

The Bridge

Connecting Our Churches and Friends around the World

April 2019

AFCU PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear Friends in Christ,

I wish you all a very happy Easter! Blessings to all as we remember with humility and gratitude the gift of God's salvation through Jesus Christ.

We are so thankful for the strong support that you as friends have given to the three European churches and the AFCU during 2018.

We are now preparing for our Annual Board and Development Meetings in Paris, France on May 17-18, hosted by the American Church in Paris (ACP). Special activities are planned for friends of the ACP who would like to return and recall the many memories and experiences of Paris and the ACP. We are hoping that many of you will join us in these activities. Thank you to Rev. Dr. Scott Herr, and members of the ACP and AFCU who are preparing for these activities.

We have a very ambitious agenda at this year's meetings.

A FEW HIGHLIGHTS:

1. We will focus on long-range planning for the ACP and American Church in Berlin (ACB), following months of preparatory work by AFCU committees in cooperation with the churches. These plans focus on the changing demographics of church membership, recognition of the maintenance requirements of the large church buildings in Paris and Berlin, membership growth in all three churches, more effectively utilizing our assets, and serving the needs of the community where the churches are located. There is a renewed emphasis on the financial needs to maintain their missions and plans for the future.

2. We will elect board members and officers of the AFCU and conduct regular business regarding budgets, contributions, committee reports, etc.

3. We will welcome the **Reverend Dr. Mari Thorkelson** for the first time since she became pastor of the ACB. Also, we will honor **Rev. Dr. Gabor Lassu** from the Vienna Community Church for his courageous and spirit led ministry during the past several years. He will be leaving Vienna in June.

I again invite you to attend the American churches when you visit Paris, Berlin, and Vienna. Be a FRIEND by supporting the churches with your prayers and financial support. Remember that when giving through the AFCU, your gifts are tax-deductible in the United States since we are a 501(c)(3) organization.

Also, if you have a desire to serve these churches with your time and talent, please contact me or another member of the AFCU board. We welcome new members and look forward to welcoming those who have a continuing desire to serve these ministries.

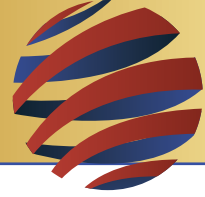
FUTURE MEETINGS

The Autumn board and development meetings are scheduled to be held in **Minneapolis during October 4-5.**

Let me close by quoting from **Romans 15 v.13:**

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

In Christ,
Ted Ziemann, AFCU President



The American and Foreign Christian Union would like to thank all of those who made donations in support of our ministries during 2018. Your support is valuable to the ministries we serve: The American Church in Paris, the American Church in Berlin, and the Vienna Community Church.

During January 2019 donor statements were mailed to all those for whom we have current addresses. If you made a donation during 2018 and your name does not appear on the above list and/or you have not received a year end giving statement, kindly contact the **Finance Secretary, Russ McNaughton** at afcufinsec@afcubridge.org

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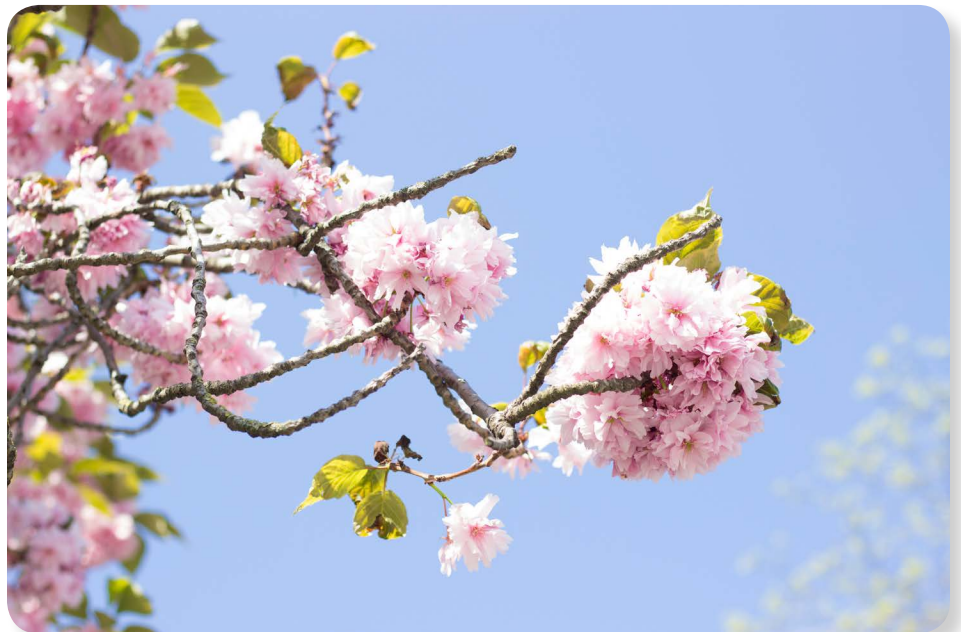


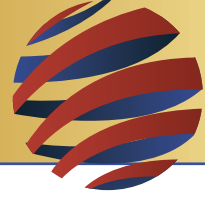
Since September our congregation has been reflecting on a theme from Ephesians 2 that in Christ we are “no longer strangers.” So it is a surprise to read that Jesus was a stranger to his disciples in the earliest accounts of the first Easter. Famously, Mary mistakes Jesus as the Gardener (John 20:15a)! By the sea of Tiberias, Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee and two others of Jesus’ disciples saw Jesus, but they “*did not know that it was Jesus*” (John 21:4). And of course, there are Cleopas and an unnamed disciple on the road to Emmaus with whom Jesus walked and talked. They did not recognize Jesus until he broke bread with them (Luke 24:16). Apparently, it is sometimes difficult for us to recognize Jesus even when he is standing right in front of us.

Recognizing God’s presence in our midst is a mystery. But Jesus helps us with the command to *welcome the stranger* and that when we do, *we welcome him*. The writer of Hebrews also adds, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2). Our congregation may have experienced this recently when we opened the gym to a number of refugees during the coldest months of December – **March. The 100 Nights of Welcome was a tremendous success, thanks to our Mission and Outreach leaders who coordinated the many volunteers who made it all happen.**

For a hundred nights we welcomed men from places like Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Mali, and Iraq. Many of us were a bit apprehensive at first, because, well, they were Muslim. Many were coming from war ravaged lands and who knows what emotional scars and psychological trauma they experienced? Perhaps our fears weren’t even conscious, but we found ourselves very pleasantly surprised by how polite, gentle, respectful and kind these young men were as our guests.

An Easter moment for me occurred the last night I helped out with the ministry. It was a Sunday night and it was my responsibility to open the doors as our receptionist had left already. I had to get the keys for the lockers and the guest list notes we passed along to the volunteers from night to night. When I looked where these items were supposed to be, I couldn’t find them. Oh no, I thought... Someone forgot to put them back. I went down to the gym to see if my keys would work, and to my surprise I found most of the guests that were supposed to come later *already in the gym and dancing!* I joined them and one of our former guests, “Gerald,” saw me and with a big smile





came over to give me a big hug. I hadn't seen him for weeks, as he had been given a home placement and didn't need to stay with us anymore. "What are you doing here?" I asked. "I'm teaching dance classes!" he said. Incredible. Gerald knew how boring it was for the other young men from day to day. And so unbeknownst to me, with other volunteers, Gerald started teaching dance classes Sunday nights for any of the men interested. Gerald came back to help with the ministry and bring a little joy into the other men's lives through dance from his culture.

Could it be that Jesus (or an angel) showed up in the person of Gerald? I don't know, but I can't get that wonderful scene out of my head: Our refugee guests and volunteers dancing and laughing together and having a good time... Gerald didn't have to come back. He had found his way. He was taken care of. But he did come back to help out those who were still waiting. He came to bring hope and joy. I think that's a big part of Easter new life. Jesus came back for us and in him we have hope and joy. As we know that we are taken care of, that we are "beloved," then we can't help but share God's love with others. And maybe, just maybe... we'll meet Jesus in our midst!

Thank you for your support of the ACP and ministries like *100 Nights of Welcome* that depend on your generosity. Your prayers and financial gifts help us to be an Easter community that brings God's love to others in tangible ways. On behalf of the entire ACP congregation, thank you. We wish you an Easter filled with much hope and joy!

In the Risen Christ,

Scott



Warm greetings to all of you from Berlin. By now our new pastor, Pastor Mari Thorkelson, and her husband Pat Foley have acclimated themselves to life in the German capital. Mari's warm personality and guidance augment the progress taking place within our congregation. To name just some of the progress made, we proudly list the following:

Community Circle Listening Sessions:

Pastor Mari held 16 small meetings in January collecting what attracted members to ACB and what keeps them here, among other questions. A total of 80 members attended giving our pastor a good opportunity to further acquaint herself with the members and the congregation, valuable for further leadership.

Time and Talents: Our pastor also actively solicited members to specify what Time and Talents they would be willing to offer the ACB mission in Berlin during this year and beyond. The resulting volunteer list has greatly helped the ACB Leadership build up the committees with new members, as well as getting more members active in the functions of the church.

Stewardship Committee: For years Finance and Stewardship have been combined in one committee with far more focus on the former than the latter. The Time and Talents list has uncovered the potential to create a separate Stewardship Committee for renewed focus on donations and fundraising within the congregation.

Young Adults: Since February young adults from ages 20-30, both single and with families, have been meeting at least once a month for discussions about deeper religious themes. This is organized by a young adult leadership team.

Prayer Corner: A portion of the church has been organized into a prayer corner for smaller services or for private meditation. This was first used during a Healing Service with great response from the congregation.

New Members: On March 31 ACB welcomed 12 new members to the congregation during the regular services. Renewed attention to mentoring new members to more deeply integrate them into the congregation was recognized during the recent...

Congregational Meeting: On March 24 a meeting was held to present the serious financial situation we are in, including a graduated graph of average giving per member which surprised most in attendance. Additionally, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis collected input from the members to support Council updating the long range plan in the coming months.

Church Rental: Since last Fall the Development Committee (DC) has focused efforts on raising income through renting space. We have added two weekly groups and hosted two successful concerts to date, with several more in planning, including a wedding. The church office and the DC have communicated well to provide a professional approach to those interested in renting.

Into the Future: Our congregation has a number of big events planned throughout the rest of 2019 including the following...

- On May 5 our Luther Church building will celebrate its 125th anniversary since inauguration by Kaiserin Auguste Viktoria in 1894.
- June 10, the ACB has been invited to join all our German partner churches (ca.15 churches) in Schöneberg - Tempelhof for a combined service on Pentecost Monday in front of Schöneberger Rathaus.
- On June 15 we host the Fest der Religionen for the third time in a street fair on the plaza surrounding our building.
- On September 7, ACB participates in Berlin's Fest der Kirchen, a kind of Open House for churches throughout the city for people to visit.
- And several more events still in planning for the Fall, so stay tuned!



We at ACB are very much looking forward to seeing you at the AFCU meeting in Paris next month to share with you further information on the above, as well as connecting with you to further Christ's work in Europe.

Should you be in Berlin this week and want to join us for Holy Week services, we would be very happy to greet you!

Maundy Thursday Service	19:00
Good Friday Service	19:00
Traditional Easter Service	11:00
Gospel Praise Service	13:30

Yours in Christ,
Martin McClure
AFCU-ACB Liaison





“VCC was the place we wanted to be every Sunday morning to start our week. We were uplifted by the outstanding music. . .”

Pat and Walt Dietrich

FEELING GOD’S PRESENCE THROUGH UPLIFTED VOICES AT THE VCC CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF ANNE PESCHEK

Approaching its 62nd year, the VCC has survived the many challenges confronting it over the years, from changing demographics, high-turnover, conflict from within, changing legal requirements and the secularisation of society, to name just a few. The one constant has been the desire of each VCC Music Chair and Choir Director to imbue the weekly Sunday Service with music that fills the soul and brings the congregation that much closer to God.

Bill Price, one of VCC’s long-term members stated:

During my 40 plus years at the VCC I have been pleased to see that the nationality, denominational and cultural mix of members of our congregation has produced a rich fabric of ever-changing texture... Last but not least, our good pulpit pilots and special music enhance VCC’s worship service...

Former members, **Pat and Walt Dietrich**, wrote on the occasion of VCC’s 50th Anniversary that:

“VCC was the place we wanted to be every Sunday morning to start our week. We were uplifted by the outstanding music...”

It would be hard to find anyone else at the VCC who has enhanced VCC’s worship service over the last decades of VCC’s existence other than **Anne Peschek**, who passed away in February of this year. Anne, like many other

musicians, came to Vienna to sing, and ended up staying for love, raising a family, and living her passion for music. She found her way to the VCC and served as VCC’s Choir Director for many years and sang in the choir for those decades that she wasn’t a Choir Director.



Anne even recorded CDs and sold them to raise money for the VCC! Her dedication was such that she was planning to come to Choir practise the day before she left us.



Over the many years, her exacting standards set the bar on the quality of the music during

VCC’s Sunday services, and our reputation for inspirational pastors and spiritually uplifting music no doubt attracted celebrated opera singers and guest choirs that have graced VCC’s doors over the many years and continue to do so. To name just a few, celebrated Tenor **Johan Botha**, rising star and **Lyrical-Spinto** Soprano **Kristin Lewis**, established Soprano **Sandra Nel**, and Tenor **Miguel Cometto**. In April, Soprano **Diana Higbee**, who organises a classical music festival each year in Le Mans, France, graced our Sunday service with her voice. **Anne’s daughter, Martina**, who is a soprano has on



occasion sung as a soloist or accompanied her mother. Our reputation follows us and many guest choirs have chosen to sing at the VCC. Our Music Chair, **David Corcoran**, recently hosted two guest choirs in February and April– the Bloomingdale High School Choir and Orchestra, and Euphony, a choir and orchestra from New Zealand!



HEAR MY PRAYER



CONCERT ON MUSIC OF KING DAVID

WHEN

11 March 2018
4pm - 6pm

WHERE

Jakschgasse 12, 1140 Vienna

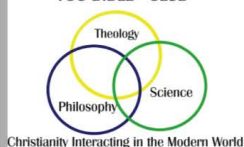
FEATURING David's Daughters

Charlotte Lowery-May: Soprano, Harp

Anne Rothgeb-Peschek: Soprano, Harp

Martina Peschek: Mezzo Soprano, Recorder

VCC BIBLE+ CLUB



PROGRAM

Summary of David's Life:
David Nolland

Music and Instruments of David
Psalm 61: *Hear my cry*

Instruments of the Old Testament

Psalm 23
Miriam Linkamer

Music

Playford, *None such*
Alfonso Sabio, *Cantiga 7*
Non Sofre
Vermil, *Cuncti sinus*
Alfonso Sabio, *Cantiga 159*
Non Sofre
13th Century, *Alle psallite cum luya*

Development of harps
17th Century Variations:
Bretagne Ballade

R.s.v.p.
bibleplusclub@
viennacommunitychurch.com
or on: 06776 1917794

To commemorate VCC's 50th Anniversary in 2005, Anne established the Rothgeb Memorial Award that has been presented to those participating in the music of the VCC who have enhanced the Sunday Service with their musical talents. These recipients have been singers and instrumentalists whom have shared their talents to uplift the souls of those attending our Church. Four of these recipients still actively contribute their time and talents to the VCC, and they are our award-winning Choir Director, Soprano Cassandra McConnell, VCC's Music Chair, Baritone David Corcoran, and VCC's organist and Tenor, Tomasz Piet k. A fourth, Soprano Miriam Linkimir, who is also a choir member, received the 2019 Rothgeb Memorial Award during the Palm Sunday service.

Anne will also be remembered for her contributions to the musical fabric in Vienna, as she founded various ensembles – the **Wienerwald Ensemble** which specialised in Viennese *Lieder*, and **David's Daughters**, which performed music and played instruments that could have been used during the time of King David. And for those who have attended Anne's House Concerts, you can never forget her beautiful antique instruments!

Let us celebrate the life of Anne Peschek, who has left her indelible mark on the VCC and taken her place as an important figure in the rich musical heritage of our beloved Church.

Mickela Moore, Moderator

Pastor Gábor Lassu



The American Church in Paris (ACP), The American Church in Berlin (ACB) and the Vienna Community Church (VCC) are ministering to a diverse population spiritually, culturally and economically. The American & Foreign Christian Union, established in 1848, provides Board guidance and economic support to American and International Christian churches, and is thankful for our current partnerships!

We welcome supporters who want to impact the world through these vibrant ministries. If interested, join us by following the giving instructions below:

Background

The AFCU is an IRS classified 501(c)(3) organization supporting the English-speaking ministries of the ACP, ACB and VCC. Your donations are tax deductible for US tax purposes.

Your gifts are important and appreciated and you can support the International Christian Community by sending your checks to our address shown below.

An alternative gifting option is to donate through the AFCU web site using your credit card or PayPal account. The AFCU web site address is www.afcubridge.org. Go to the web site and click on DONATE.

When gifting by check, please designate your donation as follows:

You can designate your donation to one of these ministries either via check; please indicate your interest below:

- _____ American Church in Paris
- _____ American Church in Berlin
- _____ Vienna Community Church
- _____ AFCU General Fund

Make the check payable to the AFCU, and include the church designation, noted above.

Mail to:

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