AFCU MEETING SCHEDULE 18-20 APRIL 2009

Friday, 17 April

17:00 - 19:00 Reception by Pastor Randy and Gail at the Manse (Schelleingasse 2/6 - Suedtiroler exit on U-1). Everyone is invited to eat out together at a nearby Czech restaurant afterwards.

Saturday, 18 April

9:00 - 16:00 Meeting in the Lutheran Church fellowship hall, next door to VCC (Reformed Church). (Includes coffee and lunch.)
19:00 Dinner in a Viennese restaurant.

Sunday, 19 April

10:30 (optional) - Bible Study - Chattanooga Café on Graben (near church)
12:00 Worship service in the Vienna Community Church (followed by light Thai lunch in fellowship hall and courtyard)
14:00 Walking tour led by Rainer Zimmerman through the 1st district
17:00 End of tour - dinner together for those who wish at a Greek restaurant

Monday, 20 April

9:00 - 16:00 Meeting in Lutheran Church fellowship hall (Includes coffee and lunch.)
18:30 Informal Heurigen dinner near the vineyards

Tuesday, 21 April

Optional half day trip by train to Bratislava

VCC meets at the Reformed Church - Dorotheergasse 16 (First District). Phone number for Pastor Randy is (manse) 505-5233 or cell 0680-128-0648.

GOOD NEWS!

The book, "The Vienna Community Church – 50 Years of Ecumenical Life in Vienna", is ready to go to the printer and so it should be available by the time the AFCU Board meets the week after Easter. If you have not yet reserved your copy, please do so as soon as possible (pickart.hl@utanet.at).

THE ROTHGEB MEMORIAL MUSIC GRANT

The Rothgeb Memorial Music Grant was established in 1987 as part of the VCC's 30th anniversary celebration. We have never been able to pay the many musicians who contribute their time and their gifts to VCC worship services; but for 22 years the Rothgeb Memorial Grant has been a token of our gratitude to these talented and faithful people. It is awarded to select VCC musicians to support a study program. Traditionally, the award is presented during worship on Palm Sunday, which in 2009 falls on 5 April; this year's recipient is flautist William Liang.

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:
Richard E. Bright - Treasurer AFCU
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DONATION INFORMATION

I PREFER THAT MY DONATION BENEFIT:

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Unless otherwise designated, your contributions will go to the General Fund from which annual distributions support all of the churches.

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Your gift is greatly appreciated. Thank You!

3-09

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*