

The Bridge

Connecting Our Churches and Friends around the World

“May your unfailing love
rest upon us O Lord, even
as we put our hope
in you.”

Psalm 33 v. 22

THIS MONTH

AFCU UPDATE

The American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU) Organization exists for the purpose of supporting the ministries of the American Church in Paris (ACP), the American Church in Berlin (ACB) and the Vienna Community Church (VCC).

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A YEAR OF TRANSITION

ACP UPDATE - Pastor Herr (Scott) will be finishing his twelve years of pastoral leadership in July of 2020.

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INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

FINANCE - 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 through a prayerful donation.

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AFCU PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear friends in Christ,

I am writing this letter in early autumn as temperatures become pleasant and the deer and the antelope play. The AFCU is busy planning our semi-annual board and development meetings to be held October 4-5, 2019 in Minneapolis.

We had a very productive meeting hosted by the American Church in Paris during May. I wish to especially thank members of the ACP and Pastor Scott and Kim for their gracious hosting of the meeting, including a wonderful reception, dinner and concert. I also wish to acknowledge members of the AFCU development team for an excellent job on the overall coordination.

At the fall meeting in Minneapolis we are looking forward to hearing progress reports on the items above as well as focusing on our long-range plans and preparing for our annual Thank-a-Thon, where Board Members and Associates call to thank you, are generous Supporters.

Future meeting: May 15-17. Location to be determined in USA. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for specific information.

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 after leaving Europe, please contact me or another member of the AFCU board. We welcome new members and workers in the kingdom of Christ.

In Christ,

Ted Ziemann
AFCU President

A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MEETINGS

- The AFCU board approved funding a utilization study of the ACP church house facilities by architectural firm Pei Partnership Architects LLP/ Cortez Associes/ Sarl Architects.
- The AFCU board agreed to support improvements to the sound and lighting in the ACP nave and sanctuary area. We encourage friends of the ACP to support this badly needed upgrade for the contemporary service.
- The AFCU board has initiated a project to determine the feasibility of building a \$1 million endowment fund for the American Church in Berlin. The purpose of the fund is to ensure long-term support of an ordained pastor at the ACB.
- The AFCU Interim Pastor Search Committee, in coordination with the ACP, is actively reviewing candidates for an interim pastor to serve following Pastor Scott Herr's planned departure next summer. We expect a full report at the fall meeting in Minneapolis.
- Officers were re-elected for a one-year term and a class of board members was elected for a three-year term at the May meeting.
- We thanked Pastor Gábor Lassu for his service at the Vienna Community Church since he was leaving in June. We now welcome guest pastor Tom Garrison and soon guest Pastor Neil Parker, near the end of September.

OUR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU) Organization exists solely for the purpose of supporting the ministries, in Christ's name, of the American Church in Paris (ACP), the American Church in Berlin (ACB) and the Vienna Community Church (VCC). While this statement of purpose seems simple and straightforward, it does require further explanation.

It is the responsibility and mission of each church to define and carry out those ministries. Through grants from the endowment funds the Board can designate funding for certain areas. The Operating Budget for each church is the sole responsibility of the local church leadership and congregation. The main financial role of the AFCU is to manage and increase the endowment funds and approve designated grants.

The key areas of collaboration between the AFCU Board and the local churches are through active development efforts and alumni support. This is being accomplished through specific functions of the Development Committee which include management of the alumni data base, regional 'Friends' receptions, a newsletter, direct letters, planned giving (Heritage Society) and various other tools.

Ministries

The role of the AFCU is to support the designated ministries, in Christ's name, of the individual churches. It is the responsibility and mission of each church to define and carry out those ministries. Through grants from the endowment funds the Board can designate funding for certain areas. The Operating Budget for each church is the sole responsibility of the local church leadership and congregation. The main financial role of the AFCU is to manage and increase the endowment funds and approve designated grants.

Organization

A Board of some 30 members currently serves the AFCU. All members volunteer their time, talents and expenses. They are comprised of alumni members and ministers along with current members of the three churches. The Board is further supported by volunteer consultants who bring a certain experience and expertise. In addition, there are the Pastors and ex-officio members from each of the churches. Finally, there are the Honorary Board members who wish to maintain close contact with the Board but who are not obligated to attend Board meetings.

The organizational structure of the Board centers upon functional committees. At the present time the specific committees are; Executive, Financial, Personnel, Nominating, Development, Communications-Interpretation, and Audit . Under the auspices of the Development Committee there are various subcommittees established for each major development area.

On behalf of the AFCU, we thank you for your continued Godly support through prayer, mission and donations.



HERITAGE SOCIETY

The Heritage Society of the AFCU recognizes members and friends of the American Church in Paris, the American Church in Berlin and the Vienna Community Church who have included one or more of these churches in their estate planning. Perhaps you would like to make a significant contribution to help the American and Foreign Christian Union support the commitment it has with the member churches it serves. Endowment funds for each church have been established to help sustain long-term ministry in these churches.

To learn more about the Heritage Society, please visit the AFCU website at AFCUBridge.com and look at The Heritage Society under the Support the AFCU tab.

Also, you may contact the AFCU at AFCUHeritage@AFCUBridge.com.

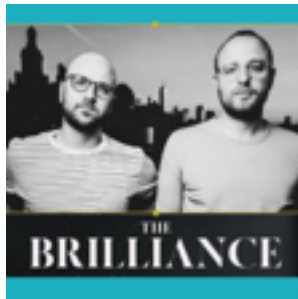


**“Call to Me and I will answer you and
tell you great and hidden things that
you have not known.”**

Jeremiah 33:3



AMERICAN CHURCH IN PARIS



Dear Alumni/Alumnae & Friends of the ACP,

The rentrée has been an inspiring time here at the ACP, with artist in residence Freiman Stoltzfus and musicians beginning the new year with “Soundtrack for a Painting” concert; renown author and speaker Brian McLaren preaching and speaking at a Thurber Conversation; our annual Ministry Fair connecting old and new members; another Alpha course in conjunction with St. Michael’s Anglican church providing a safe place for people to explore life questions; and registering newcomers for the Bloom Where You’re Planted orientation course! Architect Didi Pei and his associate Vincent Cortes have shared preliminary plans for the ACP Property Renovation Project that will be shared with the AFCU board at their October meeting in Minneapolis. We are preparing for a workshop and concert by The Brilliance, classically trained contemporary musicians exploring what it means to combine worship and praise with a heart for social justice. We are also making final plans for a Light and Sound Project to bring needed upgrades for the acoustics and lighting for our three worship services, concerts, and other events held in the sanctuary.

Our theme this year is taken from II Corinthians 5, “The Ministry of Reconciliation,” and we will continue to hear from those who have not always felt the church to be a welcoming or caring community. We are reflecting on what it means to be reconciled with God and what the ministry of reconciliation look like in a society where some people have not been “conciliated” in the first place. Brian McLaren’s book, *The Great Spiritual Migration: How the World’s Largest Religion is Seeking a Better Way to be Christian* is an excellent primer to explore some of the questions I believe the church needs to be asking today, remaining true to the timeless gospel of Jesus Christ but adapting to the needs of an ever-changing and complex world.

This is also begins a year of transition, as I will be finishing twelve years of pastoral leadership in July of 2020. The search process for an interim pastor is going well and I am doing what I can to “leave things better than I found them” so that my successors will be set up well for a new season of fruitful ministry and mission among these amazing people who make up the ACP. Thank you for your continuing prayer and support for the gospel work of the ACP. We hope that you will give generously so that we can continue to serve the people here with energy, intelligence, imagination and much love. I especially hope that you’ll support the Sound and Light Project as that will enhance our worship services for many years to come.

Either way, know that we appreciate you and your partnership in this ministry to people from around the world. As always, if you’ll be visiting Paris, make sure to let us know as we would love to meet and share with you more personally all that God is doing here in our midst. Grace and peace to you!

In Christ,

Scott



GRANT MONGIN

2019-2020 YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY INTERN

Grant Mongin is our 2019-2020 Youth and Young Adult Ministry Intern! Grant first came to know Christ in his family's interdenominational church when he was 6 years old and is excited to work with the young adults of ACP this coming year. Grant is coming to ACP from Princeton Theological Seminary (USA) where he is pursuing a Master of Divinity with a Certificate in Theology, Women, and Gender, and just completed his second of the three year degree program. Most recently, Grant has been working with The Juilliard School in NYC where he serves as the Residence Life and Summer Dance and Percussion Program Coordinator.

Grant was born and raised outside of Chicago, IL, and that is where his parents and sister live now. He was awarded a Bachelor of Science in Christian Ministries from Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion Indiana. He is particularly passionate about creating a Church where the lived experiences of all people are considered in the construction of liturgy, theology, and ministry. Providing a loving, accepting, and socially conscious space for young people to discover who they are is vital to Grant's approach to ministry. He feels especially close to God when surrounded by nature and loves to share his passion for backpacking, rock climbing, and camping with anyone who is interested. When not in the outdoors or working, Grant enjoys going to concerts, Broadway shows, modern/contemporary art exhibits, and dance performances. A particular area of excitement for his work with ACP is their focus on interdenominational/ecumenical worship and their commitment to social justice.

Grant looks forward to getting to know the ACP community and working with an experienced staff where he can learn what full-time ministry looks like and is excited for the opportunity to grow alongside this team. He knows that this year of ministry will be full of highs and lows but is excited to learn through the process. He sees getting to know the members of the ACP community as a vital piece to his ministry and as such would love the opportunity to get to know any and all of you over coffee, a meal, at a show, or really anywhere you love!

**“There is therefore now no
condemnation for those who are in
Christ Jesus. For the Law of the Spirit
of life has set you free in Christ Jesus
from the law of sin and death.”**

Romans 8:1-2



AMERICAN CHURCH IN BERLIN

Take great care of all that has been entrusted to you. These words (found in 1 Timothy 6:20) passed on by former Lutheran Social Service director Mark Peterson to his successor while I was serving on the LSS board, carry and ignite us for God's greatest possibilities. They are meant for "passing on."

In this 125th Anniversary year of Luther Church, since August our new church council, committees and congregation are being drawn into Isaiah 43:18-19a: "Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up, do you not perceive it?"

This is a real challenge to our knowing. Many know the past and cling to it. It's our security. Yet God has even better things in mind. The Holy One is already standing with us in the Present Presence. We can only see God's new thing when we let go, open our hands and heart, unclutter our

monkey mind, and release our old dwelling places. Can we trust God? Will God be by our side in our everyday lives to catch us when we fall or fail? Are we willing to take the risk of faith?

For six weeks during July and August in worship, we engaged the theme "What does it mean to be a Christian in the world today?" It helped me realize our hunger for re-rooting ourselves in spiritual practices and stories; the need to identify and distinguish who we are as Christ-followers; to ask where God has made the most difference in our lives. Then we can take great care of embodying this marvelous faith in our daily lives and practice new ways to connect with one another and our neighbors.

In thanksgiving for God's new thing,

Pastor Mari

A FEW ACB HIGHLIGHTS

- Initiated a Prayer Corner in sanctuary for individuals/small groups + Healing service on 5th Sundays
- Growth of church rentals and concerts to supplement congregational giving
Comprehensive support for a number of asylum-seekers
- **June 9** Pentecost Ecumenical Service, multi-faith participation and celebration, Gospel Choir and Gospel Praise Band singing, selling homemade "holy donuts," desserts and drinks
- **June 15** Hosting district-wide Street Fair in June to promote interfaith dialogue and understanding
- **Summer outings** including a Young Adults Beer Garden adventure, Walking on Water visit to Lake Schlachtensee, super one day trip to Baltic seaside town of Warnemünde
- **Special visitors** Rev. Dr. Rafael Malpica Padilla, ELCA Director of Global Mission; US Director of National Intelligence (since resigned) Dan Coats and wife Marsha, who have both been connected with ACB for many years; Ruth Van Reken, developer of third culture kids experience
- **August 4** Began new Saturday bible studies in August
- **August 2** - Lightning struck the church tower which affected bells, clock and projector system. Our lightning protection system requires an investment of €20,000
- **August 17** Arrival and celebration of our new pastoral intern Rachel Johnson
- **September 1** Hosting world renowned acapella choir Chanticleer in our sanctuary

**“For everything there is a season and
a time for every matter
under heaven.”**

Ecclesiastes 3:1



VIENNA COMMUNITY CHURCH



For anyone who becomes active in the Vienna Community Church, it is immediately obvious that fellowship plays an important role in VCC life. When I joined the Church some 15 years ago, that was the case, but it was just as clear that there was potential for more.

Entrusted with the coordination of fellowship around the time the VCC had the good fortune to acquire our Meeting Point, we had for the first time our own venue where we were free to organize a wide range of events. And indeed we did! Those of us on the Fellowship Committee found ourselves busy not only coordinating arrangements for potluck suppers, special receptions and after-service coffee hours, but also providing support to several other events.

The acquisition of the Meeting Point has been pivotal to our Church. Not only was there an immediate increase in events organized, but in fellowship events per se as well as support for other church activities. It is a simple fact that sharing coffee or tea, a nice cake, a glass of wine or a quiche is a pleasant, relaxing start to any get-together, be it Bible study, the College and Career Group, choir practice, a board or committee meeting, the weekly ladies Bible group, film and cultural evenings, or a chat with the Bishop. Now, four years after acquiring the Meeting Point, the approach to fellowship as a part of other events has evolved. Announcements now include as standard text the time of the event followed by “Doors open 30 minutes earlier. Drinks and food are served. Please bring something to share.” And everybody does take something along! The practice is now so well established that the Fellowship Committee is free to spend its time coordinating the numerous buffets and receptions held throughout the year, in addition to the regular after-service Sunday coffee hour.

How do I see fellowship in the Vienna Community Church? This essential dimension of church activities provides an informal and effective opportunity to become acquainted with new members and to catch up with old friends. Relationships are strengthened over a simple cup of coffee, and participants in events develop a sense of ownership and belonging merely by bringing along food and drink to share.

In such an international congregation as ours, it would be a mistake not to boast about the larger events that focus on cuisine, such as the series of international regional buffets held over the past 18 months. These events are just cause to celebrate our diverse cultural backgrounds! The ladies and gentlemen from various areas of the world energetically prepare and proudly serve a wide range of tasty dishes to an appreciative congregation. The Meeting Point is put to good use and so are the culinary talents of the many chefs.

Our strong fellowship element also reminds us to count our blessings, and of those there are many. What could be more wonderful than the opportunity of worshipping and enjoying some of life’s basic pleasures with our friends in Christ?

Anne Storey
VCC Fellowship Chair

FINANCE UPDATE

AFCU PROVIDES SUPPORT

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.

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.

TO DONATE ONLINE

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 afcubridge.org. Go to the web site and click on DONATE.

TO DONATE VIA CHECK

1. When gifting by check, please designate your donation to one of these ministries, as follows:

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

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

AFCU Treasurer
2885 Sanford Ave. SW # 29934
Grandville, MI 49418

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