

# AMERICAN CHURCH IN BERLIN

## WELCOME 2020!



### Our Mission

We **welcome** all people.  
We **serve** the neighbors of Berlin.  
We **grow** together in Christ.  
We **celebrate** God's amazing love.

## January 2020 Newsletter

## THE ACB JANUARY 2020 NEWSLETTER

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**February  
Newsletter Deadline:  
20 January**

**Missions Sunday  
5 January**

Learn how we serve Berlin  
and the world. Be ready to join  
in with your praise and  
offering!!

**Pastor:** Rev. Dr. Mari Thorkelson  
**Pastoral Intern:** Rachel Johnson  
**Deacon:** Kumar Vasanth  
**Office Manager:** Ric Carpenter  
**Contemporary Worship Leader:** Eva Diestel  
**ACB Gospel Choir:** Nanita Winniewski  
**ACB Chamber Choir:** Merrilyn Groenewald

## PASTOR'S MESSAGE | JANUARY 2020



### 2020 Vision and Wisdom for a New Year

Gentle me,  
Holy One,  
into an unclenched moment,  
a deep breath,  
a letting go  
of heavy expectancies,  
of shriveling anxieties,  
of dead certainties,  
that, softened by the silence,  
surrounded by the light,  
and open to the mystery,  
I may be found by wholeness,  
upheld by the unfathomable,  
entranced by the simple,  
and filled with the joy  
that is You. Ted Loder

Life is short and we do not have much time  
to gladden the hearts of those  
who make this earthly pilgrimage with us.  
So, be swift to love,  
make haste to do kindness,  
shower abundant hospitality on friend and stranger,  
walk in justice that you may follow the path of mercy and love.  
And the blessing of God who comes to us unbidden,  
who for our lives was broken,  
and in whose Spirit we are guided into wholeness and holiness of life,  
be upon you and those who you love and pray  
for this day, and forevermore. Amen.

Offering the perfect vision and wisdom of the poet for my New Year gift to you. I also wish to shower gratitude on our marvelous staff and musicians and absolutely every child, young person and adult (yes, that's you!) who helped make our ACB Christmas services so beautiful and fulfilling. I give thanks to God for the Light of Christ that shines in all your faces.

Here's to a dynamic and brilliant 2020 together!

*Pastor Mari*

## A WORD FROM OUR INTERN | JANUARY

### *HAPPY NEW YEAR!*

Reflecting on this year brings so many emotions. A year ago, so many things were different. I had no idea I would be where I am now - living in Berlin, working and learning in a one-of-a-kind congregation, and celebrating the end of the decade with people I love dearly, among so many unforeseeable twists and turns in my journey. When we look back, it can be so tempting to focus on what didn't happen... The dreams that didn't come true. But there is just as much unpredictable goodness in our lives too. Our faith tells a story of a God whose plans were so wholly unimaginable that they confounded everyone God ever revealed them to. We are part of that story: God's story unfolding in our midst, especially as life plays itself out totally differently than we could have imagined.

As we look forward to a new year and new decade, do not forget to hold out hope for a God whose wholly impossible plans fill us with holy possibility.



*Rachel*



## A WORD FROM OUR DEACON | JANUARY 2020

### *"Looking Backward, Looking Forward, Looking to Jesus*

Look back in this year at the things God has done in your life. Life and experiences are mixed with good times, not so good times, rough times, "don't know if I can make it times," and sick times. Also, there have been some super wonderful times, great celebration times, anniversaries, goals achieved, movements of God times, good church times, folks made steps toward discipleship times.

Paul writes "I have learnt to be content in whatever circumstances "Even in the worst circumstances, we can rely on God. He assures us that He is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. God doesn't promise we won't have trials; in fact, the Bible says trials are part of Christian life. But He assures us that He will help us through them if we exercise faith and trust "that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Look forward to see what this year will bring. What will I achieve? What will I do to improve my health and wealth? What will happen that will alter my life? We can take great comfort from the promises we read in the Bible. For example, God made many promises to care for us. "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." As God's children today, when we look towards the future, we can draw great confidence from the knowledge that God does not change, and He will care for us too. And Jesus promised to be with us as we live for Him. After the resurrection, when He gave His followers instructions for serving He encouraged them saying, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age." As we look forward, we may be concerned about the prospect of suffering and temptation, but we can give our struggles to God and trust Him to deal with them. I encourage you to place your life in God's care and entrust your future to Him. When we put our faith in Jesus, our looking forward goes beyond the foreseeable future to that time when we go to be with Him forever. Looking back is good, looking forward is good, Paul tells us to look to Jesus. Looking to Jesus Paul said, "Run toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus." Again, he looks to Jesus no matter his tensions, his issues, his doubts, his fears, his mistakes. "Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."

Let us start the New Year with these promises.

"Do not be afraid."

"With God everything is possible."

"The light shines through the darkness and the darkness never overcomes the light."



*Kumar Vasanth, Deacon*

### *A Testimony*

I was not completely sure what I was being requested to do when Rachel asked me if I would make this testimony. I knew why she had asked me, because we had been talking about a specific attribute of daily life that I had not heard in any of the testimonies. Rachel, being Rachel, said simply – “Well then why don’t you talk about it?” So there I was “talk about an aspect of stewardship”, but not sure what stewardship was. Off to the dictionary. The definition I found for stewardship is to **manage or take responsibility for something in one’s care**. That seemed pretty straightforward. Now all I had to do was connect that to my aspect and come up with something sensible to say about it.

Whenever I have stopped to consider stewardship, my mind inevitably has gone to Ecclesiastes 11 “Cast your bread upon the waters.” That does not seem to make any sense according to the dictionary definition. It certainly does not seem to be a sign of good stewardship with regard to the bread. Such is faith. It is not made of sense. We are stewards of faith, but that was not what I wanted to write about, although it might be mixed in there as well.

I was asked to make this testimony when I mentioned the joy of stewardship, more specifically, the fun that we have in the office or when Kumar and Johan are putting up a banner on the side of the church, or people are hauling chairs or tables or tents around the premises.

Do not get me wrong. It is not all fun and games. Far from it. Not at the office, not out on the ledge in the cold with the banners, not pushing a mop. But it is joyous when the participants do it with joy. Ashlyn, one of many unsung ACB heroes, may not be described as overjoyed when she reaches the top of the stairs each week to help with the accounting. But there is always a smile and after she catches her breath—joy!

Just as we are infused with love, so are we all blessed with the resource of joy. It has been granted to us. It is inherent in our nature as expressed by the toothless smile of any baby. Let us be stewards of that joy. Participate in that joy.

If you have too little time, try being an usher. That really only requires being at worship on Sunday a little earlier and wearing a smile. If you cannot manage to be at church 30 minutes before to greet people at the door once a month, then start with the smile. Throughout service and after service.

But do not just bring your joy to church or the church’s work. Take it out into your daily lives. Cast your joy upon the waters. I am sure it will come back to you manifold.

*Ric Carpenter*

## SUNDAY TEXTS IN JANUARY

**Sunday, 5 January 2020 | Second Sunday of Christmas, Year A**

***Jeremiah 31:7-14 | Psalm 147:12-20 | Ephesians 1:3-14 | John 1:1-9 | 10-18***

Within the gospel reading's profound words lies the simple message that God is revealed in a human person. Though we may try to understand how the Word existed with God from the beginning of time, the wonder we celebrate at Christmas is that the Word continues to dwell among us. Christ comes among us in the gathered assembly, the scriptures, the waters of new birth, and the bread and the wine. Through these ordinary gifts we receive the fullness of God's grace and truth. .

**Sunday, 12 January 2020 | Baptism of Our Lord , Year A**

***Isaiah 42:1-9 | Psalm 29 | Acts 10:34-43 | Matthew 3:3-17***

In the waters of the Jordan, Jesus is revealed as the beloved Son of God. Through this great epiphany, Jesus fulfills all righteousness and becomes the servant of God who will bring forth justice and be a light to the nations. In the waters of baptism we too are washed by the Word, anointed by the Spirit, and named God's beloved children. Our baptismal mission is to proclaim good news to all who are oppressed or in need of God's healing .

**Sunday, 19 January 2020 | Second Sunday after Epiphany, Year A**

***Isaiah 49:1-7 | Psalm 40:1-11 | 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 | John 1:29-42***

Today's gospel opens with further reflection on Jesus' baptism. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the one anointed by the Spirit. In the liturgy we come and see Christ revealed among us in word and meal. We go forth to invite others to come and worship the Holy One and to receive the gifts of grace and peace made known among us. .

**Sunday, 26 January 2020 | Third Sunday after Epiphany, Year A**

***Isaiah 9:1-4 | Psalm 27:1, 4-9 | 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 | Matthew 4:12-23***

Jesus begins his public ministry by calling fishers to leave their nets and follow him. In Jesus the kingdom of God has come near. We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. We see this light most profoundly in the cross—as God suffers with us and all who are oppressed by sickness, sin, or evil. Light dawns for us as we gather around the word, the font, and the holy table. We are then sent to share the good news that others may be “caught” in the net of God's grace and mercy.

## BIRTHDAYS | JANUARY 2020

Diann Pelz-Rusch	1	Charis Look	19
Werner Hausmann	1	Jenny von Rosen	21
Rebecca Aker	3	Anna Schneider	22
Werner Schumann	3	Sammuel Odomkor	22
Dapne Asmelash	4	Henning Faltin	22
Kristi Decke	6	Dagmar Carpenter	24
Julia Agbalati	7	Amanda Carrico	26
Christopher Watt	8	Jennifer Smith-Jachning	27
Mariah Mosler	9	John Woynicki, Jr.	27
Stephan Kienberger	10	Claudia Lange	28
Karola Klutmann	10	Benjamin von Schweinitz	28
Maria Benson	10	Frank Reynolds	29
Gustav Bergold	12	Joseph Fondem	30
Flemming Borby	12	Sebastian Dahnert	30
Chris Grantham	12	Steffi Knorn	30
Charlie Walzer	13	Jill Holwerda-Helow	30
Yuna Chot	13		
Andreas Speer	16		
Rishab Reitz	16		
Jessy Jacob-Reitz	16		
Mara Kaleff	16		
Luise Hoffman	16		
Nancy Gruett	17		
Makayla Kaba	18		
Adelheid Rock	18		





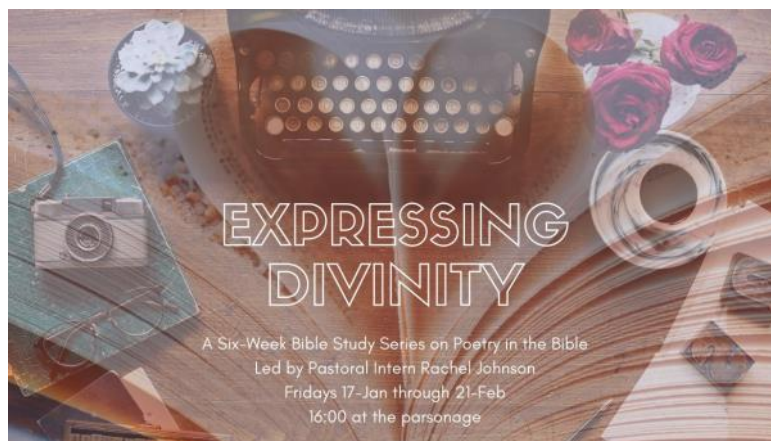
## FELLOWSHIP | JANUARY 2020

### *It's Great to Be a Lady at ACB!*



All women of ACB are invited to gather for some femme fellowship! We will meet at Cafe BilderBuch (Akazienstr. 28D-10823 Berlin) on **Wednesdays 15 and 29 January**, starting at 18:30 (feel free to arrive late if you need to!) This is a time of casual fellowship where we can spend some time together, getting to know each other over cups of whatever beverage your heart desires! Come to share your stories, your ideas, your passions, and whatever else is on your heart. We look forward to seeing you there!

### *New Bible Study with Pastoral Intern Rachel!*



## NEW FACES AT ACB | JANUARY 2020

### *Merrilyn Groenewald*

Not exactly a new face, but very much back in the leadership: Our new Vice President and Chamber Choir Director

Merrilyn joined ACB in 1991 when Pastor Dean Bard was serving in the Zehlendorf Dorf Kirche. She joined the choir under the direction of Dr Alan Pohl and served on Church Council for one year under Pastor Janice and for one year under Pastor Ben. Merrilyn saw a need among married women for a support group and with the help of Susanne Smith-Hinz started up the ACB Ladies night with singing, fun, sharing and support.

Originally from Australia, Merrilyn married a German, Werner Hainbach, and settled in Bad Berleburg (NRW) in 1982 where Jens, Lars and Sofie were born. They moved to Berlin June 1990 for work and where Tim was born. Due to family reasons Merrilyn went back to Australia in 2004 until both parents had passed and in 2018 returned to Berlin with husband Coenraad Groenewald to be with her four children and two grandchildren.



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### *Ali Mehrabiyan*



Ali was born and raised in Iran. He is a computer engineer, and entrepreneur.

After many years of being an atheist, Ali finally found his way to God roughly about three years ago while living in Georgia. I became interested in Christianity, and that went even further after moving to Berlin and joining the great Christian community of faithful people at ACB.

He is currently doing his MBA in Berlin, and works as an Online Digital Marketing.

Besides jumping in with both feet and taking on a leading role in relaunching our website, Ali has also volunteered to help out administrating the office IT infrastructure. Welcome aboard, Ali. And thank you so much.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS | JANUARY 2020

### *Chamber Choir Restart!*

Sing a Joyful noise unto the Lord!

Chamber Choir resumes in 2020 on January 14th at 19:15 until 20:45 in the upstairs choir room in the church.

Come and join us! Looking forward to seeing you there.

Happy New Year!

Merrilyn



### *1-2-5 Matching Grant*

As of 31 December 2019, we can report that the 125 matching Grant campaign for the support of our Music Ministry has been a resounding success. The response from the congregation has been truly astounding. Thank you.

We intend to report in greater detail on this campaign by the end of January. In any case, we can now move forward in the assurance that the financing of our wonderful music program for the coming year is guaranteed.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS | JANUARY 2020



Amongst other things, the Learning Café is taking a break and will not start back up till 14 January.

The Gospel Choir recommences rehearsals on Friday, 10 January.

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Thank you Alexander von Engelhardt for the SVGAs.

We are still happy to accept any old cables you have laying around



***We wish you all a blessed and joyous New Year!***

*Love,*

*Pastor Mari, Pastoral Intern Rachel, Deacon Kumar, Office Manager Ríc*