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This nativity scene can be found in the stained glass window in the Chapel. The window was a gift from the Twyeffort family, for the 100th anniversary of the American Church in Paris, in 1957.

Photo by Fred Gramann.
Advent is my favorite season of the year! Just when the weather here in the northern hemisphere fades from the sun toward the darker skies and freezing cold of winter, inside we dream about Christmas and begin our preparations, anticipations and expectations by lighting candles and listening for prophetic voices to stir us up again from our slumberous and somnambulatory faith.

One of my favorite Advent hymns is *Sleepers, Awake*. The lyrics were written by German composer Philipp Nicolai and published in 1599. It was made famous as the foundation of Johann Sebastian Bach’s chorale “Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, BWV 140,” (“Sleepers, wake! A voice calls to us!”) which Fred played so beautifully as a prelude the first Sunday of Advent. The lyrics and beautiful music provide for a poignant way to sing our longing for the coming of the Lord.

The first line is “Sleepers, wake!” A voice astounds us… Astonishment is indeed the effect of the gospel upon our lives when we hear and believe it! God loves us? God cares for us? What good news this is! But the hymn alludes to Jesus’ parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids in Matthew 25:1-13. Like the foolish bridesmaids of the parable, we too fall asleep and are surprised that God still comes to greet us… And so we are called to wake up, to repent, to change our thinking and become like the wise maidens who are ready to join the bridegroom and share in the wedding feast.

The second stanza of the hymn makes it clear that the Bridegroom is Jesus Christ. “Now come, most worthy Lord, God’s Son, incarnate Word, Alleluia! We follow all and heed your call to come into the banquet hall.” The language then in the final stanza shifts to the beautiful image of the new Jerusalem described in Revelation, the “twelve great pearls, the city’s portals: through them we stream to join the immortals as we with joy your throne surround…” and then climaxes with the acclamation, “No eye has known the sight, no ear heard such delight: Alleluia! Therefore we sing to greet our King; for ever let our praises ring.”

In this season of Advent, what does it mean for us to prepare to greet our King, to ever let our praises ring? In the coming weeks, we will hear from Jesus, John the Baptist and other prophets. They remind us that there are still many areas in our lives and world where the Lord’s reign has yet to redeem, renew and restore, to make “on earth as it is in heaven” as we pray each Sunday. As a metric of how we’re doing, we will consider Micah 6:8, “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” This will be our theme verse through 2015 until we celebrate the 50th anniversary when the prophetic voice of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at the ACP on 24 October, 1965.

I invite you to read the daily Advent calendar Michelle prepared for us on the ACP website, to light candles, and to meditate more deeply on Micah 6:8. Consider the ways in which you might do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God in your family life, among friends, and in your neighborhood, school or work relationships? If Advent is to be a spiritually transforming time, it is meant to be a time of watching and preparing, a time of reflection and repentance so that we are ready to receive and reflect the Lord’s coming into our lives and world in revealing and renovating ways…

So may your Advent be filled with tree trimming, wonder filled worship and beautiful music, delicious food and drink, colorful lights and reminders of the joy of the Incarnation, but may it also be a time when we join in the incarnation of Christ through being his Church, his body in the world, becoming by God’s grace a people known in Paris for being awake, and who come doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with our God,

In Christ,

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
Got questions about life…

By Lisa Prevett

Ever wanted to explore the meaning of life or ask challenging questions about the Christian faith? Do you have a family member, friend, neighbour or colleague who is asking questions about life? If you answered “yes” then the Alpha Course is for you! Alpha is an opportunity for anyone to explore the Christian faith in a relaxed, informal and friendly way. It welcomes all those big questions – and it’s free!

Some history...
The Alpha Course was started in the UK in 1990 by Rev. Nicky Gumbel at Holy Trinity Brompton, a church in central London. Since then, over 22 million people around the world have heard about Jesus through Alpha. Alpha is currently running in 169 countries and in 112 languages, including in churches, bars, coffee shops, homes, schools, universities, work places and prisons.

Alpha at ACP
Following the success of past Alpha courses, and most recently the Student and Youth Alpha at ACP in 2014, an all-Church Alpha (open to all ages) will kick off on Thursday 15 January with a Launch Party. The course will then run every Thursday for 10 weeks. Each session starts with a meal at 18h30 followed by a short video looking at different aspects of the Christian faith, with topics such as How can I have faith? and Does God heal today?. Afterwards there are small group discussions, where you can talk about what you have heard and ask any questions you might have.

No question is too simple or too hostile. Whether a participant has never heard of God, has recently come to faith, or has been a Christian all of your life, this course has something for everyone! Even if you’ve been a Christian for many years, Alpha is a great way to review the fundamental aspects of faith, and it is also perfect to invite friends to who are seeking answers about life…so why not invite them to come along with you?

How can I support the course?
There are many ways that you can be involved with Alpha. The first and most important way is through prayer. We welcome your prayer support throughout the preparation phase and during the course itself. There are also many other ways that you can help, for example, by volunteering to help the kitchen team prepare the meal. Invite people along - a personal invite is most effective, so take the plunge and ask a friend if he/she would like to accompany you to the Launch Party.

Is there more to life than the status quo? Come and join us at the free Launch Party on 15 January at 19h30 and let’s find out together. Over 22.5 million people around the world have done Alpha – have you?

For more information, please contact Pastor Michelle Wahila at associatepastor@acparis.org. Details about the Launch Party and the course are available via the website at acparis.org and our social media channels.

What people said about Alpha on the last course at ACP

“Since doing Alpha I have started Bible reading. Using the verses spoken about it has been great to go away and read them for myself…work at them with a deeper understanding”

“The videos were theologically rich and stimulated great discussions”

“I came here as a non-believer and now I think that life without God and faith makes no sense”

“Great food, great atmosphere, great discussions”
The extended hours of darkness that the winter season brings to Paris are not always welcome. But in my home the shadowy early mornings are accompanied by small but exceptional gifts. On most mornings two small humans crawling into bed with me serve as my alarm clock. The additional darkness of winter mornings extends our quiet cuddle time before we launch into a new cycle of getting dressed, making beds, eating breakfast, morning prayers, and a jaunt to school.

It’s in the darkness of so many winter mornings that, while cuddling next to my two small boys, I am captivated by their unique physical characteristics: full lips, chubby cheeks, lengthy eyelashes, wrist wrinkles, the softest hair. I often find myself wondering how these humans came to be; how did their dwelling place on this earth come to intersect with my own? “Who are these people?” Better yet, “who will they grow to be?” It’s perplexing and hopeful at the same time and I am dumbfounded that I could be blessed with their entrance into my own broken, messy, and imperfect life.

In that quiet dark moment just before the chaos of the day begins, I am reminded that that gift of grace sometimes comes mysteriously; sometimes active little chubby hands with wrist wrinkles deliver grace; sometimes grace appears even in the darkness... As it has been told to us, the Christ child arrived by the darkness of night, bringing God’s grace into the brokenness and messiness of human life.

As we enter into the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, we have the opportunity to embrace this gift of grace anew. During Advent we are invited to embrace the darkness as a time of waiting and anticipation for the birth of the Christ-child. During this time we can ask ourselves, “Who will He grow to be in my life?” contemplating all the mysterious ways in which the gift of grace is given and received. Even if the question is perplexing, it is hopeful.

Christmas comes with the promise that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all. While that appearance may have come by humble beginnngs – darkness and wrist wrinkles – it is the intersection of God’s own dwelling among us that wraps all of our human messiness into a graceful embrace. Within that embrace we are able to find meaning, and indeed, hope for own imperfect human narratives.

It is while I am warmly cuddled next to those two small humans that I am most overwhelmed by the gift of God’s embrace. Somehow, understanding the craziness of my own life alongside the story of the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us, full of grace and truth, gives me hope. It gives me hope for myself as an ever-failing but well-intentioned parent, hope for those little boys who, I pray, will grow daily into followers and lovers of Jesus, and hope for a world that desperately needs to see the light of Christ’s glory.

Perhaps that dark pre-dawn moment best encapsulates my need for grace – that very instant, before the day even begins. Maybe it overwhelms me because in two sleeping boys I can touch the vulnerability of our humanness into which our Savior came. But perhaps it brings me to tears most simply because the moment calls me forward – into life abundant. The light of the Son brings me into “today,” and I am called into my present vocations (spouse, parent, and pastor) to live in, by, and with grace. That is an exceptional gift for today.
Annual Women's Retreat

Rooted in God’s Love - Our Source and Our Fruit

Friday evening, 30 January, 19h30 - 21h30
Saturday morning, 31 January, 9h30 - 16h30

Come to one or both of the retreat sessions

Our guest speaker is Debby Bellingham, author of The Mentored Life

Friday evening - Our Source
Jesus lived his life excellently, abounding in love and power. The Mentored Life is a look at the life of a person who invites Jesus to be his/her mentor. We will consider seven core qualities of Jesus' life that can be ours when we ask him to teach us how to live: Identity, Trust, Volition, Purpose, Humility, Hospitality, Obedience.

Saturday - Our Fruit
To intentionally move toward growth with God, we need a teacher, a community, a practice, and knowledge of self and of God. We'll spend the day exploring these ideas and experiencing how to put them into practice.

More information is available at the ACP Welcome Table, or by emailing women@acparis.org. Sign up quickly as there is a limited amount of space.
The Rev. Dan Haugh
Associate Pastor for
Youth and Young Adult Ministries

Savoring
Christmas present

I love the season of Christmas! The lights, decorations, carols and general festive atmosphere, all tend to permeate the streets of Paris. I have always been fond of this special time of year, but even more so now that it also reminds me of the birth of my boys.

Two years ago, Lauretta and I were not only decorating our flat for Christmas, but also decorating our new nursery in anticipation of the arrival of our boys. The Advent season of hopeful and pregnant waiting was very true for us. Last year we celebrated our first real Christmas together and had plenty of toys for the boys. However, they had just turned one year old and most of the excitement, and certainly the unwrapping of gifts, was from mommy and daddy.

But now....our boys, Jack and Blake will turn two years old on 14 December and are very much the active toddlers we were warned about :)

The celebration and joy of Christmas will take on new meaning for the Haugh family this year as our boys will truly be able to enjoy opening up gifts and seeing our tree decorated. Jack already is somewhat of an amateur electrician and will try to discover how exactly the lights work (and probably how easily they can break as well!).

This Advent/Christmas/ New Year’s season is also special, as it will be our last here in Paris. I have grown to deeply appreciate the beauty of the city this time of year, from the lights of rue Cler to the famous chalets of the Christmas markets scattered throughout town. I am now beginning to reflect on what will be missed upon leaving France and returning to the United States. I do this, not to be sad, but rather to ensure I will enjoy and make the most of each and every opportunity in our remaining months.

December means Advent and Christmas for me. I love the liturgy and exquisite services here at ACP each Sunday leading up to Christmas Eve.

Apart from our church, I really enjoy visiting the numerous crèches (Nativity scenes) in other cathedrals, such as the Madeleine and Notre Dame.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of the Christmas season here in France and throughout Europe are the holiday markets! I absolutely adore roaming up and down the lines of chalets, listening to the music, trying various seasonal foods and enjoying a cup of vin chaud (hot wine).

Many of these markets remain open into January. And with the celebration of Epiphany (the visit of the Magi), usually on the first Sunday of the new year, the Parisian boulangeries glory in their galette des rois. “Galette” parties are fun and festive, and a fabulous way to enter into a new year here in Paris. I highly doubt I will be able to find these savory delights in the US.

I eagerly look forward to one final season of celebration in Paris, especially with our ACP community as we approach Advent and await together with hopeful anticipation for the arrival of Christ.

O come, O come, Emmanuel!

In Christ,
Dan Haugh
The annual Candlelight Christmas Concerts will be held on Saturday 13 December at 17h and 20h. With the sanctuary lit by candles and decked with boughs, you will hear seasonal music by the ACP Adult Choir and Chamber Choir, the ACP Bronze Ringers, Le Choeur d’Enfants Sotto Voce and Le Jeune Choeur Sotto Voce. The evening concludes with all joining to sing carols in English and French.

Tickets will go on sale as of 16 November. They are 25 euros (reserved seating for adults, students and children), 15 euros (all other seating for adults), and 10 euros (all other seating for children and students). The proceeds benefit the ACP general budget.

If you are interested in the reserved seats please don’t wait as they sell out very quickly (last year within a week!).

If you are able to volunteer to usher or help with the dinner for the musicians between concerts, please contact Fred Gramann at music@acparis.org.

Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Bible readings for Dec-Jan

14 December Third Sunday of Advent, Year B
First Reading Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11
Psalm 126 (UMH 847)
Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24
Gospel John 1:6–8, 19–28

21 December Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B
First Reading 2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16
Second Reading Romans 16:25–27

24 December Christmas Eve
First Reading Isaiah 9:2–7
Psalm 96
Second Reading Titus 2:11-14

28 December First Sunday after Christmas Day
First Reading Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Psalm 148
Second Reading Galatians 4:4-7

4 January Epiphany of the Lord
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

11 January Baptism of the Lord
Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

18 January Second Sunday after the Epiphany
1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

25 January Third Sunday after the Epiphany
Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 62:5-12
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

Gloria in excelsis Deo!

The 2014 Candlelight Christmas Concerts

Gloria in excelsis Deo!
I have been privileged to serve the American Church in Paris again this year as Visiting Pastor, with responsibility for the church’s very important wedding ministry. Thanks to the persistent work of Keiko Matsushima, Wedding Coordinator of ACP, the wedding ministry has grown in the last half of 2014. Keiko and Jean-Christophe have been reaching out to travel agencies and hotels to inform them of the high-quality wedding services available at the American Church.

And we are seeing results. We added a dozen or more Chinese weddings to the church calendar this year, as we expand the scope of couples we serve. Keiko and Jean Christophe have also given ACP visibility at wedding salons in Paris that reach thousands who are preparing for marriage.

I am convinced that no church offers the range of services ACP does, with our exceptional sanctuary setting, first-class wedding service from Keiko, attentive pastoral care and the wedding ceremony by the Visiting Pastor, and a Christian wedding blessing that is beautiful, meaningful, and significant in uniting a couple in marriage. We exceeded 150 ceremonies, inclusive of vow renewals, in the last six months of 2014, each one of which I enjoyed to the fullest. We close the year with a dozen weddings in the last week of December.

On a personal note, Nancy and I will celebrate our 52nd wedding anniversary on 29 December, at the end of a day when I will officiate at 3 weddings in the ACP sanctuary. This will be a fitting way to bring our wedding ministry at ACP to a close for 2014.

You can look forward to the arrival of Jeff and Alba Powell in January, as Jeff returns to the Visiting Pastor post once again. Jeff requires no training, as he comes with extensive experience at ACP.

There are some changes awaiting him, of course. This time he will occupy a new office and be working with a new wedding coordinator. And he will find that we have broadened the scope of the couples we serve.

In July, Dr. Jay McKell and Elizabeth, his wife, will move into the VP apartment as Jay assumes Visiting Pastor duties for the first time at ACP. The McKells come from Kansas City, and I know Jay’s pastoral gifts well. He is a retired Presbyterian pastor and was founding pastor of Grace Covenant Presbyterian church in Overland Park, KS, which grew into a major, significant church in the Kansas City area. Please welcome them warmly, as you have done so beautifully for us.

We shall pray for you all as we return to the US in January, our hearts full of fond memories. We give thanks to God for all of you and for the privilege of serving The American Church in Paris once again!
The DVD “Celebrate 200” produced by French Connection Films is a visual and aural reliving of a unique worship service that marked two centuries of public English-speaking worship in the city of Paris.

Amidst the grandeur of the Madeleine Church, clergy and congregants from many denominations came together in unity to give thanks for God’s faithfulness to the church, not only in the past, but even more importantly into the future.

Included is the special message by Mark Labberton, President of Fuller Theological Seminary; music by the Anniversary Choir and ACP Bronze Ringers; and organ music heard on both the choir organ, played by Peter Bannister, and the great organ, played by Michel Geoffroy.

The DVD can be purchased for 10 euros during the coffee fellowship on Sundays, or at the church reception desk.

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**Spreading Christmas cheer**

**Volunteer opportunities**

Looking for ways to spread Christmas cheer to those less fortunate? Volunteer for one of the ACP’s local missions over the holidays.

**The Friday Mission Lunch at the American Cathedral** will be serving a traditional Christmas meal on Friday, 26 December, celebrating with our guests and giving them a special Christmas gift bag. We will also be serving lunch on Friday 2 January. We welcome anyone with a heart for Christmas and a heart for serving, at either or both lunches, to contact KristieWorrel@hotmail.com

**The annual Christmas Day dinner at the Foyer de Grenelle** takes place for those in need on the evening of Thursday 25 December. It is a wonderful evening of community and celebration, with singing, distribution of gifts, and other entertainment that continues on through the night around a bonfire in the courtyard of the Foyer, until the next morning when breakfast is served. Volunteers are needed to help between 15h and midnight on Christmas Day and/or early the next morning to help with the breakfast. Ability to speak a little French is helpful. Contact Ann Mildred at missionoutreach@acparis.org

**The ACP Breakfast/Sandwich Ministry** will be distributing food to the homeless two days over the holidays. Sandwiches will be distributed on Saturday 20 December and breakfast bags on Saturday 3 January. We prepare the food on the preceding Friday nights at 19h30 at the church, then meet the next day at the church, at 13h30 for the sandwich distribution and at 8h00 for the breakfast distribution. Interested in helping out? Contact Jurie Ane Feleto at sandwichministryacp@gmail.com
On 15 November the American Church held a very successful Marché Noël. Those who attended bought used books, Christmas decorations, jewelry, cookies and sweets; they met Santa Claus and listened to red-capped Christmas carolers.

If you missed it, don’t despair. Many other Christmas markets exist all over France for the entire month of December and beyond. The origin of these markets is principally Germanic, linked to the celebration of St. Nicolas Day on 6 December. In fact, the best known of these is located right next to the German border, in Strasbourg. Here the market virtually takes over the city. Music is an important feature as well as Christmasy foods. Père Noël reigns as if he is the mayor of town.

In northern France, Lille has a massive Christmas market. The city is decorated with colored lights, there is a brightly lit gigantic Ferris wheel and although the Marché is open during the day, the best time to go is at night. Lille is like a citywide carnival. Its Village de Noël has been going on for 26 years and lasts for 6 months. Artisans from all over northwestern France bring their wares to display and sell. Famous foods like gaufres liègoises, cheeses from as far away as Savoy, and glasses of mulled wine are served from miniature chalets lining the streets near the place Rihour.

Going southwest, the city of Biarritz offers a marché with a flavor of the Pays Basque, featuring Olentzero. He is a Basque woodcutter and maker of charcoal who arrives in the city each winter with his stock of fuel to provide heat to the citizens. He traditionally goes from door to door distributing sweets, especially for the children. This spirit of warmth and generosity is omnipresent.

Heading east to Province, a sure sign of Christmas is the presence of “santons,” displayed and sold at each Marché de Noël. These figurines are made of clay and hand-painted. They represent villagers and shepherds in 19th century dress and make up the Provincial French crèche or nativity scene. There are representations of virtually every village occupation, from mayor to priest, fishermen to bakers.

The figures are fun to buy and collect and it can take years to compile a full set. Also made of clay are little buildings for the villagers, so that every Christmas you can display a tabletop crèche complete with Mary, Joseph, a baby Jesus, angels, and animals appropriate to the nativity. The tradition is to have the cradle of Jesus upside down until the evening of the 24th December, when he is set upright and your crèche village is complete.

So if you are stumped for a gift this season, google Marché de Noël and head to the nearest Christmas market. With the festive ambiance for inspiration, you’re sure to find an original gift, and a fun holiday experience.

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**Marché de Noël in France**

By Amit Pieter

**Sunday Morning Women's Gathering**

21 December, 12h30-13h30 in the Herr apartment

Join us for our Christmas Cookie Exchange Party! Please bring at least 3 dozen of your favorite cookies/treats. We will sample a few while we sing Christmas carols and then have some that we can take home to share with our family and friends.
Healthy holiday hints

By Alison Benney

Tis the season to fill the belly! Good cheer elicits the annual "gourmand" in each of us, and who has the strength to resist? Whether it's the office party, dinner with friends, a church event, or the family get-together, revelson rituals churn out rich fare, offering up delicacies like foie gras, salmon and sauterne, and sweet goodies such as an inordinate amount of chocolate, galette des rois, butter cookies and eggnog.

It's really unfair that indigestion, hangover and weight gain go hand in hand with the festivities. Is all this good food really so bad? Most nutritionists would say that there is no bad food, only bad eating habits. It's the over-indulging that tips the scales and distresses the stomach and liver. So, Christmas lite? Forget it. One doesn’t need to be a saint to survive the season.

**Calories** are simply the units of energy that keep our bodies running the holiday treadmill. Generally speaking, most of us need to take in between 2,000 to 2,500 calories a day to fuel our activities and maintain body weight. But just one hefty holiday meal can easily exceed that many calories – and that's with moderate alcohol consumption. When you consider that it only takes 3,500 extra calories to gain a pound of fat, and a small 8-ounce cup of eggnog is 400 calories, it’s no wonder our clothes are so tight in January.

It's not just one day of decadence that puts on the pounds; the effect is cumulative. **Cocktail parties** are killers, as an abundance of food and drink are tantalizingly displayed, at a time of day when the appetite is stirring. Try to eat a protein or carbohydrate snack just before the party to cut down craving, and think big volume, low calorie. The stomach registers fullness before calories, so a boiled egg, a handful of grapes or an apple will do the trick.

Ignore the Roquefort canapés, be prudent with the paté, but don’t feel obliged to set up camp near the crudités. Instead, head for the **seafood**. Oysters, shrimp, salmon and crab are lean, rich in nutrients and relatively low calorically. It's the buttered bread and mayonnaise that up the fat ante. Foie gras is indeed gras, one small slice is 180 calories, but, hey, it is an excellent source of iron, zinc, and vitamins A and B12.

Go slowly with the grog. **Alcohol** not only takes away our good eating sense, but adds empty calories. A flute of bubbly slides down 90 calories, and a 10cl glass of Porto packs 170. Remember to alternate each glass of alcohol with...

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**Christmas cuisine, from West Africa**

**Jollof rice**

Jollof rice, also called Benachin, meaning "one pot" in the Wolof language, is a popular dish in many parts of West Africa, so it has many variations. It is an everyday dish, but is always an essential part of Christmas dinner.

**Ingredients**
- 1¼ cups white rice
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 can (6-ounce) tomato paste
- 3 cups chicken broth

In a saucepan sauté rice and onion in oil. Cover and cook until onion is translucent and soft. Cut chicken into ¼-inch cubes and add to sauté mixture. Mix in tomato paste and then broth. Bring mixture to a boil. Cover pan and reduce heat to low. Cook until rice is tender, liquid is absorbed, and chicken is cooked, about 20 to 25 minutes. Makes 8 servings.
One of the must-have dishes for Noche Buena, the feast served at Christmas midnight in the Philippines is Chicken Relleno, a whole boneless chicken stuffed with ground pork and seasonings and baked until golden brown.

1 large chicken (about 1 1/2 kilos)  2 Tablespoons soy sauce  1 1/2 Lemon juice of calamansi Juice

Debone chicken for stuffing, leaving wing and drumstick bones intact. Marinate chicken in soy sauce and calamansi juice (a sort of limeade). Thoroughly mix together the following, except the hard-boiled eggs:

1/4 kilo cooked sweet ham, chopped finely  10 pieces green olives, pitted and chopped
1/2 kilo ground lean pork  1/2 cup raisins
5 pieces Vienna sausage, chopped finely  2 tablespoons tomato catsup
2 small pieces chorizo de bilbao, chopped finely  Salt and pepper to taste
3 eggs  2 hard-boiled eggs, quartered
1/2 cup sweet pickles  1/4 cup butter
1/2 cup grated cheese (optional)

Fry a small part of the mixture and correct seasonings. Stuff chicken, arrange quartered eggs in the center. Sew up opening and wrap in aluminum foil. Bake in moderate oven (350 F) for 1 1/2 hour.

When almost done, unwrap and continue baking until brown. Baste with butter every now and then. Arrange chicken in a platter and carve into 1/2-inch-thick diagonal or crosswise slices, starting from wing sides.
Wishing for a warm Christmas?

Help provide those less fortunate with warm winter apparel. We invite everyone to bring new mittens, hats, gloves, and scarves to decorate the mitten tree. These decorations will be donated to our mission partner, Foyer de Grenelle, for those in need during this chilly time of year. Drop them off at the reception or in the theatre after church, until 21 December.

The circus comes to town!

Christmastime is circus-time in Paris

Under the big top

160-year-old Cirque Pinder is the real deal. A massive big top pitched on the Pelouse de Reuilly in the 12th harbors thrills and chills galore, including the headline act, 12 white lions, whose trainer is the son of the circus’s owners. Not to mention llamas, camels, trapeze artists and a duo of roller-skating daredevils. Until 11 January, www.cirquepinder.com

The Greatest Show on Earth

France’s Bouglione circus dynasty has brought its new show "Géant" to the historic Cirque d’hiver. There are tigers, elephants, a dashing ringmaster and daring young men on the flying trapeze, plus clowns and tumblers both human and canine. Until 1 March, www.cirquedhiver.com

Slava’s Snow Show

Not a lion, horse or elephant in sight, this is circus tradition turned into pure performance art by acclaimed Russian clown Slava Polunin, whose antics are touchingly poetic as well as funny. 3 December-4 January at Le Trianon, 80 bd de Rochechouart, 18th, www.slavasnow.fr

Pégase et Icare

For a sleeker take on circus tradition, the Alexis Gruss company offers a dazzling demonstration of aerial acrobatics and equestrian choreography, complete with futuristic costumes and dramatic special effects, in a big top tent in the 16th. Until 4 January, www.alexis-gruss.com

SAVE THE DATES

13 December Candlelight Christmas Concerts, 17h00 and 20h00
14 December Nativity Pageant, 11h00 worship service
14 December Youth group Christmas Party, 15h
16 December Young Adult group Christmas Party, 19h30
20 December ACP all-church family Christmas Party, 17h-19h
24 December Christmas Eve services: 16h00 Family service 16h45 Cookie reception 19h00 Musical prelude 19h30 Candlelight service 21h30 Musical prelude 22h00 Candlelight service 23h15 Cookie reception

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Christmastime is circus-time in Paris

Under the big top

160-year-old Cirque Pinder is the real deal. A massive big top pitched on the Pelouse de Reuilly in the 12th harbors thrills and chills galore, including the headline act, 12 white lions, whose trainer is the son of the circus’s owners. Not to mention llamas, camels, trapeze artists and a duo of roller-skating daredevils. Until 11 January, www.cirquepinder.com

The Greatest Show on Earth

France’s Bouglione circus dynasty has brought its new show "Géant" to the historic Cirque d’hiver. There are tigers, elephants, a dashing ringmaster and daring young men on the flying trapeze, plus clowns and tumblers both human and canine. Until 1 March, www.cirquedhiver.com

Slava’s Snow Show

Not a lion, horse or elephant in sight, this is circus tradition turned into pure performance art by acclaimed Russian clown Slava Polunin, whose antics are touchingly poetic as well as funny. 3 December-4 January at Le Trianon, 80 bd de Rochechouart, 18th, www.slavasnow.fr

Pégase et Icare

For a sleeker take on circus tradition, the Alexis Gruss company offers a dazzling demonstration of aerial acrobatics and equestrian choreography, complete with futuristic costumes and dramatic special effects, in a big top tent in the 16th. Until 4 January, www.alexis-gruss.com
What’s up in Paris

Dec/Jan event listings

By Karen Albrecht

**An American in Paris, the musical: world premiere**

Vincente Minnelli’s 1951 film, based on music by George and Ira Gershwin and featuring amazing dancing by Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron, won 6 Oscars. Now the tale of love in the city of light is being turned into a major Broadway musical. But before it hits the great white way the show will have its world première in the city that inspired its iconic imagery. **Until 4 January. In English with French subtitles. Châtelet Théatre Musical de Paris, chatellet-theatre.com**

**Lighting up the city of light**

This Christmas the trees along the Champs-Elysées will be lit up with a display entitled “Scintillance”. LED technology not only lends a “magical” glow: it has cut electricity consumption to just 3% of what it was in 2006. The Champs-Elysées is also home to a “Village de Noël” with crafts stands, kiddle rides and Santa’s sleigh. **Light display until 7 January. Village until 4 January.**

**Hokusai**

This blockbuster presents 500 paintings, drawings and woodblock prints by Japanese master Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), from his instantly recognizable curlicued waves and multiple views of Mount Fuji to equally stylized human subjects. Reserve ahead. **Until 18 January, www.grandpalais.fr**

**Niki de Saint Phalle**

The rebellious Franco-American aristocrat (1930-2002) is famous for her chunky, rambunctiously colorful female figures “les nanas.” This major retrospective allows a far broader view of her painting and sculpture. And in a bow to girl-power, ticket holders get a discount at the Sonia Delaunay retrospective at the Musée d’Art Moderne (to 22 February), and vice-versa. **Until 2 February, www.grandpalais.fr**

**The Nutcracker (Casse-Noisette)**

This ballet based on a fantastical tale by Hoffman and set to the beloved music by Tchaikovsky is a Christmas classic. Rudolf Nouryev’s version, playing at the Opéra Bastille through 29 December, is sold out. But you can still catch one of 2 Paris performances by the Russian National Ballet and Orchestra as part of their French tour. **30 and 31 December at Palais des Congrès de Paris. www.fnacspectacles.com**

**Saint Louis, 800th birthday celebration**

If the commercialism of 21st-century Christmas is getting you down, plunge back into the age of saints and heroes. An exhibit in the medieval Salle des Gens d’Armes of the Conciergerie on Ile de la Cité celebrates the 800th birthday of France’s Louis IX, king, crusader and saint. Buy a combined ticket to visit the magnificent Sainte-Chapelle next door, which is also featuring a birthday tribute to its builder, ending with a high-tech 3D exhibit promising time-travel back to the palace complex as it was in Louis’s day. **Until 11 January, www.monuments-nationaux.fr**

**Africolor**

For its 26th edition, this pioneering Afro-Parisian festival offers a wildly diverse mix of concerts, films and workshops, often in non-traditional venues. The “Two Congos” (Kinshasa and Brazzaville) are featured this year with veteran Ray Lema’s creation “Nzimbu”. Check out Maputo-Mozambique, acrobat-musicians who create music by juggling rubber balls onto drum heads. The craziest thing is, it sounds great. **Until 24 December, www.africolor.com**

**Get yer skates on!**

Every winter Paris’s city hall sets up an open-air skating rink out front, the scene of some pretty amazing amateur ice-capades. Entrance is free if you bring your own skates, or skates (up to size 49!) can be rented for 5 euros, with double-bladed safety models available for junior Olympians. Gloves are mandatory (for safety reasons). **Until 1 March, www.paris.fr**
Why does Paris need an English-language mental health service?

When a person or family finds life difficult to deal with, facing situations which may seem too much to handle, it’s helpful to be able to talk to a professional in English. A therapist who speaks the client’s native language is able to help the person to feel more connected, less isolated.

Equally important, when powerful emotions need to be verbalized, they are better expressed in a person’s native language. Memory associations connected to events from childhood are more numerous, more detailed and emotionally marked when remembering is done in a person’s original language. Finally, seeing a therapist who is also an expat, who understands what it is like to integrate into a foreign country, eliminates a whole barricade of miscommunication.

The International Counseling Service (ICS) began in 1979 when a group of seven bilingual mental health professionals started exploring how they could identify and answer the needs of the English-speaking community. They met with Reverend Tom Duggan who, as ACP pastor and counselor, understood the critical need for a psychological service in English. He offered a room in the church to our original team of clinical psychologists, social workers and a counselor, and the ICS was born.

We were open weekdays, and met bi-weekly in Dr. Duggan’s office to further define our goals and share clinical experience. In 1982, the International Counseling Service became a 1901 association, with 10 founding members, including Dr. Duggan. It was natural for us to have begun at the American Church in Paris, since this church is a crossroads of the English-speaking community, housing English-speaking schools, associations and groups, along with multiple services vital to the expat community.

From the beginning, the ICS was a community-minded service, providing both professional assistance to those in need (individuals, couples, and families, spanning all ages) as well as networking with other English-speaking professionals (doctors, hospitals, schools, other professionals and associations) in the community.

How do we work? To the person, couple or family seeking help, we offer an initial assessment of the problems and needs, in a consultation that is free of charge for individuals. The assessing therapist will then make a recommendation, which may include a referral to a therapist or other appropriate resource in the Paris community.

In addition, we offer talks for schools and associations, organize workshops on mental health issues, provide supervision for other professionals, and create social events to bring together professionals, schools and associations in the English-speaking community, such as our annual networking party.

The ICS has evolved and has now joined the electronic age. We no longer have an office, but our website offers an interactive message service where those seeking help may leave a message; one of our therapists will respond, offering a telephone contact, often followed by an initial appointment to begin the process of identifying needs and proposing appropriate referrals. A 24 /7 telephone service is also available, through which a person in need will be called back within 24 hours (excluding weekends).

We are happy and proud to have offered 35 years of English-language counseling and psychotherapy to the expat community, and encourage all in need to contact us. Help is only a click away.

The International Counseling Service can be found at icsparis.com, by telephone: 01.45.50.26.49 or by email: icsparis@gmail.com

**Community group profile**

**International Counseling Service**

35 years of reaching out to expats

**By Marie Anne Brun**

Clinical Psychologist and founding member
Coping at Christmas

By Judith Collignon
Clinical Psychologist, International Counseling Service

We have probably all said at least once in our lives: “I am feeling depressed.” What does that actually mean? What is depression? And more important: what does that mean as an expat living in France, now that the Christmas season is upon us? And how can one deal with it?

The classic symptoms of depression are: feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, reckless behavior, changes in our sleep patterns, loss or gain of appetite and weight, or heightened emotional changes: anger, irritability, sadness, loss of energy and interest in daily activities, as well as apathy, lethargy and feeling tired. We all have some of these symptoms at different times in our life in response to stress but having several of these symptoms on an ongoing basis might indicate that we need to look closely at what is going on in our lives and eventually seek professional help.

Christmas is an especially stressful time for many people. The commercialism of the holiday coupled with a sense of obligation to celebrate, often with family members, to exchange gifts, and to have a “good time” is difficult for many people. According to the National Institutes of Health, Christmas is the time of year that people experience a high incidence of depression; and one study done in America reported that 45% of respondents dreaded the festive season.

There is also a kind of depression known as “situational depression” which means exhibiting some of the above symptoms when faced with an event such as Christmas; but when the event is over, the symptoms subside or disappear completely. We at the International Counseling Service have found that among our client expat population there is a tendency to become more anxious and stressed at holiday time, whether they are going home or staying in Paris.

What are some good coping strategies for getting through the Christmas season, especially if you find yourself in France or Paris during this time, with your family members in another country?

1. Connect and reach out rather than going into your “cave” and lamenting about how terrible your life is.
2. Find out what is happening in your church and in the activities you engage in and participate in some of them.
3. Use this time to explore the city and to do things that you don’t ordinarily have time to do, which might also mean spending time alone clearing up the clutter in your personal space to prepare for 2015.
4. Create or co-create an event in your home or in someone’s home and share a meal.
5. Set limits on the spending you do for gifts you give or receive to avoid excessive spending.
6. Examine your idea of Christmas, independent of what other people think and say, and see what you need to create to be in alignment with who you are.
7. Make use of technology: use Skype to connect, send e-cards to family and friends, connect via Facebook and use e-mail.
8. Write a Christmas letter to friends and family. People will be amazed and interested to learn how you have spent 2014 and will be inspired to respond to you.
9. Do something for others, for those less fortunate than you, and give in a non-monetary way.
10. Write a Christmas letter to yourself, focusing on all the good things about Christmas: the opportunity to engage in loving kindness, generosity of spirit and gratitude for others in your life. You may call this “My gratitude letter.”

This list is by no means exhaustive and you can also create your own personal strategies.

If you are traveling to your home country during this season, be realistic in how much travel you can do, how many people you can see, and what you can expect based on previous experiences. It is important to pace yourself so that Christmas does not become extremely difficult while you are away and extremely difficult when you need to come back.

If things still become difficult and you find yourself in Paris, there are community counseling resources available. For instance, the International Counseling Service provides counseling, a phone service is offered by SOS help, and your church is there as well. Not to forget friends, who also might be in the same situation as yourself! So when in difficulty, reach out.

Questions? Contact Judith Collignon at judithcollignon@aol.com
History in context

1993 - Velvet divorce between Czech Republic and Slovakia
1994 - Channel Tunnel opens, connecting Britain and France
1994 - Rwandan genocide
1994 - End of apartheid in South Africa and election of Nelson Mandela
1995 - Auction website eBay is founded
1995 - First successful air-balloon ride over the Pacific
1995 - Million Man March in Washington D.C.
1995 - Oklahoma City bombing
1995 - Sarin gas attack in Tokyo Subway
1996 - Mad cow disease hits Britain
1996 - Dolly the sheep the first successful cloned mammal
1997 - First Harry Potter book is released
1997 - Transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong to China.
1997 - Princess Diana killed in a car accident in Paris
1998 - India and Pakistan test nuclear weapons
1998 - Good Friday Agreement ends Troubles in Northern Ireland.
1998 - Titanic most successful movie ever
1998 - Viagra on the market
1999 - Fear of Y2K bug
1999 - Killing spree at Columbine High School
1999 - Panama Canal returns to Panama
2000 - "ILOVEYOU" virus hits thousands of computers
2000 - Unclear winner George W. Bush declared US president
2000 - Vladimir Putin president of Russia
2001 - September 11 attacks: Terrorists destroy the World Trade Center in New York City
2001 - Wikipedia founded
2002 - Chechen rebels seize theatre in Moscow
2002 - Guantanamo Bay detention camp is established
2003 - Iraq War begins, triggering worldwide protests
2003 - Killer heatwave in Paris
2003 - The Human Genome Project is completed
2003 - Space Shuttle Columbia is destroyed on re-entry
2004 - Boxing Day tsunami in Indian Ocean, leads to the deaths of 230,000
2005 - 7/7 attacks on London Underground
2005 - Angela Merkel becomes Germany's first woman Chancellor.
2005 - Hurricane Katrina kills nearly 2,000 people in the Gulf of Mexico.
2005 - Death of Pope John Paul II; Benedict XVI becomes Pope.
2006 - Execution of Saddam Hussein.
2007 - Spike in food prices and subprime crisis help trigger global recession.
2008 - Barack Obama is elected President of the US

Modern times

When Reverend Dr. Larry R. Kalajainen arrived as the new senior pastor in March 1994, the ACP was on the cusp of several major shifts that would play out over the nine and a half years of his tenure.

The first was a demographic shift away from an American majority in the congregation, most of whom had been upper level, middle-aged corporate nomads. In 1994, the ACP was no longer “IBM at prayer,” as the church had jokingly been termed a decade earlier. A trend of sending younger employees to Paris accelerated from 1998 on, when the Y2K issue sparked an influx of tech-savvy Americans, many with children, who came to Paris on shorter-term assignments.

In 1994, there was only a tiny youth group and no youth pastor. At the end of Rev. Kalajainen’s tenure, a full-time youth pastor was on staff, shepherding a large and active youth group. Rick Sommers, the associate pastor when Pastor Kalajainen arrived, had already begun to work with bicultural couples in the congregation, and this resulted in significant growth of the permanent core membership.

In addition, the percentage of other nationalities greatly increased. In the late 1990s, there came a surge of immigrants, particularly from several countries in Africa which had suffered civil wars and economic collapse. This resulted in the creation of the African Fellowship, similar to the Filipino Fellowship, which had existed since 1986. It is the nature of international congregations to undergo such periodic, sometimes abrupt, shifts in demographics.

The second was a change in the missional direction, with a corresponding reworking of the organizational and financial structures of the church. In 1994, more than 50% of the church operating budget was funded by revenue from Japanese weddings, and the senior and associate pastors were officiating at weddings three days per week, leaving little time to develop the actual ministries of the church. The creation of a staff position for retired clergy on a rotating six-month basis, starting with Pastor John Rodgers, freed the senior and associate pastors for giving more congregational leadership.

Strategic planning retreats and focused discussions about the church’s mission led to an ending of the ACP sponsorship of an Anglophone community newspaper, the Paris Voice, after financial analysis revealed that publication and staff costs were approximately $200,000 per year. Support from the AFCU in fundraising among
alumni and the development of an endowment policy, plus the creation of the Franco-American Community Center in response to changes in French nonprofit law, along with an intentional stewardship development emphasis, helped free the congregation from its overdependence on wedding revenue and helped lessen the risk of periodic financial meltdowns. The third major shift was the strategic plan to upgrade, modernize, and renovate the facilities. Thanks especially to the leadership of Bill Johnston, whose experience and contacts within the French construction industry were invaluable, some $3 million worth of renovations had been completed by the time Dr. Kalajainen finished his tenure, and $3 million more (the Faith in Action campaign) was on the drawing boards and subsequently completed. Among the work completed or in progress between 1994 and 2003 was the renovation of the “garden level” space previously occupied by the admissions office and bookstore of the American University in Paris, the replacement of the boilers, the first renovation of the gym and shower rooms (the second, more permanent renovation would come in the Faith in Action phase), the beginning of the renovation of the Catacombs space, the renovation of the associate pastor’s apartment and the creation of two new staff apartments at the rear of the third floor for the youth pastor and retired pastoral assistant. The ACP, like other international congregations, has faced many challenges, some of them due to factors beyond any local control. One of these was the September 11 terrorist attack in the US. Allaying the fears of anxious American parents whose children were in the ACP’s two nursery schools, keeping in close liaison with both the US Embassy and French security agencies, and upgrading the church’s own security systems became major priorities. As a sign of the French government’s expression of solidarity with its American ally, the Elysée Palace requested that the ACP host a nationally televised interfaith service of peace and solidarity, attended by the entire French government, two days after the attacks. It was one of the most intensely challenging and deeply moving occasions in the life of the pastors, staff, and congregation. That service was a poignant testimony to the widespread and deeply felt relationship that the ACP has established throughout its history with its host country, and epitomized the importance of the mission of “the Spire on the Seine.” May it long continue. Reverend Greg Turner picked up the baton in September 2003 along with his wife, Kathy, to serve as interim pastor. Tina Blair was associate pastor, and Steve Sours was the youth minister, followed by Karen Halac. In 2004, the ACP suffered a financial crisis, and for a couple of months almost had trouble paying the electricity bill. This resulted in the temporary loss of the church secretary and cutting back on staff hours, and the congregation went into a flurry of fundraising. As the secretary had been responsible for both the Spire and the church bulletins, Gigi Oyog took up both duties, with Fred Gramann proofreading and the Filipino Fellowship photocopying and folding the bulletins each week. Greg Turner left in October 2004 and Pastor Barry Dawson arrived with his family. Marvin Steinmetz, Tina’s husband, organized a couple of old-timey radio shows, with Charles Mitchelmore as host. Plus it was the first year after 911 that we felt we could revive our annual 4th of July party, with Elvis Presley as the theme. By 2006, our finances had recovered enough to clean the Tiffany windows and replace the elevator, and we feted Fred’s 30 years at ACP. But this was also the summer when our congregation almost fell apart over the issue of whether gay members could sit on Council. The church suffered through a year of murky communications, struggling to reach understanding on both sides amid passionate quarrels and flares of anger and hostility, all underlain by feelings of deep sadness. When Pastor Dawson left in 2006, Tina Blair held the church together and we managed to organize and throw a tremendous 150th anniversary party, with an entire weekend of events, including a worship service led by former pastors, a historical/hysterical play called “Expect the Unexpected,” and the throwing of the switch for the new illumination of the church spire. Reverend Alex Aronis arrived shortly after as interim, and kicked off the contemporary service in 2008, just before we called Reverend Dr. Scott Herr. And that history has yet to be written.
Advent means "coming" or "arrival." During the season of Advent, we celebrate Christ's coming into the world and watch with expectant hope for his coming again. The four weeks of Advent present an opportunity for discernment and reflection as we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of our Lord.

We invite you to participate in using 25 days of scripture as a way of preparing for the birth of our Savior. We hope that by walking through 25 days of Scripture you will be blessed by the retelling of salvation history. In recounting the wonderful deeds of the Lord we are able to give our thanks and praise. As Christians, this is (or should be) our posture in this world, during the Christmas season and beyond! So, it is also a perfect place also to begin our Advent journey.

You can download this Advent calendar along with other Advent materials from the ACP website at: http://acparis.org/holiday-season-2014/1030-advent-calendar-2014
City to City

By Kimberly Hunt

For nearly three days at the end of October, the American Church was filled with men and women seeking to learn what is happening in urban church planting across Europe, and gaining inspiration and insight for reaching their city for Christ. We hosted approximately 520 church planters for the City to City Europe “Gospel within the City” conference from 28 to 30 October.

City to City Europe is an expanding network of church planters and pastors in major European cities that focuses on church planting for city renewal, and provides content resources for leaders who want to bring the power of the gospel to every part of life. The program serves a Europe-wide movement of leaders who create new churches, new ventures, and new expressions of the gospel of Jesus Christ for the common good. Although most of the attendees hailed from Europe, there were also representatives from North America, South America, Australia and Asia.

The conference could not have happened without the support of the ACP staff and numerous volunteers from churches throughout Paris. The City to City Europe team was grateful for everyone’s efforts.

Keynotes from American Dr. Tim Keller, French theologian Henri Blocher and British professor Grace Davie touched upon subjects such as preaching, the church, current theology, and religious trends in Europe. Nearly 20 breakout sessions took place at ACP and the American University in Paris. Some of the most popular topics were the Gospel-Driven Church, Faith and Work: the Gospel in the Workplaces of the City, and Planting Evangelistically Magnetic Churches.

One of the highlights of the conference was the daily time of worship and exposition. Still Point, led by our own Natalie Raynal, used their gifts to usher people into a spirit of praise to God and readiness for the teaching on the book of Jonah by Neil Powell. As the days went by, the worship became ever more powerful and at times it seemed the stained glass windows would shatter from the force of hundreds of voices singing their praise to our great God.

The conference closed with the Lord’s Supper, and with prayer for the gospel of Jesus Christ to reach Paris, France, Europe and the world. It was the perfect reminder to these church planters and pastors that they were going out, not on their own, but with the strength and assurance of the love of God demonstrated by the ultimate sacrifice of His son, Jesus Christ.

Memory of the ACP fall retreat

The ACP fall retreat took place 31 October to 2 November, at La Clarte-Dieu, led by Dr. Eric Barreto. When asked how the weekend went, Kim Ball felt inspired to write this poem.

A feeling of grace that fills me long after the weekend’s past.
A reflection of the spiritual sharing, love and kindness among us continues to last.
Gathering as a whole to worship and learn.
Asking questions, open discussions and no formal “taking turns.”
We all came as we are - no right or wrong - no need to sing on tune when led in a small song.
Salvation, Jubilee and being mindful of our community are a few of the themes we pondered,
along with plenty of fresh forest outside of our (oh so special) monastery to wander.
You see the weekend was yours to participate in, whatever way was best for you.
A time to feel the blessings of God - to calm the mind and heart
And to really feel the sensation of a refueled start.
Since 1929, our beautiful church house on the banks of the Seine has been a home away from home for people from across the globe in Paris for short or longer stays. Each Sunday, hundreds flock through its doors for worship and fellowship. And throughout the week, its walls reverberate with the laughter of schoolchildren; the singing of choirs and chiming of bell-ringers practicing for worship; the chorus of voices in meetings, classes, conversations; the whispers of prayer.

Although managed and maintained with care through the dedicated oversight of our Council committees and church staff, our ACP home is ageing, and its upkeep and maintenance require ever-increasing investment to ensure that its foundations, walls, facade, roof, spire withstand the weathering brought on by intensive use and climatic conditions, and continue to provide a special place of worship and fellowship for many years to come.

In order to ensure that the integrity of our church property is preserved and enhanced for present and future generations, a special three-year capital campaign is being launched in the context of the 160th anniversary of ACP’s official Charter, to be celebrated in 2017, the final year of the campaign.

As set out by the ACP Council, this initiative, entitled ACP 160: Strengthening God’s House, will establish a Building Fund to help maintain and sustain the integrity of the church building and thereby strengthen the operational budget of the church.

It will also protect and enhance our church, by carrying out immediate and necessary building works to maintain the strength of our church. These could include, among others, refurbishing or replacing the heating system in the sanctuary; repairing damaged, uneven floors, and renovating the attic.

These also include value-enhancing building projects, such as creating an atrium at the heart of the church building by constructing a moveable protective covering over the courtyard, installing wheelchair accessible lifts, renovating our bathrooms, and improving the sanctuary’s lighting and sound system.

Through this initiative, in which we are joined by our partners in AFCU, it is hoped that €1.5 to €2.5 million can be raised for these objectives.

Could I invite you to join me in prayerfully considering a special participation in this effort over the next three years to support the long-term strength of our church house? More information, including pledge forms, is available from the ACP office and will be provided during worship in the weeks to come, alongside regarding regular stewardship giving. I thank you in advance for considering this special opportunity for giving.

The ACP Christmas market

A big thanks to all the volunteers that made it happen!
Photos by Francois Pierre
A word from your ACP Council

Holiday greetings to all the members and friends of ACP,

Having celebrated the American Thanksgiving holiday of feasting on turkey and all the trimmings, and pausing to reflect on the abundance of blessings we have to be thankful for, helps to set the stage for the beginning of Advent and the anticipation of the celebration of Christ’s birth. Something about living in northern latitudes like Paris, with the approach of winter solstice and the ever-diminishing hours of daylight until 21 December, seems to make the season of Advent even more wondrous. The expectation of the gift of more daylight hours after solstice somehow amplifies for me the promise of the birth of our Savior.

We hope all of you will be inspired by the Advent services and activities here at ACP and that you will feel the true blessings of the season. The ACP Council is thankful for our pastoral team and all the tremendous volunteers who give their time and talents to recreate the anticipation of Advent and wonders of the first Christmas through the Christmas concerts, the Christmas pageant, the family Christmas party, all leading up to the Christmas Eve services. We are blessed with an amazing community of talent and faith here in the heart of Paris.

Whether you are a member of the ACP, long-term resident of Paris and occasional ACP guest or a visitor just passing through Paris for a few days, we hope you will experience a special Advent and Christmas season with us. And, as this is a double edition of the Spire for December and January, we wish you a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year and welcome you to worship with us at ACP in 2015.

A Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year to all,
Pam Bohl, ACP Council Moderator
More of You

Now available for purchase on iTunes

the new album by Still Point
Creating relationships
The Cameroonian Presbyterian Church
By Ursula Perrier

The ACP Mission Outreach program funds projects around the world. Sometimes a member of our congregation goes out to work in another country and sometimes the country comes to us.

In 2008, Marie Antoinette Ebene Ebene of the Cameroonian Presbyterian Church in Douala, Cameroon, approached the ACP. Her congregation was building its church and sought funding to help push construction forward. I was head of the Mission Outreach Committee at that time and the committee accepted her request. The ACP has continued to offer a modest donation every year since then. Today the roof is on; the windows are in place and the congregation worships in the new building. But extensive work still remains.

Through my experience as Mission Outreach lay leader for this church, I have learned that mission work is not just about programs and giving money wisely, but more about establishing a relationship, about exchange and moving beyond ourselves. The Trinity is a metaphor of God as exchange in an intimate and personal relationship.

Over the course of the years, Marie Antoinette and her husband, Samuel, both elders of their church and responsible for the building project, have visited Paris and worshipped at the ACP many times. They even lived in Paris for a year. This has allowed my husband and me and some members of MOC to become closer and establish an ongoing friendship with them.

Because most of the parishioners are poor and church building is expensive, the construction has been spread out over many years. This undertaking is a tribute to the parishioners’ dedication and perseverance. Slowly but surely, they have never lost sight of their goal to attract large numbers of people who are looking for a modern environment where they can develop spiritually.

The ACP donation goes to the construction of a church building. But the building in fact is secondary. Our donation is about God sending his people in Cameroon to do his work to receive his kingdom. Putting down a floor whose only purpose is to support those feet that carry out God’s work is not exciting, but it is a tangible way of being present and participating God’s reign.

The ACP’s contribution boosts the seemingly endless fundraising process and it shows the members of the Cameroonian congregation that we support their project, that the church members are not alone. While ACP has a stewardship campaign every year, the Cameroonian Church has one every month. Mid-year they have a “super-duper” fundraiser. The members are divided into three groups and there is a sort of competition to see which group can outdo the fourth group, that is, the ACP donation. We set the standard.

The members are grateful to God to have accomplished what they have and to the ACP for our unrelenting support, spiritual and financial. In fact, their membership is growing so fast that they have started a new “chapel”. Do you know what it is called? You guessed it: The American Church in Paris!

Marie-Antoinette tells me that the members of her church consider me the godmother of their parish, an ambassador to God (through prayer) and to the ACP for them. They pray for me and I want you to know that they also pray for our church and members. They never stop thanking us for the care we show toward them through our donation and prayer.

Marie-Antoinette just wrote to say how touched she was in 2011 when Pastor Scott blessed her during our Sunday service and offered her a candle to light her way as she headed back to Cameroon. I am moved that she has treasured this blessing in her heart. I am moved by the Cameroonian parishioners’ gratitude. Mission work is truly about spiritual and caring exchange.
What to do with nearly 1,000 headphones?

A gift heard around the world

By Carolyn Bouazouni

This summer the ACP received a very generous donation of nearly 1,000 sets of in-ear headphones from the Bose Corporation, for free distribution however we wish to the ACP and our missions and mission partners. Imagine 1,000 headphones.

Pastor Scott turned the gift over to the Mission Outreach Committee, and we got right to work deciding how to spread the blessing. We reviewed all of our local and global missions and mission partners, as well as internal ACP groups, to determine which organizations and groups would best benefit from receiving some of the headphones. As we contacted each of the identified groups to ask if they were interested, the responses were all a resounding YES!

The headphones are literally going around the world. The large majority of the headphones, 75%, are going to computer classes or computer labs at orphanages and schools through our missionaries and global missions. The balance is going to local missions and some are going to programs right here at the ACP. Here is the breakdown of how this wonderful gift is being distributed:

45% of the headphones are going to our missionaries:
Patti Lafage at the Rafiki Village in Uganda, for use in their school’s computer lab
Destiny Ryales of Excellence Computer Technology Foundation in Ghana, to use in her computer classes
Anna Cobbina of The Living Truth Foundation in Ghana, for students in local schools
Michael Beeman of the Tearfund UK in South Sudan, for computer classes for displaced families

30% to our other global missions:
King’s Garden Children’s Home in the Philippines, for computer classes at the orphanage
Deep Griha in Pune, India, for children and staff at the orphanage
Gabon, for our partner organization that our youth group visited in 2012
Our Habitat for Humanity team that worked in Bulgaria this past summer

15% to local missions:
Tiffany Musica, as they share music in hospitals, rest homes and prisons around Paris
Foyer de Grenelle for their computer classes here in Paris

And 10% to the ACP!

For use in our music programs here at the church

Most of the headphones going to the international destinations went in suitcases with our missionaries or members as they travelled to and from the international destinations this summer. The last bag is waiting to be picked up by Michael Beeman when he visits us from South Sudan in late December.

Here is one of the thank you’s we have already received: “Here at Rafiki we have made very good use of all the earphones and are most grateful to Bose and ACP. Our teachers have been able to study more computer-aided courses, faster and more easily thanks to that wonderful gift.” - From Patti Lafage at the Rafiki Village in Uganda

The Mission Outreach Committee has been absolutely thrilled to participate in spreading this wonderful blessing to people around the world. A huge thank you to the Bose Corporation for making this gift to the ACP. Many lives are being blessed by their generosity.
Message from Michael Beeman

Michael Beeman was an active member at the American Church in Paris from 2009 through 2011. He still calls it his home church. Michael currently works in South Sudan for a faith-based, relief and development agency headquartered in London.

The Christmas and New Year holidays in South Sudan are marked by uncertainty. About one year ago, the country fell into disarray when political differences turned violent. Since then, over 1.5 million men, women and children have fled their homes to other parts of the country, and a majority of the country’s population do not have enough food to feed their family.

Christmas brings us a reminder of God’s grace in turbulent times. Amidst the violence, the hunger and the poverty, God has revealed Himself through Jesus of Nazareth. In conversations, I have been asked uncomfortable questions about South Sudan. “Do you think the land is cursed?” However uncomfortable, I understand where it comes from: in so much violence, hunger, and poverty, what hope is there?

I confess that this question crosses my mind. Yet, I see Christmas as the reminder of God’s grace in such circumstances. I recall hearing Jurgen Moltmann preach on faith and hope at ACP in March 2010. “Faith sees in the resurrection of Christ not the eternity of heaven, but the future of the very earth on which his cross stands. It sees in him the future of the very humanity for which he died. That is why it finds the cross the hope of the earth.”¹

For me, I have seen God’s grace in mending relationships. South Sudan's Committee for National Healing, Peace, and Reconciliation held a 4-week conference in October to initiate this process. Local leaders from all 10 states in the country convened in the southern city of Yei to begin building bridges. These are individuals from communities that have been in opposition for years who committed to restoring relationships broken by conflict.

In Juba, Confident Children out of Conflict (CCC) has helped many boys and girls traumatized by conflict restart their lives in a safe environment. Girls at CCC get access to basic education and commit to developing new skills. Boys, like Mark, receive direction when family has been lost — all of this inspired by Christ’s compassion.

God is present in this. In a country marred by conflict for five decades, He is mobilizing people for His Kingdom little by little. In 2015, we pray for the leaders who will guide the process of healing and reconciliation, and for the people who will do so individually with the widows, the orphans, and many vulnerable others.

Base Camp, Bonn

By Anastassia Sharpe
ACP youth ministry intern

When you walk out of church on Sunday, filled with the Spirit, refreshed and inspired, has it ever occurred to you to wonder how the pastors themselves get inspired? One of the ways they recharge is to attend pastoral conferences, including an annual event organized each year by the Association of International Churches in Europe and the Middle East (AICEME). The American Church in Paris is a member of AICEME, affiliated with 20 other sister churches.

On Thursday, 6 November, Pastor Dan Haugh, Eliot Berger, one of ACP’s graduating lycée students, and I headed off to an AICEME youth conference, for fellowship and training. We met at Gare du Nord with our cold weather gear and luggage in tow, and arrived late afternoon in Bonn, Germany at the "Base Camp," our digs for the long weekend.

Our home away from home was a youth hostel in an old warehouse, full of renovated RV’s, each with a different theme. I got the "space shuttle," replete with track lighting that strobed rainbows, and Dan and Eliot got the long train, each with a bunk in one of the cars. Slowly, folks trickled in from Oslo, Stockholm, Berlin, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Bonn, London and The Hague, all from our sister AICEME churches.

We kicked things off with evening worship, making our fun and funky hostel into a sanctuary, with songs of praise and the word proclaimed. Rev. Kelly Capps shared a meditation that set the tone for the weekend, explaining that we are all on this journey together.

Day two held its own treasures. We heard from Kendra, the youth intern in Dusseldorf, from Will, the youth pastor in Surrey, from the youth pastor in Berlin, and myself. Kendra hosted the morning session, and the rest of us shared our testimonies Friday night in the American Protestant Church in Bonn. We shared our stories as a way of demonstrating to the youth that they are not alone on their journeys, for many have gone before them.

Between our morning and evening sessions, we had some free time in Bonn and were blessed by a delicious dinner of about 15 homemade soups from the Bonn church chefs. Things started feeling really cozy after a full day together; we were learning each other’s names and stories, starting to feel more at home.

Day three consisted of further sessions, plus a hike, a cookout, closing worship, ice cream sundaes, and a dance party. The morning session focused on topics from science to sex, as the pastors took brief segments to try and share the good word on these subjects. We then hiked up a mountain in Bonn to some ancient ruins. The view was beautiful, and so clear we could see all the way to Cologne. We had a mountaintop moment together as we gathered around for a quick lesson and prayer before our descent. By the end of our last night, the strangers we met on Thursday felt like family.

So Sunday morning arrived with a twinge of sadness. Members of the American Protestant Church in Bonn joined us at the hostel for worship, after which we all went our separate ways. Seeing the way God unites those from all over and brings them together like family was a warm reminder of how we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. And base camp was such a hit, that we are already looking forward to next year’s conference!
What we are looking for is what is looking. ~St. Francis of Assisi

But when you are looking for information about activities at the American Church in Paris, head to our website: acparis.org

Prayer Chain Team

Do you have a prayer request for our Prayer Team?

If so, please forward your prayer by e-mail 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.

Multicultural Couples Group

20h, Friday 12 December in the ACP Thurber Room

Calling all multicultural couples: You are warmly invited to bring a dish to share and join the fun. There is always great fellowship and fascinating cross-cultural discussion.

For more information contact Monica Bassett or Anja Wyss at multicultural@acparis.org

What’s going on? Tune in: ACP Today

Have you tuned in to ACP Today, the American Church in Paris’ radio show yet? Join us on Mondays at 20h45 - this month on 1 and 15 December. The 45-minute program is an exciting and inspiring mix of music, interviews, sermon highlights, and discussion on hot topics.

We’re at 100.7 FM, Radio Fréquence Protestante, and we broadcast especially for friends who may be housebound 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.

What better way to keep in touch with the ACP family and learn about the latest ACP news? All our shows are downloaded within 48 hours to our website, at www.acparis.org/acptoday. Faith Talk from Paris - plug us in during your morning commutes.

If you have any questions, comments, ideas or would like to contribute to the show, be sure to contact us at acptoday@acparis.org.
## ACP Spire Diary – December 2014/January 2015

### events, meetings and concerts

(please check www.acparis.org/diary for updates)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Events and Monthly Meetings and Concerts</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACP Mitten Tree</strong></td>
<td>Sunday 7 Dec - Sunday 21 Dec</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Michelle Wahila associatepastor @acparis.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone is invited to bring new mittens, hats, gloves, and scarves to decorate the Christmas tree in the Theater. These items will brighten our church space, and then will be donated to our mission partner, Foyer de Grenelle, for those in need during this chilly time of year.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friday Mission Lunch (volunteers needed)</strong></td>
<td>Friday 12 Dec</td>
<td>10h00-14h00</td>
<td>The American Cathedral</td>
<td>Kristie Worrel fridaymissionlunch @acparis.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Friday a hot, nutritious meal is prepared for the homeless and needy. ACP is responsible for the meal on the second Friday of each month, but we are grateful for help with cooking, serving, and cleaning up every Friday. If you are interested and available, contact Kristie Worrel.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Multicultural Couples Potluck Dinner</strong></td>
<td>Friday 12 Dec</td>
<td>20h00</td>
<td>Thurber Room</td>
<td>Monica Bassett &amp; Anja Wyss multicultural @acparis.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship and discussion on topics such as raising bicultural/ bilingual children and cultural differences. Bring a dish to share.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Writers’ Group</strong></td>
<td>Saturday 13 Dec</td>
<td>14h30 - 16h30</td>
<td>Room G2</td>
<td>Tendayi Chirawu <a href="mailto:writers@acparis.org">writers@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candlelight Christmas Concerts</strong></td>
<td>Saturday 13 Dec</td>
<td>17h00 &amp; 20h00</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td>Fred Gramann <a href="mailto:music@acparis.org">music@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating choirs include the ACP Adult Choir and Chamber Choir, the ACP Bronze Ringers, Le Choeur d'Enfants SOTTO VOCE and Le Jeune Choeur SOTTO VOCE. Tickets available at reception.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intergenerational Christmas Pageant</strong></td>
<td>Sunday 14 Dec</td>
<td>11h00</td>
<td>Worship Service Sanctuary</td>
<td>Allison Wheeler childrensworship @acparis.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Christmas Party</strong></td>
<td>Sunday 14 Dec</td>
<td>15h00-17h00</td>
<td>Catacombs</td>
<td>Anastassia Sharpe youthintern @acparis.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atelier Concert</strong> - Free admission, with free-will offering The Brown &amp; Breen Piano Duo, with Russell Smith, didgeridoo. Works by Grainer, Sculthorpe, Gershwin, Edwards, Westlake, Kats-Chernin. The concert includes an amazing new work for two pianos and didgeridoo.</td>
<td>Sunday 14 Dec</td>
<td>17h00</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td>Fred Gramann <a href="mailto:music@acparis.org">music@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACP Today: Faith Talk in Paris radio show</strong></td>
<td>Monday 15 Dec</td>
<td>20h45 - 21h30</td>
<td>100.7 FM Radio Fréquence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tune in for inspiring music, interviews, and sermon</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For more information on weekly Bible Studies and meetings, including BSF International, Moms in Prayer International, and Youth and Young Adult events, please go to “What’s on at ACP” at www.acparis.org.
### Special Events and Monthly Meetings and Concerts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Adults Christmas Party</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday 16 Dec</td>
<td>19h30-21h30</td>
<td>Catacombs</td>
<td>Anastassia Sharpe youthintern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Movie Discussion Group</strong></td>
<td>Thursday 18 Dec</td>
<td>19h30</td>
<td>Room G2</td>
<td>Rebecca Brite <a href="mailto:movies@acparis.org">movies@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie selection is <em>Nightcrawler (Night Call), Kill the Messenger (Secret d'état), Calvary, Mr Turner.</em> See any or all at your leisure and join the group for discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sandwich Ministry</strong></td>
<td>Friday 19 Dec</td>
<td>19h30</td>
<td>Jurie Ane Feleo</td>
<td>homelesssandwich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich preparation: Friday 19h30 at ACP</td>
<td>Saturday 20 Dec</td>
<td>13h30</td>
<td>Jurie Ane Feleo</td>
<td>homelesssandwich</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandwich distribution: Saturday 13h30, meet at ACP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jurie Ane Feleo</td>
<td>homelesssandwich</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>All Church Christmas Party</strong></td>
<td>Saturday 20 Dec</td>
<td>17h00-19h00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Women’s Gathering</strong></td>
<td>Sunday 21 Dec</td>
<td>12h30</td>
<td>Kim Herr</td>
<td><a href="mailto:women@acparis.org">women@acparis.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Christmas Tea and Cookie Exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Christmas Eve</strong></td>
<td>Wednesday 25 Dec</td>
<td>12h00-15h30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church building closed in the afternoon.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Christmas Eve Services</strong></td>
<td>Wednesday 24 Dec</td>
<td>16h00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fellowship Cookie Reception in Thurber Room</td>
<td></td>
<td>16h45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Musical Prelude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19h00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Candlelight Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19h30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Musical Prelude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21h30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Candlelight Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22h00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fellowship Cookie Reception in Thurber Room</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Christmas Day</strong></td>
<td>Thursday 25 Dec</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church building closed for public holiday.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>New Years Day</strong></td>
<td>Thursday 1 Jan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Church building closed for public holiday.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alpha Course Launch Party</strong></td>
<td>Thursday 15 Jan</td>
<td>18h30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thurber Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ever wanted to explore the meaning of life or ask challenging questions about the Christian faith? Alpha is an opportunity for anyone to explore the Christian faith in a relaxed, informal and friendly way.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Women’s Retreat</strong></td>
<td>Friday 30 Jan</td>
<td>19h30-21h30</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:women@acparis.org">women@acparis.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rooted in God’s Love - Our Source and Our Fruit</td>
<td>Saturday 31 Jan</td>
<td>9h30-16h30</td>
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<tr>
<td>guest speaker Debby Bellingham, author of <em>The Mentored Life</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Curious about Christianity?
Got questions about the meaningfulness of life?
You’re not the only one.

Find out more at the Alpha Launch Party
19h30, Thursday 15 June
American Church in Paris, 65 quai d’ Orsay, 75007 Paris

Alpha is a 10-week course of exploring different aspects of the Christian faith. No question is too simple or too tough, and everyone is welcome. For more information, contact Pastor Michelle at associatepastor@acparis.org or see our website at www.acparis.org