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On the cover: The ACP is blessed with two stained glass windows that depict the Christmas story. These are from the window in the chapel, that the Twyeffort family donated for the church’s 100th birthday, in 1957. They are unusual in that they portray daily activities of the Holy Family.
"Happy New Year!" That’s what we say on the first Sunday of Advent in worship... It’s disorienting, but the Christian calendar reframes time. The first Sunday of Advent is the first day of the New Year in the liturgical calendar, or the Christian way of marking the chronological and theological dimensions of reality. In these increasingly dark days of literally less light in the natural world, and of the fear and anxiety around the probability of more terrorist attacks in our local world, the Church offers the prophetic proclamation of what is, and is to come, according to the promises of God in Jesus Christ.

Most of us think of Advent as a time of anticipating the Christmas celebration of the birth of Jesus, and in a sense this is true. We read the prophets who told of the coming Messiah, and hear John the Baptist echoing Isaiah’s voice crying in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord!”

The early Christians celebrated Christmas on 25 December since at least the third century CE, and is the date the Romans believed (incorrectly) to be the winter solstice, the darkest day of the year. The Christians reimagined and reinterpreted the Roman pagan holiday, Natalis solis invicti. (1) Our ancestors meant to proclaim clearly that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5).

This year in Advent we will be reflecting on different songs of the church, entering a new liturgical year with our theme verse taken from Colossians 3:16-17: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” In the coming year we will celebrate the way music can communicate the good news to our hearts, and how it is impossible to imagine giving God our worship and praise without singing or music!

“Music is the space between notes,” Claude Debussy once said. But perhaps in another way of thinking of music, sound notes reframe space and time to bring forth something beautiful and meaningful, which takes sound and silence and organizes it so that it is not just noise, but beautiful art?

In October the Marcus Roberts Trio, perhaps the greatest jazz trio in the United States, played here for the American University’s inauguration of the Center for Critical Democracy Studies. Professor Greg Clark gave some interesting interpretations of jazz as a way of interpreting community. I read recently that “Jazz musicians often insist that the notes they choose not to play are as important as the ones they do. Music is tightly bound up with expectation, they say: You hear a sequence of notes in a familiar scale, and you anticipate the rest of the progression. But then, ha-ha! The musician doesn’t give it to you, and that absence of comfortable resolution is what transforms bromide into art.” (2)

Perhaps Advent is a bit like jazz, in that we enter into silence and dark spaces of reality, trusting that God will speak to us in a new way and be present to us in a new light. It is a time to pray and reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation, that “the Word became flesh and lived among us...full of grace and truth.” That is a note that changes reality and gives us hope even in this time of terror and violence.

Please also note that will give thanks this month for the ministry of the Rev. Michelle Wahila and honor her in worship on Sunday, 20 December. We will also hold a congregational meeting to vote on the recommendation of the Associate Pastor Search Committee on Sunday, 6 December. As we move through this season of Advent and prepare for Christmas celebrations, we also are glad to offer the

.../...
Longest Night service on Monday, 21 December (the actual winter solstice) in addition to our traditional candlelight concerts, pageant, and Christmas Eve services.

As we begin a new year together, I encourage you to reframe the time with renewed faith and trust, with renewed prayers for our city and all our neighbors, and a new commitment to share the light of Christ in this world through loving words and generous actions. May our lives truly be a sweet sound and in harmony with the angels’ proclamation of “good news of great joy for all the people!”

Thoughts from the Rev. Dr. Scott Herr, continued

In Christ,

.../... Thoughts from the Rev. Dr. Scott Herr, continued


With love & gratitude: Michelle

By Allison Wheeler

Part of living the expat life means getting used to a near constant “changing of the guard”: good friends leave, and new friends arrive. And while Pastor Michelle Wahila won’t be leaving our city, she will very soon be finishing her time with us as the Associate Pastor of the American Church in Paris. And when that time comes, we will miss her very much.

Michelle’s talent, commitment, and care have been evident in all aspects of her ministry. From her work with the missions teams to her support of Community Life, Michelle has nurtured so many vital areas of our church. As the Director of Children’s Ministries, I can personally attest that she has been a tireless advocate for the children and families of ACP, guiding me and our volunteers as we have worked to grow and solidify our Children’s Worship and family ministries. The family Christmas Eve service, as well as our recent Toussaint family worship service, have demonstrated just how richly we have been blessed by her creativity and her deep theological insight.

In addition to her steady and visionary leadership, Michelle has never backed down from being “in the trenches” with her volunteers. When we needed signs painted for VBS, she put her crafting skills to immediate use (she paints a quite impressive parrot, by the way).

When Carol Brown needed extra hands cleaning up after the many wonderful Community Life events that they have coordinated together, Michelle rolled up her sleeves and asked to be passed the dish soap. No job was ever too small, and her humility, as well as her real joy for working in cooperative ministry, is only a small part of why she will be deeply missed.

Michelle has become more than my boss. She has become my mentor, and more importantly, my friend. Her impact on my own life has been invaluable. As a seminarian new to church work, she has encouraged me on every step of my journey with warmth, patience, and the occasional strong cup of coffee. She has touched my life deeply, as I know she has touched the lives of so many others. And she has done it all while being an exceptional mother to her boys, Conner and Marcello, as well as a supportive and loving partner to her husband, Kevin. While we will miss her here, we send her into this new phase of life, one focused more exclusively on family, with our deep love and gratitude for the time she has given to us.
Dear friends,

At the close of 2015, I feel particularly reminiscent this year. As my time at ACP draws to a close, I am reminded of this verse from Thessalonians. It has served as a foundational piece of scripture for my time among you and service with you.

These words were Paul’s reminder to the Thessalonian church of the “why.” How we do ministry and what we do in ministry is important, but it is the “why” that is the driving force, the core, the heart of the “how” and the “what” of ministry and church.

Why? Because we loved you so much.

What? We were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well.

How? Over the past three and a half years, I pray that I have shared my life and the life of my family, with all of you in ways that show the Gospel, point always to the good news, and that exemplify the love of God. After all, it is his great, generous and overwhelming love that allows us to love one another, and to be the Body of Christ together.

This month will be a very busy month in the life of ACP (like any other great month around here!). I do hope that even amidst the busyness of this wonderful season, I will have the chance to greet you, to thank you, and to say goodbye. Our family has grown in our faith immensely through our time here, and for this great gift, we are truly thankful. You have all been a part of this gift!

Pray for your new pastor, and his/her family. Support them endlessly, protect them fiercely, and love them in abundance. They will need you as they adjust to life in France and life as a part of the ACP community. Never begin a phrase with, “We used to do it this way” or “Pastor Michelle did this....”

Instead, open doors for your new Associate – allow innovation and creativity that will lead you into newness. Let the Holy Spirit surprise you with “what’s next.” I am praying for you and with you as God ushers you into this next season of life together.

I came across our 2012 “Moving Day” picture not too long ago. I was amazed to see how little my boys were and how excited but also how “deer in headlights” we looked. We sold our house in just 24 hours on faith – that we had been called to France by God... Here we are, three and a half years later! We are the same, and yet very different. We are stronger, older (and wiser?), and have grown in love for one another, for the Lord, and have been over and over again amazed by the work the Holy Spirit here.

While it is a bittersweet departure for me, I will hold you in my heart and I continue to believe in the many ministries of ACP that are changing lives by God’s grace. I know that as you remain steadfast in your worship and pour love into one another’s lives that your light will grow ever brighter. May you remain a Beacon on the Seine and a house of prayer for all people.

Benedictions,
Michelle

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Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. 
-1 Thessalonians 2:8
Bible readings for December

6 December  Second Sunday of Advent
Malachi 3:1-4
Luke 1:68-79
Philippians 1:3-11
Luke 3:1-6

13 December  Third Sunday of Advent
Zephaniah 3:14-20
Isaiah 12:2-6
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:7-18

20 December  Fourth Sunday of Advent
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Isaiah 7:10-16
Matthew 1:18-25
Romans 1:1-7

24 December  Christmas Eve
Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

27 December  First Sunday after Christmas
1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26
Psalm 148
Colossians 3:12-17
Luke 2:41-52

Welcome to the new Visiting Pastor(s)

The Reverends Jim and Odette Lockwood-Stewart

Jim grew up in Santa Monica, California. He studied at the University of Göttingen, Germany, UCLA, and the Claremont School of Theology. He was ordained an Elder in the United Methodist Church in 1971.

He served as pastor of United Methodist Congregations in Southern and Northern California for four decades. Before his retirement in 2007, he served for six years as Superintendent of the Bay View District, overseeing the work of 70 United Methodist congregations in San Francisco’s East Bay.

Congregations he has served have initiated community counseling centers, urban redevelopment projects, homeless shelter services, and child care centers, and have been involved in prison ministries, seeking to live out their faith in the world.

Jim is a musician, a life-long bassoonist, playing for the last seven years as a member of the University of California Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, including their 2014 Eastern European Tour with concerts in Vienna, Prague, Bratislava, and Budapest.

Odette grew up in Connecticut and California, attending seminary at Boston University School of Theology. She currently is on the Faculty of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley where she also directs PSR’s Field Education and Contextual Learning.

She has led congregations and campus ministries for over thirty-five years as a United Methodist Elder and has given leadership at international, national, and regional levels of the church and ecumenical associations.

She currently serves on the Board of the Glide Foundation in San Francisco and The Dean’s Advisory Board of Boston University.

Jim and Odette have four grown children whose families live in Maryland, Oklahoma, and California, and seven wonderful grandchildren.
Thresholds of change
By Jay McKell
Visiting Pastor

“What!”

“Stop!”

“Wait a minute ... no, make that a month or more.”

Those were the thoughts which came to mind when my wife, Elizabeth, suggested that I go up into the attic and bring down the few Christmas decorations we brought with us to Paris. It seems like only yesterday we were happily waving the French flag and joining the city in celebrating Bastille Day.

Now it is December. The sunlight is shorter. The winds are colder. And we, well, we are feeling rather sad as the time for our departure quickly approaches. All too soon we will be heading home and the new Visiting Pastor, Jim Lockwood-Stewart and his wife, Odette, will be arriving to experience the many blessings that accompany being a part of this family of faith. I encourage you to welcome them warmly. Open your hearts and your doors to them so that their Paris experience will be one that is characterized by friendship and growing faith.

While I am wishing we had longer here with you, I am also aware that time is like an ever-flowing stream (to borrow the words from that great hymn, “O God, Our Help in Ages Past, Our Hope for Years to Come”). A new day dawns and soon the same can be said for a new year also approaching, when we will find ourselves hanging up a new calendar.

The new year is but one of many reminders that change is constant. It is one of the few certainties of life. But also there are times when change is one of life’s major challenges. In light of our upcoming transition I have thought about that reality a lot lately. The recent frightening events in Paris and Mali have added to this awareness, for who would have expected that Friday night, 13 November, would become what it did.

There have been numerous occasions when I, like you, have stood on the threshold of change. A relocation (like moving to Paris or back to the States), a loss of a job or a friend or a family member, deteriorating health, retirement ... the list can be quite long. Many times we face a future that is unfamiliar and perhaps frightening. Think about Mary when she learned that she was pregnant. Think about the disciples when Jesus first said to them, “Follow me.” Mary was frightened but said, “Let it be.” The disciples cast aside the security of their fishing nets and off they went, having no idea what the future held for them.

I have been through a great many changes in my lifetime. So have you. Admittedly some of those changes were not welcomed. They were unsettling, even frightening. Where was my next paycheck coming from? Would I be able to find new friends ... a new church ... a new purpose? Those are big, important questions.

The answer is “Yes!” As I look back on my long and good life I have repeatedly been reminded that God takes care of us. That is a constant truth. It doesn’t mean we will avoid troubles. There will be plenty of them, some of which will assault your soul. But still, God is faithful in seeing us through whatever wildernesses life might lead us. So as Elizabeth and I prepare to leave this ministry and make our way back home with little certainty about what’s next, I remind myself and you and all the people of Paris of those words so frequently found in scripture, “Be not afraid.”

P.S. The phrase "Be not afraid" appears 365 times in scripture. In other words on every single day of the year God tells us, "Be not afraid." Remember that every single day of the year.
On Saturday, November 28, almost 200 guests from many nations gathered at ACP to share a traditional American Thanksgiving Dinner. The menu included roasted turkey (27 kg), sage and celery stuffing (25 kg), mashed potatoes (50 kg), sweet potatoes (23 kg), green beans (17 kg), salad (9 kg), cranberry sauce and dinner rolls. A dessert buffet was offered along with coffee and tea. For the young (and young-at-heart) there was a showing of A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving and crafts.

In addition to the 200 ticketed guests, the volunteers also got meals, and we are so happy to have been able to provide 25 meals to the homeless through the efforts of Serve-the-City Volunteers. The STC team was out on the streets delivering the hot meals before the ticketed guests were seated. The STC team also delivered meals from the leftovers early the next week.

Over 70 wonderful people gave of their time and talents to make this event a success! These volunteers cooked all the dishes (except the turkeys), baked the desserts, set up and took down the tables, decorated the rooms, collected tickets, waited the tables, washed the dishes, and packed up leftovers. I would like thank all the volunteers for making this such a fabulous event and one of my most cherished memories of my time in Paris.

Listed here are the volunteers – words cannot say how grateful I am to have had the privilege to work with you:

Fabien, Kent, Kai-Marcel, Lisa, Chris, Teteh, Anne, Dana, Mary, Paul, Bruce, Daphne, Brian, Brigitte, Gina, Arlene, Kim, Matthew, Scott, Marie-Helene, Penny, Eloise, Pierre, Julia, Elodie, Elizabeth, Jay, Myriam, Jaime, Ginny, Camilla, Alba, Jeff, Aedan, Gavin, Jonathan, Laura, Torin, Yasmina, Billy, Gina, Agnes, Erik, Karen, Eric, Chloe, Louise, Lucie, Patti, Kandice, Madelaine, Kevin, Michelle, Allison, Dieynaba, Tim, Jurie Ane, Michel, Kennie, Jim, Marta, Mira, AJ, Valentina, Desiree, Pam, Anike, Denise, Tiana, Kristie, Raphaela, Emeline, Andrea, Emily, Heather, Amat and his security team. I hope I did not leave anyone out!

One of the most requested recipes was for the Sweet Potatoes – so here it is:

**Sweet Potatoes**

*(potate douce)*

- 3 kg, cooked and mashed
- 375 ml
- 1 tsp
- 340 gr
- 100 gr

**Topping:**

- 250 gr
- 170 gr
- 170 gr, melted

Add the milk, vanilla, sugar, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt to the mashed potatoes, mixing well. Add the butter, mixing completely. Fold in the eggs gently, do not beat or stir. Pour into a baking pan. Bake in a 175° oven for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and sprinkle (cover) the top with the Topping. Bake for an additional 10-15 minutes – do not burn topping.

Please help recycle this publication. When you’re through reading it, instead of tossing it in the bin, return it to the Welcome desk.
“It's the most wonderful time of the year!”

Walk into any store or restaurant or coffee shop in the city during the Christmas season and you are likely to hear Andy Williams’ familiar crooning voice over the sound system.

Gifts. Father Christmas. Christmas markets. Holiday parties. The list goes on and on. Everywhere you look the spirit of Christmas is inescapable. It’s hard not to get swept up with the joy of the holidays. For many of us we can hardly wait to put on our favorite Christmas album and decorate our homes with evergreen and ornaments.

And yet for so many people the very mention of the holidays is met with cringes and feelings of loneliness. The overwhelming presence of joy can feel suffocating for the many people who are experiencing a season of grief or loss.

It can be really tempting for us, especially as Christians during the Christmas season, to want to usher people out of the darkness and into the light. Jesus is the light of the world and we want to offer that light to others. I wonder if that’s the best response to someone who is suffering, however. For many people the last thing they want to hear is that everything is going to be okay, because even if that’s true, it’s not the reality in which they are currently living.

I am often reminded that Jesus experienced sadness during his life. In the shortest verse in all of Scripture we discover that “Jesus wept” for his friend who had just died. The irony is that Jesus knew that his friend would be raised from the dead soon, but the point was that when confronted with the sadness of his friends Jesus could think of no better response than to descend into that emotion with his friends.

He could have told them it was going to be okay. Which it was. He could have told them that he would raise Lazarus to life. Which he did. But Jesus doesn’t do that. He weeps. Because what those people needed at that time was not to have the Sunday school answer that Jesus makes everything okay, but that God was with them.

One of the names for Jesus is Emmanuel, which means “God with us.” In his moment with Lazarus’ friends Jesus opted not to give the trite Christian answers many of us want to give, even out of good intentions. Instead, he lives into his name, Emmanuel – God with us.

It’s out of this belief that God is with us in our deepest hurts and longings and pain that we wanted to create a safe space for people to go into the depths of this darkness and know that God is with us.

On the 21st of December all are welcome to the Longest Night service at the American Church in Paris. This time has been called the "long dark night of the soul" and "the winter of our discontent" in which memories of past experiences and the pain of present experiences can become overwhelming. During this service we can, with others, acknowledge the “dark” feelings we have during the holidays, the reasons for them, and look to God for healing and transformation. We will have some singing appropriate to the season, recognizing that this is not a season of joy for everyone. It is a time to remember that Emmanuel – the God who is with us – knows your pain and loves you unconditionally.

We think that, especially in light of the recent violence here in Paris and around the world, lots of people are feeling the weight of life during what is supposed to be a joyous time of the year. Our hope is that you and anyone you might know would find this service helpful in remembering that Jesus also wept and that it is important for each of us to also embrace Emmanuel, knowing that we are not alone in our pain and through the love of Christ our pain might someday be transformed.
Feeling safe at ACP: Our security restrictions

As an institution open to the public, the church must abide by strict security rules, even in the calmest of times. With the city operating under a state of emergency since 13 November, French police are extra-vigilant, and ask that we play our part as well.

Whether a regular at ACP or just a visitor, you’ll notice there is now a security guard on duty during ALL opening hours, to check bags and to check out people. As this is in your interest, please have your bag open and ready and prepare to be as cooperative - and patient - as possible.

The security-locked door at the entrance to the Reception requires you to hit the buzzer to the left of the door, look into the camera and speak distinctly when the receptionist asks you to identify yourself. It helps a lot if you provide your name and which activity you’re taking part in.

Don’t leave bags lying around, of course, and if you see one which has no apparent owner, report it immediately to the security guard, or on Sunday, to the usher and/or the desk receptionist.

Be vigilant, look around you and if you see anyone suspicious report it to the security guard, Sunday usher and/or the desk receptionist.

Most importantly, don’t panic. Do yourself and those around you a favor and think before acting or reacting to an unexpected incident. Nerves are running high and we all need to help everyone around us to keep their cool, to soothe tempers, and generate a strong, faithful sense of assurance.

Make 2016 your best year yet!

Life zooms by at an amazing speed. It seems like yesterday I was changing diapers and now I am looking at college applications. Where did the time go? The time passes whether we do what is most important to us or not. We have all been given special gifts to use in our lives. If we don’t use them, the gifts remain dormant. The more we use them, the gifts grow and flourish, and we serve God and build our Christian community. Don’t let your life pass and leave you with only regrets. Take time to plan your year and actively use your gifts.

This goal-setting workshop will help you look at the big picture of your life to see what is truly important to you. We will work on setting specific goals in each of the domains of your life: spiritual, financial, family, relationships, career, and health. We will look at 5 key tools highly successful people use every day to stay on track and see how to add them to our life. In the end, you will have an action plan to achieve your priorities for 2016 and a strategy to stay on track to achieve your goals.

Don’t leave your success to chance or hope. Take charge and make 2016 your best year yet!

RSVP aliciaberberich@gmail.com or register at the acparis.org website. The American Church in Paris is sponsoring this workshop. Alicia Berberich regularly leads workshops on finding your spiritual gifts and goal setting in San Francisco and Paris. She is a life coach and mother.

To give anything less than your best, is to sacrifice the gift.
~Steve Prefontaine, runner

Goal-setting workshop

Saturday 16 January 2016, 9h-12h30 Room G7
American Church in Paris, donation: 25 euros

“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve on another with whatever gift each of you has received.” 1 Peter 4:10
On the Paris attacks
Rev. Jean-Christophe Bieselaar

When the Paris attacks began, Rev. Jean-Christophe Bieselaar, our ACP parish associate, was on call as the protestant chaplain for Hôpital Henri Mondor (APHP).

"These were war victims; it was war injuries," he says, recalling the shock of that evening.

"There is one lady I remember. And, honestly, I can't tell you why I remember her more than other people. She came into the ER, went straight to the welcome desk. And she said, 'I've heard that my son was brought to this hospital.' And she actually was leaning with both hands on the table — as if she was afraid to collapse if the news was bad."

Along with hundreds of other hospital staff around the city, Bieselaar was scrambled to an ER to help the injured and their families. Twenty-six seriously injured victims were brought to Hôpital Mondor, and two surgery units were working non-stop. As a chaplain, his role is to offer spiritual comfort to the sick and dying and their relatives, at times when medical or even psychological support is of limited use. On that evening, he worked until four o'clock in the morning, meeting victims and their families, and even helping out with practical tasks such as guiding families around the hospital.

It was a deeply shocking event, he said, but one which reminded him of his time working as a pastor in New York in 2001. On the day of 9/11 he happened to drive quite early in front of the World Trade Center towers on his way from New York to Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, PA.

When he finally reached I-95 he never imagined that the New York skyline would never look exactly the same. It took him nearly 6 hours to return to New York where Keiko was waiting for him. From his church in Queens, he saw smoke rising from the site of the Twin Towers for months.

Are the events of 9/11 in New York and those of 13 November in Paris similar? It was a question addressed by a number of journalists in New York City. Bieselaar says that he has noticed several differences in the way New Yorkers and Parisians responded to their tragedy.

"In New York, hospitals were ready to welcome the victims of the WTC — everyone was 'ready' in the ER and it remained rather quiet; few people actually came in, as many — too many - died when the towers collapsed. In Paris on 13 November, there was a continuous flow of badly hurt victims coming in — in Mondor hospital at the rate of one victim every 20 minutes or so."

He continued, “In New York City, the first Sunday after 9/11, churches were crowded to a point we had never seen. People were waiting outside churches, with a line stretching for several blocks. Obviously in New York people wanted to get back together as a community — a human community.” The response in France has been different, he says. “In Paris, perhaps it's too early, or perhaps it's a cultural difference. But we did not experience the same thing. We have seen more people [in the churches] but absolutely not to the extent of 9/11.”

"There is always a little bit in the French culture that — instead of looking at God as a refuge, saying 'God bless our country' ('God bless America' was seen virtually everywhere in New York boroughs following 9/11) — French prefer to ask questions such as 'where is God? And why did God allow these things to happen?'"

How can we reconnect to life after ministering to the victims and their relatives in grief? One of Jean-Christophe's friends was killed during the terrorist attacks.

First, protect yourself from images, especially non-stop TV broadcast. In order to be able to help and support, Jean-Christophe had to protect himself emotionally, and his first step on 9/11 and 13 Nov. was to turn off the TV. A friend of his, Christian psychologist Gary Collins, wrote: “Watching endless media reruns or commentary can arouse, rather than reduce anxiety. In addition, media consumption can lead to fear-inspiring addiction. This stuff is fascinating to watch.”

Second, draw from your spiritual resources, from your faith. Reading Scriptures, particularly the Psalms, and prayer are not resources for Sunday service only but for everyday life!

And last, get connected back to life — to the happy moments of life. One occasion that moved him personally was a marriage of a Chinese couple he officiated at The American Church in Paris just a few days after the attack. It gave him a sense of the future, he says. "This week there has been lots of death, trauma, anxiety, sadness. But then to see a young couple get married, to see them smile, full of hopes — it really blessed me. It gave me hope for all of us.”
THE LONGEST NIGHT

Monday
21 December
20h at ACP

The Longest Night Service of Worship is held before the longest and darkest night of the year - the Winter Solstice. This time has been called the "long dark night of the soul" and "the winter of our discontent" in which memories of past experiences and the pain of present experiences can become overwhelming. During this service we can, with others, acknowledge the "dark" feelings we have during the holidays, the reasons for them, and look to God for healing and transformation. We will have some singing appropriate to the season, recognizing that this is not a season of joy for everyone. It is a time to remember that Emmanuel – the God who is with us – knows your pain and loves you unconditionally.
The American Church Christmas Pageant
By Sarah Barton

This year marks my very first Christmas Pageant at the American Church, but certainly not the first one the children in the Youth Music Program have participated in, making me the rookie! All of the kids who I have the privilege to work with here at the American Church have been excitedly preparing for this year’s Christmas Pageant, Sunday 13 December, for weeks now. Along with the end-of-the-year extravaganza we are planning for May (see below), it is one of the biggest highlights of the year.

All the children, even the tiniest among us (age 4!) will be making a joyful noise in our pageant. The Angel and Junior Choirs will sing “The Friendly Beasts” together, the Advanced Handbells will delight with the strains of “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” and all the children will join in chorus for “The Little Drummer Boy.” We are so lucky to have a family trio singing “Mary Did You Know?” a contemporary Christmas favorite. We are even throwing in a little South American flair this year with the song “Mi burrito sabanero,” a song full of the joy of the Christmas season from the first note to the last.

As Allison Wheeler happily mentioned, there is something a little different this year: for the first time the Christmas Pageant music will be done completely by the children and youth. We have a wealth of talented kids involved in the Youth Music program, and they are honoured and proud to be able to sing and play for the entire pageant. We are so looking forward to 13 December and hope to see you there!

As noted above, the Youth Music Program is planning quite an extravaganza for our end of year concert on Saturday 28 May 2016! We would love to have you join us!

This year’s Spring Concert will allow for participation by anyone in the American Church of Paris and wider community, and will feature extended excerpts from three well-loved musicals:

The Sound of Music
Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat
Sister Act

In response to previous mention of this concert in another Spire article and through the ACP grapevine, we have quite a number of adults already signed on to participate with the youth in what promises to be a great, family-centered, fun-filled concert. We would love to have even more adults and children participate. If you would like information about upcoming rehearsals or just to find out more, please contact Sara Barton at ymusic@acparis.org

Christmas season events

ACP Candlelight Christmas Concerts
12 December, 17h and 20h

Intergenerational Nativity Pageant
13 December at the 11h service

Children’s Worship Family Christmas Party
13 December, 12h30

Longest Night Service
21 December, 20h

Christmas Eve services, 24 December
16h00 Family Service
19h30 Candlelight Service
22h00 Candlelight Service

Advent Calendar 2015

We invite you to participate in using 25 days of scripture as a way of preparing for the birth of our Savior. Found on our website, the scriptures are numbered (1-25 December), and feature a fun activity that you can do together as a family. References are provided for a more in depth reading of these special Advent verses. We hope that these verses and the activities will allow you the space to reflect on the birth of Christ together in new and joyful ways. See http://acparis.org.

Remember, you can order a Poinsettia plant to decorate the Sanctuary, and take it home after the Christmas Eve services. 20 euros.
It’s showtime!

By Karen Albrecht

Christmastime is Paris’s season for extravagant circus acts and big, blockbuster musicals. What better way to fend off the winter gloom than with some hyperbolic high-kicking and unregenerate razzle-dazzle? Be sure to check ahead regarding any special security measures that might apply this year.

Amaluna

Cirque du Soleil, renowned the world over for its amazing acrobatics, avant-garde aesthetics and eye-popping production values, comes to a big-top tent in the Parc de Bagatelle. This show begins with Queen Prospera’s celebration of her daughter’s coming of age, followed by a tempest (get it?), the arrival of shipwrecked young men and the princess’s quest for love and harmony. The story may ring a bell, but even Shakespeare’s fertile imagination could never have dreamed up moves like these. Spellbinding. Until 3 January, www.cirquedusoleil.com

Singin’ in the Rain

This stage version is closely based on the iconic 1952 film starring Gene Kelly. The story of silent film stars’ bumpy transition to the age of talkies is a pretext for a bevy of catchy, instantly recognizable show tunes. The music is performed by the Paris Chamber Orchestra, and the impressive battery of special effects includes: what else? An on-stage rainstorm. In English with French subtitles. Until 15 January, http://chatelet-theatre.com

Cats

Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical-based “Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats” by T.S. Eliot took London and New York by storm back in the 1980s, winning 7 Tony Awards and 2 Oliviers. This French version has been so popular with Parisians that its run at Théâtre Mogador has been extended until next summer. Its signature song may celebrate “Minuit“ rather than "Memory," but the mellifluous tribute to the moon is every bit as haunting. Until 5 July, www.catsthemusical.com/paris/

Bharati2

The sequel to the hit Bollywood-style stage musical picks up the story 18 years after the heroine’s wedding at the end of Part 1. Bharati travels to India with her westernized teenage daughter in tow. Plenty of madcap adventures ensue, accompanied of course by much singing, dancing and acrobatics, and complete with over-the-top Indian costumes. 12 January-14 February www.legrandrex.com

Rire

The new show at the landmark Cirque d’Hiver is good, old-fashioned circus, complete with tumblers, tigers, and trapeze artists, plus equestrian acts and even a colorful company of trained parrots. As the title (meaning "laughter") indicates, the accent is on light-hearted fun, with plenty of clowning around interspersed with the acrobatic thrills and chills. Until 6 March, www.circquedhiver.com

La Légende du Roi Arthur

After the Sun King, the French Revolution and Mozart, flamboyant musical producer Dove Attia takes on Camelot, in a mega-production playing at the cavernous Palais des Congrès. If you can handle Arthur, Guinevere, Morgana, and Merlin belting out bouncy pop tunes in French amidst lots of glitzy proto-medieval bling, this video-game-style extravaganza is for you. Until 16 January www.lalegendeduroiarthur.com
Chiens et chats
Ever wonder what it would be like to be a dog? Or just what the world looks like to a cat? This popular show at La Villette is your chance.

Step into a special booth that simulates the sensory experiences of our furry friends. Or learn to decipher animals’ body language and the various sounds they make. For young and old alike, it’s the cat’s meow.

Until 28 February. Online reservations recommended.

www.cite-sciences.fr

Florence - Portraits at the court of the Medicis
Plunge into the sumptuous world of 16th-century Florence, via exquisite paintings by Bronzino, Andrea del Sarto and other masters, gathered from Italy and all over Europe. Marvel at the intricate brushwork that lights up the fascinating faces, elaborately jeweled garments and even a pampered Florentine lapdog or two.


Do you speak djembe?
Every seat in the theater is set up with its very own African drum, so spectators participate in what could only be called a very hands-on way. On stage the kora, dundun, balafon and other traditional African instruments weave African rhythms, but also salsa and well-loved pop tunes, on a joyful journey to encourage the audience to "speak djembe."

La Cigale, through 27 December
http://doyouspeakdjembe.com

Who’s afraid of women photographers?
Twin expositions trace women’s contribution to the history of photography, with Part I (1839-1919) at L’Orangerie and Part II (1918-1945) across the river at Musée d’Orsay. In addition to women who contributed to Surrealism and other major artistic movements, the shows highlight the many unsung heroines who wielded their cameras in the UK, US, France, and Germany.

Until 24 January

Holiday sing-along
Come along and belt out your yuletide favorites, led by vivacious American singer Keri Chryst, with Josiah Woodson on guitar and piano.

"Rudolph" and rousing "Let it Snow" to an exuberant "Joy to the World," these classic carols will bring out the holiday spirit in even the most hardened Grinch.

Pavé d’Orsay, 19 December, 2.15-4.15pm
www.facebook.com/ArtsEmbassyInternational

Sepik
The Musée du Quai Branly is showcasing some 230 sculptures from the Sepik river valley in Papua New Guinea. The show explores various depictions of the founding ancestor figures revered by the Sepik people, in both their public and their "secret" forms.

Until 31 January,
www.quaibranly.fr

What’s up in Paris
December event listings
By Karen Albrecht

Who’s afraid of women photographers?
If you’ve walked across the street from the church to take a look at the schooner La Boudeuse, you probably noticed a fiery dragon painted on the prow. It was inspired by Captain Patrice Franceschi’s first ship, a proud two-masted wooden Chinese junk, with a fierce dragon-head decorating each side of her prow. For many years he had longed to "sail the seven seas" in the name of science on a ship of his own but had to wait until he found just the right vessel and could manage to buy it. He bought the wooden junk in Cambodia in 1998, and named it La Boudeuse, for the reason explained last month (in homage to the French explorer Bougainville).

After more than two years of scientific expeditions and adventures, mainly in Indonesian waters, the ship was en route to France when suddenly, one night in March 2001, she struck an unidentified floating object and sank off the coast of Malta. All the crew members were saved but nearly everything else on board was lost, including the results of all the expeditions. Captain Franceschi swore he would not be defeated by this tragic shipwreck and vowed to continue the expeditions as soon as he could find another seaworthy vessel. The schooner you see on the Seine today was purchased in Sweden in 2003 and renamed La Boudeuse, and the famous dragon was painted on the prow of this new ship in remembrance of the junk that had sunk. Thus the present is a continuation of the past.

The captain kept his promise to continue performing scientific, humanitarian and environmental expeditions, sailing around the world for three years under the auspices of UNESCO, covering nearly 60,000 miles and bringing back the results of their discoveries to enrich the collections of French natural history museums.

A few years later, in 2009, while docked in Paris at the Quai de Bercy, Captain Franceschi received an official “Lettre de Mission” from the French government’s Ministry of Ecology, mandating the ship to embark scientists from various disciplines and do research on environmental issues along the eastern coast of South America. This mission, called Terre-Océan, was supposed to last two years but ended after only nine months because the funds promised by the government didn’t come through, obliging the ship to return to France with only the skeleton crew she could afford to pay.

Now back in Paris, the captain and the ship’s administrators are working together with the non-profit ACTED and the organizers of COP21 to develop future environmental missions around the world, which will be announced in the coming weeks.

Patrice Franceschi, a young man of 60, has lived the equivalent of several lives and keeps moving forward to new experiences. He was the first man to fly around the world in an ultralight craft, and in 909 days (1984-87). He’s an honorary president of the French Explorers Society and holds a degree in philosophy. He has produced over a dozen documentary films, written over 30 books (novels, essays, poetry, short stories) and traveled to war-torn areas of the globe, like Afghanistan and Syria. Through it all, he remains faithful to his personal values, including independence, freedom from commercial ties, perseverance against all odds, respect for others, and sharing ideas through writing and by meeting the most diverse kinds of people all over the world.

La Boudeuse is now open for public visits every Saturday, in French. They take place every hour on the hour from 10h to 13h and from 14h to 17h. Each visit lasts an hour and is free of charge (though visitors can leave a free-will offering at the end of the visit). Once again, volunteers from the French Tall Ships Association (Amis des Grands Voiliers) are serving as guides on a rotating basis, so I am helping out part of the time.

**On Saturday, 19 December at 15h, I will provide a tour in English. Please come along for a visit.**
Some 40,000 people, from national delegates and journalists to diplomats and heads of state, are descending on Paris’s northern suburbs in early December to discuss what to do about our planet’s rapidly changing climate.

Activists had hoped that hundreds of thousands more would fill the streets of the city proper on 29 November, the eve of this year’s big climate conference, and on 12 December, the day after its closure. But in the wake of the 13 November terrorist attacks, police rescinded approval of these two scheduled Parisian marches.

Dozens of demonstrations urging strong government action on climate change are expected in cities around the world as the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN climate treaty gets under way in Le Bourget, north of Paris. Local activists have called for marchers to defy the police ban and add their voices to the worldwide call for effective, binding action at COP21, as the conference is known.

Police and the military counter that the November attacks have made it impossible for their forces, already stretched thin since the terrorist strike last January, to ensure security both at Le Bourget and at protests in town. Yet such protests and similar events have long been the only place the voices of ordinary people can be heard in the climate change debate.

Some Paris events for the general public will still be held, especially during the week of 7-11 December. Thus, the Centquatre venue in the 19th arrondissement will become a “Climate Action Zone” that week, hosting films, debates and other information events, including daily updates on the COP21 negotiations as countries strive to reach agreement on action to reduce fossil fuel use. See www.104.fr/english for practical info on the venue.

Also expected to be maintained is the “Citizen Climate Summit” scheduled the weekend of 5-6 December in Montreuil, just east of Paris, featuring a kind of trade fair of alternative approaches to energy use, agriculture, transport, food, finance, and so on; see https://alternatiba.eu/en/global-village-of-alternatives for further details. Meals, concerts and other diversions are planned as well.

Coalition Climat21, an umbrella organization of activist groups that is involved in both the Centquatre and Montreuil events, is also encouraging a range of artistic installations and informal gatherings in private businesses and homes along what would have been the route of the march from République to Nation.

In addition, Coalition Climat21, Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, France Nature Environnement, and the Nicolas Hulot Foundation launched a digital tool, March4Me, using Facebook to enable people in France to participate virtually in the marches that will still be going on around the world despite the French bans. The website www.march4me.org, giving access to this tool, was expected to be activated by 25 November, a few days before COP21 opened.

As had been widely expected, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration recently announced that “The globally averaged temperature over land and ocean surfaces for October 2015 was the highest for October since record keeping began in 1880.” The year as a whole is well on track to be the warmest ever recorded, just as 2014 was before it. Indeed, nine out of the ten warmest years on record have occurred in this century.

The nearly 200 countries whose representatives are gathering at Le Bourget will have ample reminders throughout COP21 of what is at stake in their negotiations. Pope Francis, who spent the week before the conference in Africa, one of the regions expected to be the worst affected by climate change, has made this one of his signature issues (see Spire, November 2015). Whatever does or doesn’t happen in Paris, whether in Le Bourget or in the streets, the world will certainly be watching.
Three key points will help world leaders and representatives of business, labour and civil society to strike an effective new deal on climate change at the crucial UN summit on climate change in Paris and accelerate climate action in 2015 and beyond.

Are we moving fast enough in fighting climate change?

In a word, no. Everyone acknowledges the problem, but around the world, hundreds of billions of dollars are still being spent subsidising the use of fossil fuels. Fossil fuels remain the dominant energy source. Now, there is incremental progress being made, but the trouble is it’s just not fast enough. We are already seeing the physical signs of climate damage, and our work suggests we will start to see that impacting on economic growth before too long.

Remember, 2°C of warming is already locked in. It is going to be costly enough coping with that. Any warming beyond that is going to be harder and harder to cope with. So we need to move faster, because time is the one thing we haven’t got. Delay is going to limit our choices and make things much more costly.

Is the solution to agree on concrete emission targets?

Well, it is not just a matter of setting targets; it is also a matter of meeting them. And that requires from governments a plan of action which will go right down into the engine room of the economy. This is a massive challenge, and no corner of the economy will be left untouched, because we will need to get to somewhere very different from where we are now. That is, a world in which there are net zero carbon emissions by the end of the century.

So, we need a price on carbon. That could be via a carbon tax or an emissions trading system, for instance. It is no use hoping people will stop polluting if it is free to do so. Already in 2015 carbon emissions into the atmosphere have reached new heights. We need to ensure that the regulations, which exist today to help a fossil economy prosper, are replaced with regulations which allow the penetration of clean technologies in all sectors. And then we need to be able to mobilise capital behind those clean technologies. And finally, but by no means least, we need to ensure that the costs of the transition, because there are costs, aren’t disproportionately borne by people who are not in a position to bear them.

Do we have the funds to effectively fight climate change?

That is always going to be a question of priorities, but in the case of developed and rapidly emerging economies, there is a big question around mobilising private investment. Governments have to make sure that their policies do not stand in the way. Now, if you take institutional investors like pensions funds or insurance companies, these interests control over US$90 trillion dollars’ worth of assets. Yet, less than 1% finds its way to investment in clean infrastructure. There are regulatory reasons for that, and those barriers need to be removed.

When it comes to developing countries, there is a case for more assistance from developed countries. The good news there is that that flow of funding is rising. Analysis by OECD and Climate Policy Initiative estimates that developed countries mobilised $62 billion to support climate action in developing countries in 2014, up from $52 billion in 2013. This is encouraging, but there is still some way to go to reach the target of $100 billion by 2020.

For unto us a child
By Alison Benney

We all know the Christmas story so there are no surprises in this, the third window in our stained glass chronology. It contains standing figures of the angel of the Annunciation, Mary and the Child, the shepherds and the Magi. In the medallions below are depicted respectively the Annunciation, the Holy Family, the adoring shepherds, and the gift-bringing Magi. This window was created by the Lorin workshops of Chartres. The atelier is still there, but has been taken over by another family.

Gabriel
Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.
Luke 1: 30-32

Mary’s song (extract)
My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
Luke 1:46-49

The shepherds
Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.
Luke 2: 10-12

The magi
When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
Matthew 2: 10-11
Blessings to you all in my lovely but upside down Paris. I'm very sorry to hear about the terrorist attacks in November. We are praying for peace to reign throughout the world, even as we are in the End Times. Lord hear our prayer!

Christmas in Ghana always depends on the size of a person’s pocketbook the week before. They do not save or shop early as we would in the States. It's just not that serious to them. So some families will really enjoy the festival season, while others will only see it as another day on the calendar.

For the lucky few, you will see the children or siblings returning home to the village from school or work in the big cities. The Metro Mass station, our biggest transportation bus that can hold up to 200 individuals, always has a queue during the Christmas season. To make it home in time, it's best to travel early!

Once home, the parents have prepared a wonderful but very simple Christmas dinner. The dinner in Ghana cannot compete with our American dinner, there is absolutely no variety. However, the meal is still just as delicious. Normally the dish will include grilled chicken in stew and rice. In the good old days, chicken and rice were not served any other day. So it was a special treat served only on Christmas evening because they were both very expensive to purchase. But that is not the case now.

For me, I would rather have grilled tilapia with rice or plantains, but Ghanaians would eat it with Banku. Tilapia has such a sweet taste that I could honestly eat it every evening. It is grilled whole with the skin and the head intact over a charcoal fire for 30-40 minutes with some fresh-ground hot sauce on the side. Yumminess!

Often children would dress up in a costume during Christmas to ask for money, usually in small groups so they can cover more people walking by or in their shop selling.

Needless to say, Christmas is nothing to write home about but the spirit is still there. My friends and neighbors might also attend church for the entire week in honor of Jesus Christ coming to the world. Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let Earth receive her King - Merry Christmas to you all!

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“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.
And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Colossians 3:16-17
Are you looking for a volunteer opportunity for Christmas this year? You’re in luck! In 2013, the president of Benenova, Stéphanie, was inspired by the free-spirited nature of an American organization entitled the Hands on Network. With a little help from them, Benenova has created a flexible, organized, efficient way to volunteer in Paris and Nantes for people of all ages. While most volunteer organizations here in Paris require a weekly commitment, Benenova’s projects are chunked into two/three-hour time slots. You simply register for an event on their website and are all set to go!

Benenova follows a simple message when it comes to volunteering: They provide access to volunteer projects in a friendly environment with the assurance that you and your time will be respected. You choose actions that pique your interest and fit within the confines of your personal schedule. Two clicks and voila!

After that, your sole responsibility is to meet up with your fellow volunteers and group leader on the day of the action. From an administration perspective, Benenova works with fellow non-profit organizations to ensure that every action runs smoothly (welcoming volunteers, duration, requirements, etc.) They also verify that these actions will be a positive experience all around.

Some of their projects include gathering and redistributing food, volunteering at refugee shelters, sorting through clothing donations, spending time with some of the locals at a nursing home, giving tours around different parts of Paris to people with physical disabilities, and more. Specifically for Christmas, Benenova has partnered with several organizations focusing on repairing and distributing toys, wrapping gifts, and working with the Mayor of Paris to organize food boxes for underprivileged families. All of these projects are incredible opportunities and Benenova would love to have some extra hands helping out this holiday season.

Do you need to speak fluent French? Absolutely not! Most of their actions require the bare basics. As you will spend your time working with other French speakers here in Paris, these actions can serve as a great way to practice your French and meet new people, while taking the time to volunteer.

How can you get started? It’s easy! Hop on to the website at www.benenova.fr and click on the link in the upper-right hand corner titled +Inscription. After registering all of your information, you have the option to click on the calendar to find events that both interest you and work with your schedule.

All of the activities are listed on the calendar and are paired up with a project leader who will keep you informed about the action. Soon after choosing a volunteer project you will receive an e-mail confirmation from your project leader with specific details about the event.

If you’re looking for a way to help others enjoy Christmas this year, get in touch. The staff is happy to answer any questions you may have.

English Speaking Coordinator: Emilee McArdle emilee@benenova.fr
Follow Benenova on social media: www.facebook.com/Benenova.fr and Twitter @Benenova_fr

Serve the City Mission Project

The Serve the City Mission Project is distributing food donated by Prêt à Manger to the needy. There are now nearly 20 American Church volunteers serving up to 150 meals five days a week to the less fortunate in and around Paris. Additional volunteers are needed to help pick up sandwiches from the Prêt à Manger’s Neuilly-sur-Seine shop at 8h and distribute them to homeless people. Come join the team and help us Serve the City! Contact parisservethecity@gmail.com.
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 7 and 21 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, at www.acparis.org/acptoday. Faith Talk from Paris - ACP chat at your fingertips. Want to get involved? Contact acptoday@acparis.org.

Simplify. Unclutter Your Soul is a 4-week Christian Education course based on DVD presentations by Bill Hybels, followed by discussion.

Overscheduled. Exhausted. Overwhelmed. Sound familiar? Too familiar? In "Simplify," pastor and bestselling author Bill Hybels identifies core issues that drive this kind of living and offers action steps to help you live a better way. By eradicating clutter from your inner world, you can experience immediate rewards: greater energy, clearer purpose, richer relationships and more. Your life won't simplify itself. You must act. Isn't it about time?

Across the Seine from the ACP and near the Pont Alexandre III, lies a ship with certain similarities to La Boudeuse in that she is also dedicated to adventure and scientific discovery. Slightly smaller than the older ship (La Boudeuse will be 100 years old next year), this all-aluminum two-masted schooner called Tara was built in 1989, and belonged for a few years to the famed New Zealand navigator Sir Peter Blake, until he was murdered in 2001 by pirates on the Amazon River in Brazil.

The ship was then bought by the general manager of the French fashion design company "agnès b", which provides most of the funds for the ship’s many expeditions, mainly devoted to the collection and study of plankton in seawater samples from all over the world to better understand the impact of climate change. One of Tara’s most outstanding feats was when she proved that the Arctic ice-pack is not immobile, by allowing the ship to be frozen in the ice and letting it "drift" for 505 days (2006-2008).

Tara is open to the public on weekends and also hosts conferences on the role of the ocean in climate regulation, held in their pavilion near the ship. Details can be found at http://oceans.taraexpeditions.org/en.
If the holiday season in the U.S. begins with Thanksgiving, in Uganda it’s in mid-November when, for a few short weeks, the prized delicacy nsenene, otherwise known as grasshoppers, are in season. Fried in their own oil with onions, they are crunchy and delicious.

By mid-November our children’s 400+ handmade Christmas cards are ready to mail to their sponsors.

On December 24, Rafiki children hunt down and cut a spindly pine-smelling bush to decorate in their cottages with homemade decorations and balloons. In the evening we have a music program ending with candle-light carol singing, just as Christians do everywhere.

For Christmas lunch and a few other special occasions, Rafiki children (and staff) enjoy a hugely heaped plate of two or three different kinds of meat (grilled pork or beef, beef or goat stew, chicken), three starches (delicious steamed green banana puree called matoke, rice, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes) often topped with pink peanut sauce and chili sauce, greens, and fruit salad. All is served at the same time, then it’s back for seconds or thirds of “Everything, please!” A special occasion dish called luwombo, is made with any favorite foods steamed in sealed banana leaf pouches.

At Rafiki, our cooks go “all out” to prepare the Christmas lunch for 125, served by the Mamas, and then they have the rest of the day off to celebrate in their own homes with their families.

A favorite meal of the year, according to our children, is Christmas evening supper, cooked by the missionaries and visiting “mini-missionaries”. Three hundred grilled cheese sandwiches, apples, and cake, accompanied by soda, make a once-a-year treat.

Even our very youngest, the biological children of our House Parents, love to eat. There is an abundance of good food in central Uganda – everything grows so easily – and especially at Rafiki. We are so very blessed.

The Rafiki children join me in wishing a very merry Christmas to all the saints at ACP.
JOIN OUR GROUP

for the 2016 ACP mission trip to INDIA

DATES: 18 February to 26 March 2016 (dates are flexible)
WHERE: Pune (near Mumbai), India - city and rural areas
WHAT: Volunteer as the second ACP team with Deep Griha Society

Fall in love! With your neighbor as yourself
Discover That in giving you receive
Experience the joy of helping The poor yet joyful communities of Deep Griha: Babies, children, youth

Come! Christ is there!

Please contact Pascale Deforge, pascaledeforge@live.com, tel: 06 3833 2823, see www.deepgriha.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.

Mark your calendars

Women’s gathering: Sunday 13 December, 12h30-13h30

Our Christmas Party will be held in the Herr apartment, located on the 3rd floor of the Church House. There are lots of things that are planned for this date, but we hope you can join us for a time of fellowship and Christmas caroling. If you are able, please bring a snack to share. For moms and grandmoms, there is childcare provided in G1 during all Women’s Fellowship meetings.

Movie discussion group: Thursday 17 December, 19h30, Room G2

See these films and join us to discuss: Macbeth, Me and Earl and the Dying Girl (aka This is not a love story), The Good Dinosaur (Le Voyage d’Arlo), and Mia Madrè. For info: movies@acparis.org

Are you inSpired by the Spire? The Spire team needs a production assistant and help with layout. If you enjoy giving shape to ideas, and sharing information about our church and Paris community, you will love volunteer work with the Spire! We need new members on the team now, to prep the September edition. If you’re interested, please contact Alison Benney at Spire@acparis.org

Call for Sunday Nursery volunteers We have a growing need to serve our smallest disciples, and our nursery requires extra helping hands during the 11h and 13h30 services. Please contact childrensworship@acparis.org if you have experience with caring for children under 23 months and you would like to assist this vital ministry.
Marriage begins with a decision of two people to unite their lives under God.

The Wedding Ministry of the American Church in Paris (ACP) is honored to celebrate the union of husband and wife. Musical assistance and clergy guidance are provided so that the ceremony will be dignified and spiritually grounded.

As an international and interdenominational congregation, we welcome people from diverse backgrounds and Christian traditions.

The celebration of marriage in the ACP is not restricted to our local members.

**Off-site Wedding Blessing Ceremony**

One of the ordained pastors of the American Church in Paris can officiate your wedding blessing ceremony held outside of the church.

**Premarital counseling**

The American Church in Paris recommends all couples preparing to get married to seek counseling before the ceremony. Premarital counseling is available to anyone who would like to prepare for, and establish the strongest marriage possible to the glory of God. It helps couples

- to explore strength and growth areas
- to strengthen communication skills
- to identify and manage major stressors and/or cultural and personality differences
- to resolve conflict using the Ten-Step Model
- to discuss financial planning and budgeting

Premarital Counseling is is not restricted to our local members or those preparing to get married at the ACP.

Please contact our Wedding Coordinator for more information: weddings@acparis.org

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**Alison’s Eggnog**

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<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>European equivalents</th>
<th>Serves 25 to 30</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 eggs, separated</td>
<td>12 œufs</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 ½ cups powdered sugar</td>
<td>300g sucre glace</td>
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<td>1 quart rich milk</td>
<td>1 litre lait entier</td>
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<td>1 cup cognac</td>
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<td>1 cup dark rum</td>
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<td>1 small orange</td>
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<td>1 quart heavy cream</td>
<td>1 litre crème entière liquide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grated nutmeg</td>
<td>noix de muscade, râpé</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beat the egg yolks and sugar until thick, then stir in the milk, cognac and rum. Beat the egg whites until they just hold a peak, and fold them in. Put this mixture away to chill for a few hours. Peel the orange and grate the rind.

Whip the cream until it only just begins to thicken, not so much that it actually holds peaks. Stir this half-whipped cream into the milk and egg mixture, and beat a few more strokes with a whisk. Stir in the juice of the orange and the orange rind. Pour the eggnog into a serving bowl. Over the top of it, sprinkle plenty of grated nutmeg.
## ACP Spire Diary

**Events, meetings and concerts**

(Please check [www.acparis.org/whatson](http://www.acparis.org/whatson) for updates, and also Young Adults and weekly schedules)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Events and Monthly Meetings and Concerts</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast Ministry</strong></td>
<td>Friday 4 Dec, Saturday 5 Dec</td>
<td>19h30, 8h00</td>
<td>Jurie Ane Feleo, <a href="mailto:homelesssandwich@acparis.org">homelesssandwich@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation: Friday 19h30, meet at ACP Reception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution: Saturday 08h00, meet at ACP Reception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multicultural Couples Potluck Dinner</strong></td>
<td>Friday 4 Dec</td>
<td>20h00</td>
<td>Monica Bassett &amp; Anja Wyss, <a href="mailto:multicultural@acparis.org">multicultural@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship and discussion on topics such as raising bicultural/bilingual children and cultural differences. Bring a dish to share.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Contact for location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marché de Noël, rescheduled</strong></td>
<td>Saturday 5 Dec</td>
<td>9h00-17h00</td>
<td>Kristie Worrell, <a href="mailto:marchedenoel@acparis.org">marchedenoel@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Market, organized by the ACP Mission Outreach Committee. All proceeds from ACP tables mission ministries.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Congregational Meeting</strong></td>
<td>Sunday 6 Dec</td>
<td>Following 11h00 Worship Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Council of the American Church in Paris requests the presence of all voting members of the ACP at a special congregational meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to receive the final report of the Associate Pastor for Congregational Ministries Search Committee and to vote on their recommendation. Please plan to attend this meeting, but if you cannot be present, make sure that your vote counts by filling out a proxy form and return it to the Council Secretary’s mailbox at Reception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACP Today: Faith Talk in Paris radio show</strong></td>
<td>Monday 7 Dec</td>
<td>20h45 - 21h30</td>
<td>100.7 FM, Radio Fréquence Protestante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tune in for inspiring music and interviews.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACP MOPS (mothers of children ages newborn-6)</strong></td>
<td>Thursday 10 Dec</td>
<td>10h00 - 12h00 Catacombs</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mops@acparis.org">mops@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare available. Come “flourish fiercely” with us.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday Mission Lunch (volunteers needed)</strong></td>
<td>Friday 11 Dec</td>
<td>10h00 - 14h00 The American Cathedral</td>
<td>If you are interested, please first contact: Kristie Worrel, <a href="mailto:fridaymissionlunch@acparis.org">fridaymissionlunch@acparis.org</a></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.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writers’ Group</strong></td>
<td>Saturday 12 Dec</td>
<td>14h30 - 16h30 Room G2</td>
<td>Tendaiy Chinawu, <a href="mailto:writers@acparis.org">writers@acparis.org</a></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Candlelight Christmas Concerts</strong></td>
<td>Saturday 12 Dec</td>
<td>17h00 &amp; 20h00 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, the ACP Bronze Ringers, the Vocal Ensemble “Lumina” and the Sotto Voce Children’s Choir. Buy tickets at reception.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intergenerational Christmas Pageant</strong></td>
<td>Sunday 13 Dec</td>
<td>11h00 Worship Service Sanctuary</td>
<td>Allison Wheeler, <a href="mailto:childrensworship@acparis.org">childrensworship@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s Worship Family Christmas Party</strong></td>
<td>Sunday 13 Dec</td>
<td>Following 11h00 Worship Service</td>
<td>Allison Wheeler, <a href="mailto:childrensworship@acparis.org">childrensworship@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## ACP Spire Diary
### Events, meetings & concerts (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Events and Monthly Meetings and Concerts</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Adults Christmas Party</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday 15 Dec</td>
<td>19h00</td>
<td>Catacombs</td>
<td>Alyssa McKnight youthintern</td>
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<td></td>
<td>@acparis.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Movie Discussion Group</strong></td>
<td>Thursday 17 Dec</td>
<td>19h30</td>
<td>Room G2</td>
<td>Rebecca Brite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This month's movie listings. <em>Macbeth</em>, <em>Me and Earl and the Dying Girl</em> (aka <em>This is not a love story</em>), <em>The Good Dinosaur</em> (<em>Le Voyage d'Arlo</em>), <em>Mia Madrè</em>. See any or all at your leisure and join the group for discussion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:movies@acparis.org">movies@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sandwich Ministry</strong></td>
<td>Friday 18 Dec</td>
<td>19h30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jurie Ane Feleo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation: Friday 19h30, meet at ACP Reception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:homelesssandwich@acparis.org">homelesssandwich@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution: Saturday 13h30, meet at ACP Reception</td>
<td>Saturday 19 Dec</td>
<td>13h30</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Longest Night Service</strong></td>
<td>Monday 21 Dec</td>
<td>20h00</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held before the longest and darkest night of the year - the Winter Solstice. During this service we can, with others, acknowledge the “dark” feelings we have during the holidays, the reasons for them, and look to God for healing and transformation.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACP Today: Faith Talk in Paris radio show</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tune in for inspiring music and interviews.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Christmas Eve</strong></td>
<td>Thursday 24 Dec</td>
<td>12h00-15h30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church building closed in the afternoon.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Christmas Eve Services</strong></td>
<td>Thursday 24 Dec</td>
<td>16h00</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Musical Prelude</td>
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<tr>
<td>Candlelight Service</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Prelude</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Candlelight Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Christmas Day</strong></td>
<td>Friday 25 Dec</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church building closed for public holiday.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Concert - Nicole TAYLOR, soprano and Debra TAKAKJIAN - piano</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday 29 Dec</td>
<td>20h00</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td>Fred Gramann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free admission, with free-will offering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:music@acparis.org">music@acparis.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Years Day</strong></td>
<td>Friday 1 Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church building closed for public holiday.</td>
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</table>

(Please check [www.acparis.org/whatson](http://www.acparis.org/whatson) for updates and weekly schedules)
THE 2015 CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS CONCERTS

Presented by
THE AMERICAN CHURCH CHOIR
THE ACP BRONZE Ringers
Fred GRAMANN, DIRECTOR
THE ENSEMBLE LUMINA
Caroline DRURY, DIRECTOR
LE CHOEUR D’ENFANTS SOTTO VOCE
SCOTT ALAN PROUTY, DIRECTOR

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2015
AT 17H AND 20H

SEASONAL MUSIC, CAROL ARRANGEMENTS,
AND ALL JOINING TO SING CAROLS IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH

THE AMERICAN CHURCH IN PARIS
65, QUAI D’ORSAY - 75007 PARIS

Métro: Alma-Marceau, Invalides
Bus: 42, 63, 80, 92

Tickets: 25 euros (reserved seating for adults, students and children)
15 euros (adults, all other seating)
10 euros (children & students, all other seating)

TO ORDER TICKETS FROM NOVEMBER 8TH TO 28TH: www.acparis.org
ON SALE AT THE CHURCH FROM NOVEMBER 17TH

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