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Dear Members and Friends of the ACP,

In this season of Epiphany one of my favorite texts is from Isaiah 60:1, “Arise, shine out, for your light has come, the glory of the Lord is rising upon you…” The prophet goes on to declare that though darkness still covers the people, above us God’s glory appears and “nations will come to your light…” and “the sound of violence shall be heard no longer in your land…” As we move into what in the USA is Black History Month, I am reflecting on the continuing state of brokenness between people of different races. Especially as a church we are discussing the ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5) and how this is a painful subject when considered from the perspective of minoritized and marginalized people groups, I realize I have need for so much more illumination and understanding.

Bryan Stevenson, author of Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption, is a leader in the fight against racial injustice with the US Justice system. Professor Stevenson is a devout Christian, raised in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He is the Director of Equal Justice Initiative, helped found the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, received the Benjamin Franklin Award from the American Philosophical Society as a “Drum major for justice and mercy,” and is depicted in the 2019 movie Just Mercy based on his memoir.

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice honors the names of each of the more than 4,000 African Americans lynched in the 12 states of the South from 1877 to 1950. He argues that the present day disproportionately high rate of incarceration and death sentences in the south for African Americans is merely an evolution of the history of slavery and lynchings. Listening to Professor Stevenson being interviewed by Terry Gross on Fresh Air, I was intrigued to learn that when he first arrived in Montgomery, he noticed public memorials honoring Confederate War “heroes.” What a contrast to Germany, where you can see regular markers of where Nazis abducted or killed various Jewish people, but you will never see a memorial to Hitler or any of the leaders of the Third Reich.

Today, Germans want tourists to go to the Holocaust museum to help outsiders know that the German people are trying to forsake the dark history of the Nazis and change their national narrative. They do not want to be thought of as Nazis and fascists. In the United States, however, we don’t talk about slavery or the native genocide. We actually have some cities where the architects and defenders of enslavement are celebrated!

Professor Stevenson’s belief, which I share, is that we must change the narrative of our country by admitting how pervasive and very wrong systemic racism is even to this day. He was giving a lecture in Germany on the death penalty, and a German scholar stood up and said “Of course we can’t have the death penalty in Germany. It would be unconscionable if we had gas chambers where we were executing people, given our history.” Professor Stevenson muses, “What would I do if they had gas chambers still today in Germany, and they executed a disproportionate number of Jews?”

He said that’s a fairly accurate analogy to what is happening in America today with the African American population, and until we understand and recognize the.../... continued, next page
Thoughts, continued.../

patterns and continuity of systemic racial discrimination and violence, we will not experience healing or reconciliation as a nation.

As Christians, we have access to another narrative. We know that all people bear the imago dei and are of infinite worth in the eyes of God. We know that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, and that “justice is what love looks like in public.” Though we are an international congregation, we still bear the name of the American Church, and “when one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers.” So, I encourage you to take time in this Black History Month to explore resources (ie, the NY Times 1619 Project podcast; or read a book by Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Ta-Nehisi Coates, or come hear Jacqueline Lewis, our guest preacher and Thurber lecturer) to learn. Join the conversations, “Let’s Talk about Race...” We have hope in Isaiah’s declaration, “But the Lord will be your everlasting light, your God will be your splendor. For you shall be called the city of God, the dwelling of the Holy One of Israel.” Praying for brighter enlightenment for us all...

In Christ,

2. One of my favorite quotes of Cornell West.
Not loving the label!

by Peter De Wit

Have you ever found yourself labeling those who are different from you? I have. I grew up in the 60s and became a teen in the 70s, in a predominately white culture where it was normal for me to hear words like fag, queer, and from time to time the “n” word. I never thought much of it, no one seemed to. My world was small and the demographic was mostly uni-cultural. It was the way we interacted. And while those three words, as a boy, sounded unusual to me, I was never actually aware of anyone who fit in those categories, at least not for a long time.

As for the “n” word, I would go to the corner store and ask the owner to fill up a little paper sack with 10 cents worth of “nigger babies!” What? Yep, those delicious black licorice candies in the shape of little people were called nigger babies. That was my world. And I never knew the effect that these labels would have on me as I grew up.

The demeaning label that I heard most was “fag” or “faggot.” Boys would sometimes call each other that in jest, but it was meant to degrade the masculinity of the other. The label was powerful. I recall a conversation I had years later. A friend found out I loved watching “The Amazing Race” on television. The current season at the time featured a gay couple, which was rare at the time. When my friend mentioned that the gay couple had won, I responded in disgust, “No way, not those fags!” The words came out so quickly that they surprised even me. I had believed in the label.

Months later, I was at an airport in Thailand, waiting at the gate. When I saw a white man dressed as a woman, I immediately went into critical mode: “Man, that’s a white guy! Shoot! And he can’t even put lipstick on rightfulness!” As I silently mocked him, another inner voice spoke to me, “Peter, would you be so offended if that was your own son?” It felt like a spiritual slap in the heart! The phrase “if it was your son” woke me up to my bias against the gay community. I was guilty of seeing that man as less than part of the human family, judging him as somewhat unworthy, all because of the lens of my demeaning label.

And this is the thing: we all have used labels at some time or another. Throughout our lifetime we have unconsciously accumulated these biases and, for the most part, are unaware of them. Those sneaky biases snuck through the backdoor of daily conversations, politics, culture, and even religion. Religious and political leaders disguise labels and biases as concerns. One is worried that their followers will be contaminated by too much relationship with the world, while the other stokes our fears by repeating their concerns for the safety of the country, families, jobs, and the future: “If we let all these people in, they will make it worse for all of us!”

So take a look at us now, after thousands of years of people living together on earth, we still see whole groups through the lens of demeaning labels. We seem to have forgotten our history lessons about the pogroms and genocides and religious wars! Here in France, the majority of descendants of immigrants still feel like they can never truly be French. It’s easy to see that labeling remains present in every realm of life. And labels do nothing to bring healing to our world.

What should we do then? Begin by reminding yourself of how easy it is to fear those who are different than us. Start there. Do you harbor fears and biases towards those who look different than you or who believe passionately in things you don’t? If you do, then realize that any labels you start with only divide the human race. It begins with avoidance and usually ends in some kind of judgement. The last step is the kicker. Listen to the words of Jesus, “It’s easy to love those who like you back. Nothing special about that at all. But I say go and love even those to whom you have given the label ‘wrong,’ ‘unworthy,’ or ‘enemy’.” Can’t beat that!

I have had to let go of my labels, many times in fact. It took time and a deep look at my own heart. I finish with a story of a boy, my son, who came out as gay. He was 15 years old when he wrote to Patricia and me, something like: “Dear Mom and Dad, I need to tell you that I am gay!” That day my world was turned upside down. Though my label of “gay” had started to be dismantled in a Bangkok airport, I was still holding on to the idea that gay people are just damaged by sin. I told my son that evening he was mistaken, that he was straight. I took him rock climbing and did more father things with him. But he remained gay. We took him to counseling. The counselor said, “Your son is really gay.” And through love, ours for him and his for us, we have learned to never again look at gay people through the lens of disappointment, derision, or scorn.

It’s time we drop the demeaning labels that have to do with gender, race or religion, and choose to love unconditionally all people. This has become for me the only way to live in our global neighborhood.
ACP Women’s Retreat

Christ-centered listening: Abundant life in community
Saturday, 21 March, 9h00-16h00

“... that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.” - Ephesians 3: 16-17

Women, you are invited to a one-day retreat at ACP. We will welcome one another to abundant life by living it. We will listen to God, to our deepest selves, and to one another in Christ. We will remember, hear and tell stories that bring life. We will open to God, deepen our joy, honor our gifts and wounds in the peace that really does pass understanding.

Our speaker will be the Reverend Odette Lockwood-Stewart, of Berkeley, California, and former visiting ACP Pastor.

Participation cost is 20 euros. We offer a Kids’ Retreat for moms who require childcare for 5 euros/family. We have scholarships available for those needing some assistance.

Register during Sunday coffee hours, beginning 9 February.
Organizing a Welcome Dinner
by Yvonne Hazelton Shao

My friend Kate Snipes and I decided to co-host a Welcome Dinner for refugees.

We decided to share the work by using my apartment, and she would bring the most labor-intensive food. We recruited our children, mostly because they speak French better than we do, but also because it’s good for them to meet people from outside their high school crowd. Kate contacted Ursula Perrier of ACP’s refugee ministry, and they put us in touch with JRS, Jesuit Refugee Services, who set it up.

They matched us up with three young men, and sent us their names and phone numbers, and whether they preferred to speak English or French. I texted them an invitation in my still-shaky French, and they all replied that they would come.

The day of the dinner, Kate brought her tasty lamb chops, vegetable stew, and chocolate chip cookies. I baked sweet potatoes and roasted vegetables, and assembled apéro trays.

Then, an hour before the dinner, Paris did its thing and had a demonstration right in front of my building. The metro stop was closed. The streets were blocked off. Police lined up to stop traffic, drummers drummed, a megaphone blared. There was singing and a couple of loud bangs. I texted everybody again, letting them know that dinner was still on, but transportation might be iffy. They all responded that they were on their way, undeterred. Just before arrival time, the police and demonstrators called it a day, and disappeared.

The young men arrived, and when I saw them, in my mind they switched from being refugees to being guests. They were lovely people, a bit shy at first but happy to be there. Our conversation started out in French, but one man, Reza, couldn’t participate because he had just arrived in France and didn’t speak French yet. When he said he’d come from Germany, I perked up and said, “Wir können deutsch sprechen,” and his eyes lit up. My German is proficient from my university days in Vienna, but I still struggle with French. Reza and I became instant friends. What are the odds, that an Iranian German speaker and an American German speaker would get thrown together at a soirée in France?

After the aperitif, I went into “Mom Mode” and gave everybody jobs: table setting, bread-slicing, drink distribution. We ate and drank for two hours. Everybody participated – while Kate and I were the moms of the evening, our kids were the younger siblings that our guests needed, who provided most of the laughter and comfort. Farsi, English, French, and German flew around the table. No one was left out.

Why are these dinners so important?

Reza told me that all he really wants now is a Heimat -- the German word for homeland, with its culture and society and sense of belonging. He spent five years in Germany, learning the language, taking all the right steps, but then the paperwork gods intervened and told him he couldn’t stay there anymore. He came to France, tired and alone, ready to work but forbidden to, fluent in German but starting from scratch in French.

We - Kate and I and our kids - can’t fix these men’s problems. We can’t solve their paperwork issues or give them jobs or declare peace in the Middle East. But there’s one thing we can do, those of us who have spent decades feeding people or raising kids or saying “put on a sweater, sweetie, it’s cold out.” We can give these men a home for one evening. We can invite them to sit in our warm apartments, around a table loaded with food, and we can talk to them, laugh with them, listen to them, and do all the things you do in a home.

Just for one evening, we can give them a Heimat.

If interested in hosting a welcome dinner, please contact Ursula Perrier at ursulaperrier@gmail.com.

We would like to thank the members of the Search Committee for their diligent, faithful work in selecting our new Interim Senior Pastor, Reverend Odette Lockwood-Stewart.
See acparis.org for more information on Odette.

ACP Spire, February 2020 7
Thurber Lecture
Tuesday 4 February

Rev. Jacqui Lewis
“Liberating God”

When Jacqui was just eight years old, the assassination of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. both traumatized her and catalyzed her calling to work against racism and poverty in America. Jacqui earned her Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary and earned a M.Phil. and a Ph.D. in Psychology and Religion from Drew University. Her doctoral studies focused on racial and gender identity development. She has been adjunct professor at seminaries across the country, including Princeton Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary, and the Drew Theological School, where she is currently co-teaching a Doctor of Ministry program in Public Theology with her best friend and spouse, the Rev. John Janka.

Ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA), Jacqui is the first African American and first woman to serve as senior minister in the Collegiate Church, which was founded in New York City in 1628. She is the author of The Power of Stories: A Guide for Leading Multi-racial, and Multi-cultural Congregations; The Pentecost Paradigm: 10 Essential Strategies to Grow a Multiracial, Multicultural Congregation; and the children's book, You Are So Wonderful! She is writing a book on fierce love and its power to heal our souls and the world, and a memoir about finding a grown-up God.

If you’d like to get a preview of Rev. Lewis’s talk, listen to her interview on ACP Today, 20 January, at https://acparis.org/acp-today-53329/366-acp-today-faith-talk-from-paris-

The American Church welcomes the return in February 2020 of Jodi and Doug Fondell as Interim Associate Pastors for Congregational Ministries

Jodi and Doug have been active in International Church ministry since 1998. Their first call abroad was to Immanuel International in Stockholm, Sweden where a 3-year call yielded 17 years of fruitful and meaningful ministry. Since then they served at the American Church in London, at the ACP, and at All Nations Church Luxembourg.

Prior to moving to Europe, Doug served as associate pastor in the Chicago area where his responsibilities included ministry to youth and young adults along with preaching, leading worship, working with the Christian Education board, teaching Sunday School and directing Vacation Bible School programs.

Jodi served as Chaplain of North Park University, a Christian liberal arts college in Chicago where she was engaged with college-age students through pastoral care, leading and planning chapel services, and building campus ministry teams. Both Jodi and Doug have extensive experience in leading mission trips both in the US and abroad.

Listen to their interview broadcast on ACP Today, on Monday 6 January, here: https://acparis.org/acp-today-53329/
Making Sense of the Bible: Small group study
Interview with John Price

John Price is the assistant secretary on the ACP Council, and outside the church, runs Inclusive Education Now, an NGO dedicated to training teachers in Africa to teach children with disabilities. He also gives tours of the city, and to places like the Normandy beaches and the Champagne region. He was instrumental in the organization of small groups for the congregation-wide book study on Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today, by Adam Hamilton.

John, first of all, tell us a little about the book itself.
The book is about the Bible. For many of us, our views of the Bible were formed when we were children, but as we grew older, perhaps we never thought more carefully about what is the nature of the book. Hamilton gives us a fresh look at the Bible, informing in what context the Old Testament and the New Testament were written, and how we as Christians and non-Christians may interpret it. He talks about what the Bible is not; for instance, the Bible doesn’t work like a Magic 8 Ball; remember those? He says that the Bible is not an owners’ manual, a science book, or even a systematic book of theology. Actually, it’s less of a book than a library of books written by scores of authors over more than a thousand years. Making Sense of the Bible asks questions like “How does it function as the word of God.”

Why was this book chosen for ACP’s first all-congregation study group?
The ACP is an interdenominational church. I’m a Baptist, Pastor Scott has a Presbyterian background, my wife is Parisian and grew up Catholic. There are people from over 50 countries attending, so we have a wide breadth of cultural backgrounds, different interpretations about Christianity. So, in order for us to really thrive together, we don’t focus on who is right, we focus on what is right. Mary Fenu, assistant Council moderator, is chairperson of the Welcome and Inclusion task force, and she suggested we all read it. It was really exciting. As our childhood views of the Bible were reshaped into a much more complex, and frankly “adult” perspective, the task force members all agreed to get copies of the book to the rest of the church Council members. When the Council had read the book, they agreed that the whole congregation would benefit from reading and discuss it.

I understand that all the study group leaders were given some training beforehand. What did that consist of, and why is it important?
The training was handled by Mary Fenu and Pastor Scott, and it was terrific. We clearly defined what a small group is, the various types of small groups (being, caring, learning, working) and the difference between the ideal small group and the actual small group. Instructions on time management, conflict avoidance, and recognizing that there is a lot of diversity and a variety of interpretations of the Bible. One quote from the leader training that stuck with me was from Pastor Scott who quoted St. Augustin “If your interpretation of scripture doesn’t lead you to a deeper love of God and neighbor, then it’s probably wrong.” We were also provided with leader guides, which is a 100-page book centered on studying Making Sense of the Bible, which Mary provided for us. All of the leaders are taking this very seriously and we communicate after each of our sessions, about what went well, what can we work on, and so forth.

The groups just kicked off last week – how many groups are there, and how many participants? Are you happy with, surprised at or disappointed with the numbers?
We have five groups: Tuesday night in someone’s home, Wednesday night at ACP, Thursday night again in another leader’s home, Saturday at 11h at ACP and I lead a group from 12h to 13h30 at the church. There are about 60 participants in all, and I’m really happy with the enthusiasm of the people in my group, and hearing from the other group leaders, I’d say it is going really well.

What is the point of having the whole congregation study one book in particular?
There is so much going on at ACP: a movie group, different fellowships, community outreach, an amazing variety of music programs, Alpha, youth activities, opening up the church to refugees at night, it’s really an amazingly vibrant community. This is just one small part.../...continued, next page
of what we are doing, and specifically, we hope that this is bringing us closer together by focusing our attention on the nature of the Bible.

Could you tell us a bit about the Welcome Inclusion Task Force?
The task force was launched to look at how we as a community of Christians treat others. Who should we welcome to ACP? How do we currently celebrate our diversity and how can we improve on that? For one thing, people have a natural tendency to want to associate with people who are like them. I must confess, it’s easier for me after church to be chatty with the other choir members with whom I’m friends, or people I already know. We have been meeting for close to a year now discussing topics like community, membership, faith, marriage, reconciliation and how ACP can serve our community better and more completely. They say “Never talk about religion at family events.” It can be dangerous. What if your family is made up of Americans, French, Filipino, African, Chinese, and many other cultures? The task force attempts to root us in a Christ-like dialogue as a patchwork of opinions, beliefs and experiences.

Can people still join groups?
Definitely. If you are interested in joining a small group, email connections@acparis.org and we can get you fixed with a book and a small group that meets at a time that works for you. We haven’t finalized when the next launch will be, but get the book and send us your info and you’ll be included. It’s interesting and enjoyable.

ACP Community Book Study


“I can think of no one more adept at bringing out the beauty and authority of scripture while also shedding light on the Bible’s most controversial teachings than Adam Hamilton,” says Jim Wallis, president and founder of Sojourners.

As a congregation, we will be reading and discussing this inspirational book from 12 January to 29 February, via small group discussions.

Get your copy from the ACP Book Table on Sundays after worship while they last. Also, digital and paperback copies are available from online booksellers. We are excited to embark on this journey as a church, and all are welcome!

To sign up for a small group, please contact John Price at jpygmalyon@gmail.com

Sunday Worship at the ACP

09h00:  
Traditional Service, with weekly communion

11h00:  
Traditional Service, with choirs, children’s worship service; communion first Sunday of the month

13h30:  
Contemporary Service, with children’s worship service, weekly communion, and live band accompanying sung worship

Note: All are welcome to attend the Ash Wednesday service: 26 February, 19h in the Sanctuary.
Serve the City

Are you feeling the urge to help those less fortunate around you, but not sure how? Serve the City Paris meets five days a week at La Caféothèque (75004) at 8h30 to deliver food to the refugees and homeless throughout Paris.

For more information, visit the site www.servethecityparis.com or write to info@servethecity.paris. You will find great opportunities to become a part of the Serve the City movement of volunteers, seeking to show compassion and kindness to the most vulnerable in our city.
The movie discussion group that meets monthly at the American Church in Paris celebrates a big milestone this month: the 25th anniversary of its founding. I love to point out that the group has met every single month, including August and December, since its first meeting in February 1995. But I don’t always reveal the truth about that first time.

Nowadays we usually pick four movies to discuss each month. Twenty-five years ago, though, for the launch of the group, there was just one. And I, as the founder, got to pick it all by myself. This, in hindsight, was not a great idea. My choice was Kenneth Brannagh’s version of *Frankenstein*. There wasn’t a lot of discussion that night: not a soul but me showed up.

First lesson learned: don’t pick horror movies. Gradually, though, membership picked up, and the film choice became more democratic. There were, oh, two or three of us at the second meeting, where we discussed – and mostly dismissed – a film called *The Shawshank Redemption* that later went on to be the biggest cult hit in US history.

At least one of the people who was there that second time still comes to our meetings. There is a core of around half a dozen very long-term members, another six or so who joined us in our second decade, and an ever-changing assortment of shorter-term members.

Discussions are in English. In the early days, they were frequently a bit chaotic. The membership has always been international, with people from several Anglophone countries, many French members and a variety from elsewhere. For non-native English speakers, trying to follow along when several people are speaking at once can be difficult.

But over the years, a more controlled discussion method evolved: for a given film, everyone first gives a score from one to ten. We then go back around the circle so that people can explain why they gave the grade they did. People are free to change their scores as a result of the discussion, and often do.

We reviewed nearly 50 movies in 2019. These are all first-run films: members see them when and where they like, in the cinema, and then we sit down with snacks, wine, and other beverages to discuss them.

Here are some of our favorites from last year:

January – *Shoplifters, Wildlife*.
March – *Vice, Stan & Ollie*.
April – *Tel Aviv on Fire*.
May – *Dolor y Gloria*.
June – *Rocket Man, Parasite*.
July – *The Mustang, Wild Rose*.
September – *Blinded by the Light, Deux moi*.
October – *Ad Astra, Portrait de la jeune fille en feu, Hustlers*.
November – *Sorry We Missed You*.
December – *Ford v Ferrari, Les Misérables, Knives Out, J’accuse*.

August was kind of a dud month in which nothing stood out. But many of our other picks have done very well. In the recent Academy Award nominations, *Parasite* and *Ford v Ferrari* received best picture nods, while *Parasite, Dolor y Gloria* and *Les Misérables* were nominated for best international film. *J’accuse* won the Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival and best picture in France’s Lumière Awards.

Unlike at our 20th anniversary meeting, which was a special celebration, this month we will be discussing films as usual. The meeting will take place on Thursday, 20 February, at 19h30 in room G2, and the movies we’ve chosen include two of this year’s Oscar nominees: *1917* and *Jojo Rabbit*. Rounding out the discussion will be *Adam* by Maryam Touzani and *Le Prince Oublié* by Michel Hazanavicius.

I’m told this may be the oldest continual lay activity at the ACP, aside from the Atelier Concerts.* The group continues to bring in both ACP members (or attenders) and non-members. We have at least a few newcomers at almost every meeting. Everyone is cordially invited to join us on Thursday, 20 February, even if you’ve not seen any of the month’s films.

*If you think of other exceptions, let me know at movies@acparis.org.*
Idol gossip
The latest of La Philharmonie’s excellent shows connecting art, photography and popular music showcases the deliciously kitsch creations of photographer-painter duo Pierre et Gilles. Spanning four decades, from Nina Hagen, Soft Cell, and Madonna to Stromae and rap-crooner Eddy De Pretto, the colorful photos, retouched with bright paint for a hyper-realistic yet dreamlike effect, playfully transform pop stars into idols, often borrowing iconography from sacred art. Headsets pump out a catchy playlist of the corresponding tunes.
Until 23 February, philharmoniedeparis.fr

Earthly delights
In France, agriculture is both a massive industry and a fine art, not to mention a fertile ground for ecological and technological innovation. The sprawling Salon de l’Agriculture is a perennial hit with all ages, boasting highly photogenic prize livestock — including this year’s poster-cow, the winsome Charolaise Idéale. It’s a chance to learn about the traditions French farmers are preserving, as well how agriculture is changing with the times. Most famously, it’s a grand opportunity to sample gourmet goodies from France’s top farms, and beyond.
22 February-1 March, www.salon-agriculture.com

AWA-inspiring
The show’s title “AWA” stands for “African Women in the Arts” but it is also the African equivalent of Eve, evoking earth’s very first woman. Among the striking works by female artists and photographers from (or working in) Africa, hauntingly powerful canvases by young Congolese sensation Géraldine Tobe, painted with the smoke from a burning candle. The gallery two doors down is mirroring Art-Z’s initiative with stunning photography from Senegal, Congo and Burkina Faso.
Until 29 February, art-z.net

Waiting for Godard
As he comes up on his 90th birthday, renegade Franco-Swiss film-maker Jean-Luc Godard is being honored at the Cinémathèque Française, which is projecting every one of Godard’s nearly 200 films, from the 1960 New-Wave classic “Breathless” and on through his sometimes loopy but always provocative body of work to the 2018 collage “The Image Book.” The festival will end with a bang, a live encounter with the famously crotchety genius himself.

Be-bop Al-Ula
The Institut du Monde Arabe has extended its exposition devoted to Al-Ula, the ancient oasis located in present-day Saudi Arabia. Long a crossroads of caravans bearing incense and spices, the 7,000 year-old village is now a UNESCO heritage site. Videos by superstar Yann Arthus-Bertrand offer plunging views of the dramatic rock formations and the ruins of monumental tombs, while carved figures, intricate columns, inscribed tablets and other archeological finds transport visitors back through the millennia.
Until 8 March, www.imarabe.org

Dancing in the streets
The all-volunteer Carnaval de Paris proudly wears its (cardboard) crown as a celebration by, of, and for the people, reviving and reinventing the medieval tradition of pre- and mid-Lenten levity. On the Sunday before Mardi Gras a homespun procession of drummers, folk-dancers and costumed revelers will sashay from Gambetta to République, and halfway through Lent the Carnaval des Femmes invites women to dress up as queens and men to dress up as women, for a madcap march around the Marais.
23 February and 22 March, www.carnaval-paris.org

What’s up in Paris
Events in February
by Karen Albrecht
Originating in Left Bank studios in 1895, the Atelier Concert Series became part of the cultural activities at the American Church in Paris during the early 1930s. These concerts provide a performance opportunity in Paris for talented musicians of all nationalities.

A different program is offered each Sunday evening at 17h00, September through November and January through June. There is no admission fee, but a free-will offering is taken at the door to support the series. For the schedule of concerts, see http://acparis.org

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**Sunday Atelier Concert Series**

**Sunday 2 February 17h**  
Tien HSIEH - piano

**Sunday 9 February 17h**  
Mertol Demirelli - piano

**Sunday 16 February 17h**  
John Muratore - guitar

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**ACP Facilities Redevelopment Project meetings**  
2 and 9 February, 12h30-13h30, Theater

The AFCU (ACP’s US-based parent organization) agreed to fund an architectural feasibility study by Pei Partnership and Cortes Associates to redevelop the ACP facilities, and many of you gave us feedback in June 2019. Come see and hear how we incorporated your feedback and learn about the next steps in the Facilities Redevelopment Project.

As described in the January Spire article, “ACP property development work, 2nd phase,” the Property Committee presented the results of the feasibility study, including congregational feedback, to the AFCU in October. We received their agreement to continue with the study and so we have organized two sessions to discuss the current plans for the project and next steps. Your engagement and input are keys in this next phase!

Please join one of the two identical sessions, as we need your input on how we can be the best stewards of our space to achieve the ACP mission and remain the Beacon on the Seine for the next decades.
New Year’s Greetings to the members and friends of ACP! As the new ACP Council Moderator, I am writing to give you an idea of the exciting work the Council has before it this New Year. But as some of you may not be familiar with me, let me first introduce myself.

As the wife of a US diplomat, I have lived in several countries, including Poland, France and Hungary. When we married, I left a career as a lawyer in San Francisco, and since then we have raised two children, moved 9 times, and along the way I earned a Masters degree in Clinical Social Work with training in child and family counseling, grief support, and hospice. I have a particular passion for working with international, expat families and third-culture kids.

My husband and I arrived in Paris in August 2018, for our second posting in this beautiful city. In August 2019, the ACP Council asked me to take over the position of the Council Moderator. Through that, I have seen firsthand the work of our Council and Council committees and the tremendous variety of programs and ministries they plan and organize for our congregation and greater Paris. From Bible and book studies, our Children’s Ministry and Alpha outreach courses, to 100 Nights of Welcome and the Sandwich ministry, ACP’s Council and Council members and many of you are serving the needs of both our church community and the greater City of Paris.

In one of the first exciting developments of this new year, the Council is looking forward to welcoming Doug and Jodi Fondell, our new Associate Interim Pastors, who will arrive in Paris on 31 January! We are confident that they will be a fantastic addition to our ACP leadership team.

The Interim Senior Pastor Search Committee is making great and prayerful progress towards a decision on the Interim Senior Pastor. We will be making an announcement very soon, with our new Interim Senior Pastor expected to arrive in July.

The Council was studying Adam Hamilton’s book, Making Sense of the Bible; and in January we launched the ACP Small Group Book Study, enabling Council and ACP members to participate together in small group studies of this illuminating book. Initial feedback has been very positive with many reporting the group fellowship and conversation has been particularly meaningful and enjoyable.

In February ACP recognizes Black History Month, as we consider and pray about effectively addressing racism and all forms of inequality, and discuss related concepts such as diversity, and inclusion and what that means to the American Church in Paris. There will be opportunities within ACP to explore these ideas, from the Thurber Conversation with guest preacher Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis, to discussions led by ACP members on race and reconciliation, planned throughout the month.

Also, on 2 and 9 February you will have the opportunity to hear again from Vincent Cortes, the architect who worked with ACP to develop plans for renovation of ACP’s building and facilities. These information sessions will be a follow-up and response to those held for the congregation last September, and will include changes made in light of your comments at that time.

Related to this, the Council is in the process of forming a Project Planning Steering Committee to consider various options for the plans and funding of the renovation project. This committee will manage the preparation of more detailed architectural and financing proposals to present to our parent organization, AFCU, at their Board of Directors meeting scheduled in May.

Finally, in February and March, Council will be working with the Finance Committee to prepare for the congregation-wide meeting in March, when Council will review the annual reports, and the Congregation will vote on the proposed 2020 church budget.

I will close by encouraging you to feel free to approach me or any other members of Council with any questions or concerns you might have about our Council and its work. And I thank you, on behalf of the entire Council, for the opportunity to serve ACP during this new year!
Faith Talk from Paris
ACP Today radio podcasts

Have you ever listened to ACP Today, the American Church in Paris’ radio show? Join us on Mondays at 20h45 – this month on 2 and 16 December. The 45-minute program is an exciting and inspiring mix of music, interviews, sermon highlights, and discussion on hot topics.

Tune into 100.7 FM, Radio Fréquence Protestante. We broadcast especially for friends who may be house-bound or who would simply like more devotional time on a Monday evening. Don’t like the radio? Listen online at http://frequenceprotestante.com or tune in at your leisure via the ACP website, at www.acparis.org/ACPtoday, or the ACP mobile app.

On Monday 3 February, Amit Pieter hosts, with Youth/Young Adult Intern Grant Mongin. They will be joined by a couple of young adults to discuss Black History Month, and vacances scolaires. Lisa Previtt will join to talk about the most recent Alpha program, and the date for the launch of the next series.

On Monday 17 February, Alison Benney hosts, with our new Interim Associate Pastors, Jody and Doug Fondell. Ashley Hafer will be there to discuss the Missions Outreach project, Sandwiches & Sipping, and there may be an interview with the organizers of the upcoming Relationship Workshop on 7 March.

Friends and visitors, what better way to keep in touch with the ACP family and learn about the latest ACP news? If you want to catch up, all our shows are available on the ACP website. Faith Talk from Paris – it’s a kind of souvenir that never gets old.

If you have any questions, comments, ideas or would like to contribute to the show, be sure to contact us at acptoday@acparis.org.

Sunday Women’s Bible Study
2 February, 12h15 – 13h15, room F2

Continuing with our study of "Focus on Forgiveness," we will be reflecting on the father in the Parable of the Prodigal. This study is led by Teri Lee Valluy and all women are welcome to attend. Childcare is available.

The Kids’ Bible Study is also at this time, and the nursery is available. For more information, email sundaywomensbible@acparis.org

Kids’ Bible Study
in French and English
Sunday, 2 February, 12h15 – 13h15

French-speaking children will meet in the Catacombs, and English-speaking children will meet in G7. Our superhero of the month is Esther, and our superpower is responsibility. ALL children over the age of 7 are welcome, even if this will be their first time. Please RSVP to let me know if your child will be attending, to Allison Wheeler at childrensworship@acparis.org. We hope your child can join us! The women’s monthly Bible study is also at this time.

Rainbow Connection Grief Support

A support group for those mourning the loss of a loved one. All meetings are free and facilitated by a therapist who specializes in grief therapy. The meetings take place in the Catacombs. Contact: RainbowConnectionGS@gmail.com
Prayer Chain Team

Do you have a prayer request for our Prayer Team?
If so, please forward your prayer by email to prayerrequests@acparis.org.
Your prayer request will remain strictly private and confidential.
Prayer is powerful. We are here for you.

If you would like someone to pray with you after services, a Prayer Team member is available. Meet in the chapel next to the theater after each service.

Relationships matter!
Learn how to nurture your close relationships and make your life sweeter
By Janelle Watters

As human beings, we are wired for connection with others. Good relationships help keep us happier and healthier and bring us a deeper and richer experience of our lives. Join Anne and Janelle for a day of exploring important bonds and how to make them better during this relationship education workshop for adults.

What to expect? A fun-filled day learning about close relationships and our role in each one. Activities and experiential moments will help you to better understand the dynamics of these important bonds and their impact on our lives.

Join us either on your own or with someone special in your life (partner, daughter, father, close friend etc.).

Saturday, 7 March from 9h30-15h30 (a light lunch will be provided). Cost: 85 euros per person/150 euros for couples.

Your workshop leaders: Anne Belgram-Perkins & Janelle Watters Oliel, both licensed therapists trained in Emotionally Focused Therapy.

For more information about how they work, see: https://eftfrance.fr

To contact Anne & Janelle to sign up or for more information, see: https://annebelgramperkins.com

From Conflict to Collaboration:
A Parenting Framework That Brings Out the Best in You and Your Child/Teen

Sunday, 1 March, 12h15-13h30, ACP Catacombs

Imagine having a simple framework that guides you in every parenting challenge and brings out the best in both you and your child. Parenting coach Karen Kraut will give an overview of the Collaborative Problem Solving approach, which gives parents concrete tools to connect better with their kids, reduce their challenging behavior, and build their skills in self-regulation, communication and problem-solving.

Attendance is free of charge but we ask that you please reserve your place by RSVP'ing to Allison Wheeler at childrensworship@acparis.org. For more information, see www.betheparentboston.com
Sandwich-making and Sipping
Wed, 5 February, 13h30-15h30 in the Thurber Kitchen

Join us to make sandwiches to be delivered to homeless and refugee populations. This event is financially supported by the ACP and the food will be distributed by Serve the City volunteers. Feel free to bring a few bags of sliced bread if you would like. We will make fresh sandwiches together and share conversation.

ACP Men’s Retreat
13-14 March, at the Clarté-Dieu retreat center in Orsay

All men are welcome for a time of spiritual growth, fellowship, and fun. Pastor Doug Fondell will be leading us as we explore the meaning of Hesed-love as it is revealed in Old Testament scripture, and as it is manifested in our daily lives. A participation fee of €59, payable to ACP, is requested to offset the costs. Scholarships available. Registration at acparis.org and on Sundays during coffee hour after services.
What is love? It’s something we can’t see, we can’t hold it, we can’t put our finger on it—but we can definitely feel it. It is fragile, passionate, powerful, and unnerving. It can be easy or complicated, platonic, unrequited, forever, or for now. But what do we really know about love? The Palais de la Découverte takes on this question in De L’Amour, an exhibit that explores this complex emotion from both a sentimental and a scientific perspective.

A giant illuminated beating heart positioned at the entry draws the visitor into the “Attachments Gallery,” for a dive into feelings. The Greeks have four words for love: eros, indicating desire or the physical side of love; storge, the love for family; agape, signifying an aloof or impartial love; and philia, the love between friends. The expo explores these four concepts through objects, images, thoughts, short films, and staged vignettes.

Enter a tiny alcove that features a wall of graffiti covered with proclamations of love. Peer into a display case, and feel like a voyeur reading someone’s diary. A towering colossus of stuffed animals illustrates the concept of the attachment children create with an object, once weaned from their mother. Feel the impact of a kiss as painted by Roy Lichtenstein.

Take a break in a library full of classic and contemporary romantic literature. Quotes from writers, philosophers, and personalities are hung on the walls in French, English, and Spanish. For instance, French neuro-psychiatrist Boris Cyrulnik reminds us that, be we dog, dolphin, or human, there’s a security and a pleasure which we will never forget by being loved and loving in return.

Moving on to the Scientific Gallery, the focus shifts to love as a physical, chemical, and hormonal phenomenon, while tackling topics that have baffled philosophers, sociologists, and scientists for ages. For example, there is an eye-opening section on how babies become attached to adults, and how the interaction between the two affects the behavior of the infant, presaging how they will react in relationships as adults.

In another area we learn about the effect love has on the body. The physical signs of being in love resemble those of being under stress: a racing heart, sweaty palms, butterflies in the stomach. A film shows how the chemical and hormonal cocktail of love can dull certain parts of the brain, hampering our sense of judgment and the ability to see reality. This reinforces a message seen in a display in the Attachments section, that brings to life French author Stendhal’s concept of “crystallization,” the moment when one imagines their beloved to have ideal qualities which they do not actually possess. Love truly is blind after all.

The Science Gallery is enlivened by films, digital displays, interactive games, and experiences that help us understand what we are experiencing when we feel love for someone. Is your partner looking for a soulmate or just a fling? Play one of the games and see what intentions come to light, because, after all, love can be a game. Another section dives into online dating and apps, complete with an interactive screen where the viewer can drive the direction of a text message dialogue.

With Valentine’s Day coming soon on 14th February, why not plan a visit to the exhibit with your partner? The exhibit texts are posted in French, English and Spanish. Braille plaques and headsets are available throughout for the sight and hearing impaired.

Through 30 August 2020, at Palais de la Découverte, ave. Franklin Roosevelt, 75008 Paris (for visitors aged 15 and older). Note: when this exhibit ends in August, the Palais de la Découverte will close for a 4-year major renovation.

Come along to the Adult Fellowship Group

The Adult Fellowship Group started as a 30Plus group and has grown to an all-church, all ages, children included, friends-invited monthly event. We meet each month for an activity, to be determined by the group, and ideas are welcome. Get to know your ACP brothers and sisters (better). Talk, listen, play, be yourself!

Contact Daphne at 30plusfellowship@acparis.org

ACP Spire, February 2020 19
2020

4 February
Jacqueline Lewis

10 March
Odette Lockwood-Stewart

21 April
Keri Day

thurber conversations

The American Church in Paris
Food, Lecture and Conversation | Tuesday’s 19h00 - 21h15
# ACP Spire Diary – February 2020

## events, meetings and concerts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Events and Monthly Meetings and Concerts</th>
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</table>
| **All-Church Fellowship**  
Join us for fellowship each month. Get to know your ACP brothers and sisters (better). Talk, listen, play, be yourself! Ideas welcome. | TBD | From 20h email contact for location  
Daphne  
ACPfellowship@acparis.org |
| **ACP Community Book Study**  
We are reading and discussing Adam Hamilton’s book *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* in small groups. Get your copy from the ACP Book Table on Sundays. | Through 29 Feb |  |
| **100 Nights of Welcome (100 NOW)**  
To provide warm hospitality, shelter, beds, and showers to our 10-15 refugee guests each evening, volunteers are needed: to serve as overnight hosts, and to coordinate food donation, the social dinner and other aspects of the ministry. | Through 9 Mar | Daniel Tostado danieltostado1@gmail.com |
| **Guest preacher - Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis**  
Dr. Lewis – an activist and public theologian – is Senior Minister at Middle Collegiate Church in New York City. Jacqui leads her welcoming, artistic, multi-everything congregation to work for racial, gender, economic, and LGBTQIA equality, and against gun violence, preaching “Love God, Neighbor, and Self; Love. Period. Everything else is commentary.”  
Sunday 2 Feb |  |  |
| **Women’s Monthly Bible Study - Focus on forgiveness**  
All women welcome to study what the Bible says about forgiving and being forgiven. Free childcare is provided.  
Sunday 2 Feb | 12h15-13h15 F2 (first floor)  
Teri Lee Valluy sundaywomensbible@acparis.org |  |
| **Kid’s Monthly Bible Study**  
All children ages 7-12 welcome to study the “Who’s Who” of Bible Characters. The course is taught in English and French.  
Sunday 2 Feb | 12h15-13h15  
G7 (English); Catacombs (French) |  |
| **ACP Facilities Redevelopment Project meeting**  
Learn of the status and next steps of the Facilities Redevelopment Project. Provide further input on how we can best be stewards of our space to achieve ACP’s mission and remain the Beacon on the Seine for the next decades.  
Sunday 2 Feb | 12h30-13h30 Theater |  |
| **Atelier Concert**  
Tien HSIEH - piano  
Free admission, with free-will offering  
Sunday 2 Feb | 17h Sanctuary | Fred Gramann  
music@acparis.org |
| **ACP Today: Faith Talk in Paris radio show**  
Tune in for inspiring music and interviews.  
Monday 3 Feb | 20h45-21h30  
100.7 FM, Radio Fréquence Protestante |  |
| **Thurber Conversation - Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis**  
Dr. Lewis will speak on “Liberating God.”  
Tuesday 4 Feb | 19h meal;  
19h45 program  
Thurber Room |  |
| **Sandwich-making and Sipping**  
Join us to make sandwiches to be delivered to homeless and refugee populations, including our 100NOW guests.  
Wednesday 5 Feb | 13h30-15h30  
Thurber Kitchen |  |
| **Writers Group**  
The ACP writer’s group meets once a month to sharpen each other’s writing tool kits and support fellow members’ writing projects.  
Saturday 8 Feb | 14h30 - 16h30 email contact for location | Tendayi Chirawu  
writers@acparis.org |
| **School Holidays / Vacances Scolaire - Winter / Hiver** | Saturday 8 Feb – Sunday 23 Feb |  |
The American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU), our US partner in ministry, has established endowment funds to help sustain our long-term ministry. Gifts from estates are a fundamental way these endowments are funded. If you would like to participate in growing these endowment funds, please contact the AFCU at AFCUHeritage@AFCUBridge.org.

Please help keep our children healthy
Because we want to keep the ACP nursery and toddler rooms safe and hygienic places to play and rest, children who are sick will not be admitted to the nursery and toddler rooms. This is to protect all of our children from communicable illnesses. We also assume that a child who is unwell will prefer to be at home with their parent(s) or caregiver(s) rather than at Sunday nursery. Thank you for your consideration and cooperation. If you have any questions, please email Allison Wheeler at childrensworship@acparis.org.

DOCENT TOUR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
Love history? Proud of the American Church in Paris? Learn the history and architecture of our church sanctuary, and lend a hand on the weekend of the Journées du Patrimoine in September. We need you to help welcome the community into our church! Contact Alison at Spire@acparis.org.

The Movie Discussion Group
19h30, Thursday, 20 February
ACP, Salle G5
This month’s movies to see beforehand:
1917
Jojo Rabbit
Adam
Le Prince Oublié
Contact: movies@acparis.org
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACP Facilities Redevelopment Project meeting</td>
<td>Sunday 9</td>
<td>12h30-13h30</td>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>(See Sunday 2 Feb listing).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atelier Concert</td>
<td>Sunday 9</td>
<td>17h</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td>Fred Gramann; <a href="mailto:music@acparis.org">music@acparis.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mertol DEMIRELLI - piano</td>
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<tr>
<td>So we want to talk about reconciliation</td>
<td>Thursday 13</td>
<td>19h30-21h30</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td>Registration at acparis.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abednego CONWAY - Let's talk about race</td>
<td>Thursday 13</td>
<td>19h30-21h30</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td>Registration at acparis.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movie Discussion Group</td>
<td>Thursday 20</td>
<td>19h30</td>
<td>Room G2</td>
<td>Rebecca Brite; <a href="mailto:movies@acparis.org">movies@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td>Monthly Sunday Women’s Fellowship:</td>
<td>Sunday 23</td>
<td>12h15-13h30</td>
<td>Thurber Room</td>
<td>Kim Herr; <a href="mailto:women@acparis.org">women@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td>Ash Wednesday Service</td>
<td>Wednesday 26</td>
<td>19h</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
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<tr>
<td>So we want to talk about reconciliation</td>
<td>Thursday 27</td>
<td>19h30-21h30</td>
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<td>Registration at acparis.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking ahead to March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alpha Course launch party</td>
<td>Thursday 5</td>
<td>19h30</td>
<td>Thurber Room</td>
<td><a href="mailto:alpha@acparis.org">alpha@acparis.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships matter!</td>
<td>Saturday 7</td>
<td>9h30-15h30</td>
<td></td>
<td>annebelgramperkins.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurber Conversation</td>
<td>Tuesday 10</td>
<td>19h meal;</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:mensbiblestudy@acparis.org">mensbiblestudy@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td>Thirteenth Conversation</td>
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<td>19h45 program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men’s Retreat</td>
<td>Fri-Sat 13-14</td>
<td>9h-16h</td>
<td>Thurber Room</td>
<td>Kim Herr; <a href="mailto:women@acparis.org">women@acparis.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s Retreat - Christ-centered listening</td>
<td>Saturday 21</td>
<td>9h-16h</td>
<td>Thurber Room</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
So we want to talk about reconciliation

Let’s talk about race

February 13, 20, 27
19h30 - 21h30
@ The American Church
Free Admission
Limited Spots Available
Register Here: acparis.org/reconciliation-and-race

Led by Tarani Joy
Merriweather Woodson,
Felicia A. Henderson, &
Victor Andre Greene