December 2011

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The American Church in Paris

Tel.: 01 40 62 05 00
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Dear Members and Friends of the ACP,

The Christmas lights are up over the neighborhood streets (and of course the Avenue des Champs-Élysées!). The lights signal that the winter holiday season is coming near. November 27th was the first Sunday of Advent which marks the beginning of the Christian calendar New Year. We read the prophets and light candles, recalling the Isaiah text, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined” (9:2). It’s the season of hope, perennially in juxtaposition with the winter solstice, the darkest day of the year, when Christians reflect on the different ways in which God is coming near to us in Jesus Christ.

Advent is also a time to reflect on the painful realities of our lives and this world. We use the color purple in worship as a reminder that this is a time of preparation which involves repentance and turning away from that which has cluttered our spiritual lives, impeding the future reign of God’s compassion and love. It is a time to grieve that in so many ways our world is “not the way it’s supposed to be.” Advent, however, is also a time when we may again turn to the One who is a faithful source of hope, peace, love and joy, our King who was entering into our world in such humble manner as a babe lying in a manger, who comes into our hearts and lives today through breaths of the Holy Spirit (and the unrestrained joy and exuberance of children’s Christmas pageants!), and who will come again in glory “to judge the quick and the dead.”

The Advent enterprise is an exercise in rediscovering our source of hope. God entered into the darkness of our world as light, the Word become flesh, “full of grace and truth.” Indeed as Mary wondered out loud to the angel, we sometimes wonder about looking to the future with hope: “How can this be…?” Incredulity is often our inner posture toward hope, especially given the larger context of our world economic crises, various failures of national leadership, a foreboding discontent in so many volatile regions of the world, and the more intimate context of personal disappointment and loss.

I read recently a poem by Tamara Madison called, The Return of the Subjunctive, that struck an Advent note of hope in me:

Oh, the Subjunctive,  
May it make its bold return!  
May it ride back proud  
In liveried coach,  
May its two fine horses snort  
And paw the ground,  
And, escorted by it staunch  
Attendants If and Whether,  
May it descend in velvet cloak  
And black-gloved hand  
The lacquered steps of hope  
And happenstance.  
May it fix upon us its deep  
Uncertain gaze!  
I shall be there to greet it  
Though my company  
Be small and moody.  
I shall beg it stay  
And may its presence give  
Some respite from the steely glare

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1 Cornelius Plantinga’s favorite definition for “sin.”
2 From the Apostles’ Creed.
Of Indicative, a mantle to shield us
From Passive’s clammy chill.
May it light again the land
Between the world that was
And is, and that which still might be,
And may we tread again desire’s
Leaf-dappled path
Of possibility.3

Indeed, for me the Subjunctive is all about
that which still might be, of possibility.
Perhaps faith is living in the subjunctive
mood? As we reflect on the various ways in
which Christ comes and “how silently the
wondrous gift is given” even again in this
Advent season, what possibility does faith
open up for us to live in new ways, leaning
more care-freely and carefully into the
Kingdom of God?

As of the first Sunday of Advent, you will
find the old baptismal font boldly asserting
itself in the Narthex. Previously it has been
pushed aside during most worship services,
only occasionally hauled out to the center
aisle for baptisms. Over the years this
constant and literal pushing around of the
baptismal font has done it injury. Pieces
have fallen off of it and it is in need of repair.
We need to find a more permanent place to
put it! The theologically appropriate location
for the baptismal font has traditionally been
in the Narthex so that it forces your attention
as you are coming into and going out from
the sanctuary. The small “fountain” invites
you to remember your baptismal identity and
purpose as you prepare for corporate
worship, and as you leave hopefully will
inspire you to live in the world in such a way
as to reflect more the promises made in
baptism: “to be a faithful disciple of Jesus
Christ, to obey his word and show his love.”

Even amidst difficult goodbyes (to dear
friends and pastors like Ken and Cil, Jeff and
Alba!) and other unexpected transitions, may
this Advent be a time for all of us to
prayerfully embrace again the subjunctive
mood of faith, affirm our baptismal vows, and
make ready to greet again the coming light
between the world that was, and is, and that
which still might be…

In Christ,

Scott

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### CHRISTMAS EVE AND CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICES

**24 DECEMBER, SATURDAY, CHRISTMAS EVE**

- **16h00** Family Christmas Eve service
- **19h00** Musical prelude
- **19h30** Service of Lessons and Carols
- **21h30** Musical prelude
- **22h00** Service of Lessons and Carols

**25 DECEMBER, SUNDAY, CHRISTMAS DAY**

- **11h00** Traditional worship service
- **13h30** Contemporary worship service

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CHURCH WILL BE CLOSED**
**ON 24 DECEMBER FROM NOON TO 15H30.**

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The 10h00 Sunday Bible Study "Advent Study" begins Sunday, 27 November. His birth was for His death, His death was for our birth! Please feel free to come join us between 10h15-11h00 in room G2 on the garden level.

ADVENT Bible Verses
By Dr. Richard J. Krejcir

The Meaning of Advent

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

"Advent" simply means coming as in Christ is coming, and for us now He has arrived. This is referring to His birth in history and in humanity. It meant the welcoming or the arrival of a special king and for us; it is our King of kings. This is what the Old Testament prophecies foretold concerning Jesus' Incarnation, the Word made flesh for our hope and Atonement that brought us our deliverance. Advent represents our expectation, anticipation, and preparation for who Christ is and what He has done for us. He arrived into the world as a human being, being fully God and fully man. He came to identify as one of us, as the Son of Man, as a baby born in a manger. He came for us, He came for you and He comes into our lives and into our hearts. He is coming again in great power and glory to bring His Kingdom into fruition.

The Advent Wreath

And again, Isaiah says, “The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.” May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:12-13).

Traditionally, during the Christmas season we have an “Advent Wreath” in our Churches, and this is remarkably celebrated in all Denominations, including Orthodox, Catholic, liturgical, Mainline and Evangelical. The Advent Wreath is a venerable tradition that cuts across denominational and theological boundaries. It dates to the beginning of the 19th century in Europe. This Advent Wreath is arranged with 4 or 5 Advent candles, 3 or 4 of which are in a circle symbolizing Christ's eternity, as a circle has no beginning and has no end, it is a symbol for God, Who is eternal and thus without beginning or end. The evergreens mean He is “ever with us,” they are usually pine branches or holly that are used as a base that represents anticipation, newness, renewal and His everlastingness. The red berries of the holly represent the shedding of Christ’s blood.

- **The Wreath:** The wreath itself means “victory” as Christ’s victory over sin so He can save us. The Advent Wreath has 4 or 5 candles that are arranged in a circle symbolizing Christ's eternity, as a circle has no beginning and has no end, it is a symbol for God, Who is eternal and thus without beginning or end. The evergreens mean He is “ever with us,” they are usually pine branches or holly that are used as a base that represents anticipation, newness, renewal and His everlastingness. The red berries of the holly represent the shedding of Christ’s blood.

- **The Candles:** The Advent candles mean the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His Son. This refers to the significance that Christ is the Light of the world. When they are lit, the illumination is to symbolize the Christ of eternity
and His coming as the “Light of the World” and our worship and honor of His most precious gift of His Grace and mercy. These candles also have a color theme too, purple, blue, pink or rose and while. The first two or three are purple meaning royalty and this is also the color of suffering and the darkness of sin, connecting Jesus’ birth and crucifixion and His triumph over sin. Blue means sky and life, pink means joy, and white means purity.

Each candle has a special meaning:

- The first candle (purple) “CANDLE OF HOPE” means His promise and hope. We can have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises He made to us. Our hope comes from God. (Romans 15:12-13)
- The second candle (purple) “CANDLE OF PREPARATION” means His light and preparation. Preparation means to ‘get ready’. "Help us to be ready to welcome YOU, O GOD!" (Luke 3:4-6) (Some traditions combine the first two)
- The third candle (pink or rose) “CANDLE OF JOY” means the angels sang a message of JOY! (Luke 2:7-15)
- The fourth candle (purple or blue) “CANDLE OF LOVE” symbolizes Christ love. God sent His only Son to earth to save us, because He loves us! (John 3:16-17) (some traditions omit this one)
- The fifth candle (white) “CHRIST CANDLE” symbolizes the incarnation, the heart and reason of the season, God giving light to the world. Its location is in the center as Christ’s light is central and radiant. This reminds us that Jesus is the spotless Lamb of God, sent to wash away our sins! (in wreaths that have 4 candles, it is in the circle among the rest of the candles)

Each candle is lighted during the worship services each week in progression until Christmas Eve or Christmas Day when the last candle is lit. (some denominations and traditions have different color schemes and some only four candles) Each week the new unlit candle for that week is lighted, and then the previous candles are re-lighted. A family is sent up to do the lighting as a passage is read, a carol sung and or a prayer said. The four weeks are a period of waiting also signifying the four centuries of waiting between the last prophet Malachi and the birth of Jesus. All five candles should continue to be lighted in worship services through Epiphany on January 6 (epiphany means “to show,” is the climax of the Christmas Season and the “Twelve Days of Christmas.” It is observed to denote the coming of the wise men bringing gifts and their worship to Christ).

Advent Verses

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD – (Isaiah 11:2)

Typical Liturgical Lectionary Verses (Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Episcopal and many Evangelical Churches too):

Week 1: Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Cor. 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37
Week 2: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8
Week 3: Isaiah 61:1-4,8-11; Psalm 126 or Luke 1: 46b-55; 1 Thess. 5:16-24; John 1:6-8,19-28
Week 4: 2 Sam. 7:1-11,16; Psalm 89:1-4,19-26; Rom 16:25-27; Luke 1: 26-38
Also:
The Annunciations of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:18-25) and Mary’s visit to Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56) can be read every Advent Sunday and then the following passages just prior to the Advent wreath lighting ceremony:


Additional Scripture verses to be personally read during Advent:

FOUR WEEKS BEFORE CHRISTMAS
SUNDAY: Isaiah 7:14 and Micah 5:2
WEDNESDAY: Luke 2:6-7
THURSDAY: Luke 2:8-9
FRIDAY: Luke 2:10-12

THREE WEEKS BEFORE CHRISTMAS
SUNDAY: Luke 2:15-16
TUESDAY: Luke 2:19
WEDNESDAY: Luke 2:20
THURSDAY: Luke 2:21
FRIDAY: Matthew 2:1-2
SATURDAY: Matthew 2:3-6

TWO WEEKS BEFORE CHRISTMAS
SUNDAY: Matthew 2:7-8
MONDAY: Matthew 2:9
TUESDAY: Matthew 2:10-11
WEDNESDAY: Matthew 2:12-15
THURSDAY: Galatians 4:4-5
FRIDAY: Ephesians 2:8-9
SATURDAY: 1 John 4:7-16

ONE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS
SUNDAY: Ephesians 2:12-22
MONDAY: John 7:37-38, and 14:6
TUESDAY: Matthew 28:19-20
WEDNESDAY: John 8:12
THURSDAY: John 9:4-5 and Matthew 5:14-16
FRIDAY: Psalm 98:1-6
SATURDAY: John 1:1-3, 14 and Romans 6:23

CHRISTMAS DAY
Psalm 100, Revelation 3:20-21

His birth was for his death; his death was for our birth! (John 1:29 and John 3:1-8)
God in coming to earth used family as the instrument and the support structure for the infant Jesus to be cared for, nurtured and assisted in growth to adulthood of the man, Jesus, God Incarnate. No wonder Christmas is a time people seek family and do all they can to keep the promise, “I’ll be Home for Christmas.” We seek out that basic unit in which we began life and often grew into maturity. Leaving home is part of life, sometimes a bitter sweet part of life. Maybe that is why couples and parents cry at weddings; probably not all tears of joy. (Genesis 2:24)

Family is not the same for everyone. Sometimes it is not the place for nurture and growth. It is not the place from which some leave, but they flee. Also death and divorce can fracture the family so that it no longer is the support unity, but becomes separate and too often competitive rather than a cooperative unit. This puts pressure on every member of the family, especially the child or children.

Yet we still seek out family and in strange ways still need family. Sometimes that need is filled not by the biological family, but by other families and groups. I have found the American Church in Paris to be family away from home for me; and I know it is that for most the people who come here to worship, to meet others or to learn. Even though I have a loving family in the United States, the American Church in Paris has been family for me away from family at home.

The Gospel of Matthew introduces another aspect of family that has come to be known as the Virgin Birth. (Matthew 1:18) This has different meanings for different people in Christianity. For me it announces the source of life: God, the Creator. And it affirms the reality of Christians in community, the Church, to be family, children of God. Even Jesus as Son of God gives a valuable and precious relationship for us. We are children of God, but also brothers and sisters in Christ.


“The Human Family. It’s a good phrase, reminding us not only that we come from the same beginning and are headed toward the same conclusion but that in the meantime our lives are elaborately and inescapably linked. A famine in one part of the world affects people in all parts of the world. An assassination in Dallas or Sarajevo affects everybody. No man is an island. It is well worth remembering.”

At the same time, Buechner points out that there are differences in families. These differences cannot be seen from the outside; and even with the best will and effort, nobody can make totally known what is inside. Families can be torn apart, in some ways are very fragile. At the same time, the bonds initially created initially in family are so very strong. Evidence of this is the popularity of ancestor research and people seeking out family members even after years of separation.
This Christmas as Cil and I celebrate with our family in Colorado, 2 daughters with 3 children each, and a son and his wife and their 2 young daughters, I will be remembering a special family celebrating in Paris at the American Church. I am so grateful for the care and support given to me and to Cil during the 22 months I have been here over the past four years. You have been a family for me, and for Cil. I am also blessed and grateful that my Colorado family has strongly expressed a need and desire to have Cil and me back not just for Christmas but for a long time. I have been pulled in two directions by families who have been and are so important to me. So when Cil and I leave 15 December for Christmas, we will not be returning to Paris. Please know that the American Church in Paris will always be for me and for Cil a significant family for whom we are grateful.

BLESSED CHRISTMAS,
AMERICAN CHURCH IN PARIS FAMILY!

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**DECEMBER WORSHIP**

**4 DECEMBER, SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
Isa. 40:1–11; *Ps. 85:1–2, 8–13*
2 Peter 3:8–15a; Mark 1:1–8

**11 DECEMBER, THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
Isa. 61:1–4, 8–11; *Ps. 126 or Luke 1:46b–55*
1 Thess. 5:16–24; John 1:6–8, 19–28

**18 DECEMBER, FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
2 Sam. 7:1–11, 16; *Luke 1:46b–55 or Ps. 89:1–4, 19–26; Rom. 16:25–27*
Luke 1:26–38

**25 DECEMBER, CHRISTMAS DAY**
*Dawn:* Isa. 62:6–12; *Ps. 97; Titus 3:4–7 Luke 2:(1–7) 8–20
*Day:* Isa. 52:7–10; *Ps. 98; Heb. 1:1–4 (5–12); John 1:1–14
"We are all sojourners in this life, journeying through this world. Home is not here. Home is everywhere. Home is heaven."

These were both challenging and comforting words offered by a group of international teenagers at a church in Switzerland. In mid-November I had the privilege of attending an international youth workers conference in Nyon, Switzerland hosted by the AICEME.

Much of our time was spent in community, fellowship, and reflection. We were all blessed by the hospitality of Westlake Church and their team, and I was specifically blessed to have the opportunity to connect with colleagues from all across Europe.

In addition to networking and building these new-found friendships, the theme for the week was understand the "to-and-fro world of the TCK".

What is a TCK you may ask?
“TCK” is an acronym for “third culture kids”.

Here a few brief descriptions:
- live outside one or both of their parents’ passport country;
- they have assimilated aspects of two or more countries into their identity, but don’t feel part of any one culture;
- often these students have a high level of mobility and independence but experience constant traditions.

“TCKs are the prototype citizens of the future”, claimed sociologist Ted War over two decades go.

These international students have unique opportunities and distinct advantages in comparison with their mono-cultural peers. However, they also face unique challenges, especially during the formative teenage years.

Often, TCK’s are uprooted from a place of security, stability, and comfort into an unknown territory and culture. They learn to discover methods to find and develop their identity in light of multiple culture changes and influences.

Culture is important because it provides a sense of belonging, and helps provide ways we interpret the environment around us.

What happens when one’s culture is replaced? When we no longer have the comfort and security of what is familiar to us? When we no longer feel that we know others and are known?

This can often lead to a crisis of identity, esteem, and sometimes faith. This is a challenge for international youth workers as we help guide transient students into spiritual formation.

Youth leaders and parents need to encourage youth to find a healthy balance between staying true to their personal identity while at the same time gain flexibility to learn how to live within expectations based on new cultural norms.

Our hope is to help students gain an internal sense of identity based on unchanging biblical values yet be adaptable in various cultural settings.

As I discussed and discovered more about these transitions that international youth face, I became more aware of my own

From
Rev. Dan Haugh
Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministry
recent transition and the situation that faces us all.

We all will endure transitions of some sort in this life.

The truth is that we are all on a journey.

We live in transition.

This place (wherever it may be for now) is not our true home. We will always have a longing and desire for the eternal.

It might be a worthwhile effort to reflect on the transitions in our lives from time to time.

Though people and places may change, there is something and someone who will remain. God.

Let our hearts cry aloud as did the sons of Korah, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble”. (Psalm 46:1)

In this frantic and chaotic life, where change seems to be the norm, Christ is consistent.

His constant love and grace goes with you wherever life’s path may wander.

One of my prayers and goals of the youth ministry here at ACP is to provide a safe place to belong for all students. I also desire for students to understand the lavish love God has for them and to find their identity in Christ, as a beloved daughter and son of God, empowered by the Spirit to live life to the fullest.

My dream and hope for all of us here at ACP is that we discover the true nature of our home, citizenship, and identity.

“For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.” - Ephesians 2:18-20

YOUNG ADULT EVENTS

2 December, Friday, 19h30
6 December, Tuesday, 18h00/19h30
13 December, Tuesday, 19h30
20 December, Tuesday, 19h30
21 December, Wednesday, 19h00

ACP Café Night in the Theater and CD release
Bible Study in the Catacombs
Advent Prayer Stations
Christmas party
Youth and Young Adult Leaders Christmas party

Come and join us every Tuesday for either Bible Study or Pizza Night, as we share fellowship and conversation. For Pizza Night come at 18h00 to help cook and from 19h30 for dinner and small group discussion.

YOUTH EVENTS

2 December, Friday, 19h30
4 December, Sunday, 15h00-17h00
4 December, Sunday, 17h00
11 December, Sunday, 15h00-17h00
18 December, Sunday, 15h00-17h00

ACP Café Night in the Theater, and CD release
Youth Group in the Catacombs. Topic: Love in a Box
Youth Missions meeting
Advent Prayer Stations
Christmas party

Youth Group meets on Sundays from 15h-17h00 for fun, fellowship and Bible study in the Catacombs. Please feel free to bring friends along – they are always welcome at ACP events!

Contact youthpastor@acparis.org for more information about Youth and Young Adult events. Or join them on Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/acpyouthgroup, or www.facebook.com/groups/ACPyoungadults.
Alba and I will be returning to our home in Seal Beach, California on December 27, 2011 after celebrating Christmas with you. We have thoroughly enjoyed our six-months of service at ACP as Visiting Pastor and Spouse. We first felt a special relationship with the ACP congregation during a AICEME Pastors and Spouses conference hosted by ACP in 1999 while I was serving as the Senior Pastor of the American Church in London. In 2002, while on sabbatical, I volunteered for the six-month position of Visiting Pastor in charge of wedding blessings. It was a great experience for us and made us want to return later as volunteers during retirement.

We have been delighted to serve with such a talented and wonderful leadership team. The wedding blessing ministry has a place in my heart since many of the couples seeking wedding blessings come from Japan where I served the Tokyo Union Church for five years in the 1990’s. It has provided opportunities personally to share God’s love and the nature of Christian commitment with Japanese couples. I also have been blessed in celebrating wedding blessings and wedding vow renewals with a diversity of couples and especially ACP members and friends.

It has also been a privilege to share other pastoral gifts with the congregation. Highlights include: Sunday worship participation, ecumenical services such as the 9/11 commemoration, Thurber Thursdays, Multicultural Couples Group, and the Men’s Morning Coffee.

Alba has enjoyed participating in Children’s Worship, Thurber Thursday cooking, Multicultural Couples Group, Bloom Where You Are Planted, Ladies Bible Study and the Community Bible Study planning.

We are looking forward to reconnecting with our three children and three grandchildren in the USA. Lord willing, we will return to ACP at the end of June 2012 to begin another six months of service with you.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

In the Joy of His Coming,
Pastor Jeff and Alba Powell
Thank you for sharing your blessings during Stewardship Dedication Sunday!

We are overwhelmed and blessed by your sharing of your blessings. On Stewardship Dedication Sunday on Nov 20, we asked everyone to consecrate their pledge of financial resources and/or service for 2012. With your generosity and commitments for 2012, the ACP can begin to work on allocating all our gifts of finance and service to programs of mission and outreach, Christian education, inspirational worship leadership, and responsible development of our amazing building and resources.

**God is so good! We are so blessed!**

The act of pledging may be new for members and friends of the ACP, maybe even the word itself is! That's ok! Making a pledge, and the act of consecrating it, is a way to bring us one step closer in our relationship with God. Yes, putting money in the collection plate creates a relationship with God, but it is more a reflection of our past week's efforts and blessings. Anyone can make a donation or a gift to the ACP by putting money in the mail or in the collection plate. By making a pledge, you are expressing a desire to grow in your relationship with God and to help the ACP grow and share God’s blessings with others. Pledging allows us to start a dialogue with God now about how we want to live our lives in the future.

**It’s not too late to be a part of the exciting growth and development at the ACP!**

It’s not too late to make a pledge for 2012. Contact a member of the Stewardship Team, the front desk, or the ACP accountant Jean-Michel Bollecker for a Gift of Financial Resources and/or a Gift of Service pledge form. You may place your completed form at any time in the offering plate, at the front desk, or send to the ACP to the attention of Jean-Michel Bollecker.

**Come, you who are blessed by God ...**

As Pastor Scott challenged and encouraged us in his Stewardship letter “Let’s pray. Let’s learn. Let’s serve. Let’s worship and give thanks from our knees, that we may continue to receive God’s blessings as a wonderfully diverse and gifted community, and continue to be a blessing to others...” Let’s get on our knees and pray to God and ask what God’s will is for each of us in this season of Stewardship.

**ACP Finance & Stewardship Team**

Julia Kung (Stewardship Chair), Julie Coutton, Sue Orsoni, Noemie Plaza, Dave Smidt (Finance Committee Chair), Dustin Smith, Megan Staley. stewardship@acparis.org

If you have questions about Stewardship and what it means, or why it is important to pledge a Gift of Financial Resources, do not hesitate to contact us.

*The financial amount you pledge remains confidential – only you, God and Jean-Michel know the amount you pledge/give (Jean-Michel for your tax documentation purposes).*
Appreciating God’s Gifts in Other Religious Faiths without Losing Your Own
by Rev. Don Postema

Rev. Don Postema is an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church. He carries on a ministry of spiritual formation through retreats, conferences, teaching, writing and spiritual direction. He serves as a member of the adjunct faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, in the area of Christian Spirituality. He has also taught at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA; Whitworth College, Spokane, WA; Mars Hill Graduate School, Seattle, WA; and San Francisco Theological Seminary. Rev. Postema is author of Space for God: Study and Practice of Prayer and Spirituality and a cassette tape and CD, Space for God in Words and Music. Don also authored Catch Your Breath: God’s Invitation to Sabbath Rest. He has travelled widely as a retreat leader and conference speaker - including Gambia and Sierra Leone, West Africa; Canada; Costa Rica; Japan; Malaysia; and Mexico as well as many places in the U.S. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and of the Vrije Universiteit van Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He has also studied at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley CA and at Yale Divinity School, New Haven, CT with Fr. Henri J.M. Nouwen. In 1997 Don retired after 34 years as pastor of Campus Chapel [campus ministry of the Christian Reformed Church at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan]. As a lecturer at the University of Michigan, he taught “World Religions”, and “Personality and Religious Development”. Rev. Postema was Pastoral Assistant at the ACP in 2005. He was the speaker during the All-Church retreat from 7 to 9 October on the theme “Sabbath: Cultivating a God-Conscious Life.”

The 20th and 21st centuries have brought an unprecedented awareness and encounter of people of faith from many world religions: in our cities, on the job, on campuses, on the bus and metro, in our neighborhoods, among our friends, maybe even in our families. It is almost constantly in the media around the world. This wonderful opportunity may be a divine gift to us; one of the great spiritual adventures of our time. Yet, the clash of cultures and religions also has produced a volatile threat to world peace. Dr. Hans Küng has said that there will be no peace among nations until there is peace among religions.

So, as people of faith, we face a great challenge in our pluralistic, multi-cultural, multi-religious society. What do we do when we value our tradition, feel pretty secure in our faith, and then encounter people with a long history of genuine faith and spiritual practice from other religious traditions that involve a whole way of life that seems so incompatible with our own? This can be unnerving and even threatening. I have found that it also can be stimulating and enlightening.

I’m honored to share a few perspectives I have gained; some attitudes, principles, challenges and opportunities. I hope you will be stimulated to reflect on your own experiences of relating to other people of faith.

Commitments we treasure.

When we enter interfaith conversations, I think it is imperative that we bring our own deep commitments and convictions. This is not a time to water down our beliefs, but to hone them so we have something solid and maybe even unique to bring to the table. For others come with convictions and experiences as well. Being committed does not mean being intolerant of others, but rather being rooted in a tradition, in basic beliefs and spiritual practices and experiences. Commitments provide a conceptual and experiential framework for my spiritual journey and for my conversations with other people of faith. So I try to be committed yet open. I urge you to ask: what are my commitments? What do I treasure about my tradition; what gives me joy in my faith? That’s what you can bring to the conversation.
Three attitudes for listening to other voices.

1. **Dialog.** Dialog is not a debate, but a kind of *mutual witness.* It does not mean that we will necessarily agree, but only that we will try to understand more clearly and begin to replace ignorance, stereotypes, even prejudice, with relationship. I like to encourage an *appreciative inquiry method* of interaction in which we find out what gives meaning to each other’s spiritual journey.

   A. We really are carrying on dialog all the time. We have *dialogs within ourselves* when we face difficult ethical decisions, tragedy, crisis of belief, or entertain new ideas. Don’t you find different voices in you offering opposing thoughts and opinions? It’s like an *inner interfaith dialog.* How do you handle the diversity of opinions within you? If we want to be authentic during interfaith dialogs, we may need to listen to the different voices in our own hearts and minds and practice peacemaking, compassion and reconciliation among our many selves.

   B. We also have *outer dialogs within our congregations, churches and denominations.* So many issues are being discussed today within religious communities; there seem to be so many conflicts, divisions and opposition between Christians, let alone between churches and denominations. If we can’t even get along with people in our own congregation and denomination, what hope is there for genuine interaction and dialog with other Christians, let alone with other religions? Maybe we need an appreciative inquiry attitude toward folks in our own traditions!

   C. Understanding that we have interfaith dialogs within ourselves and within our own communities, can give us some sensitivity and insight as we enter *interfaith dialog with people from other Christian or Jewish or Muslim traditions or from other world religions.* I have been a member of the Snowmass InterSpiritual Dialog for 23 years. This is a small group of spiritual leaders that meet once a year to explore theories and practices of spirituality in our various world religious traditions and how they influence our personal life journeys. These people have become my friends, so each religion is not just a belief system, or some writings in a book, but each has a human face for me. We care about each other and respect each other as people of faith and spiritual depth. This provides a basis for meaningful dialog that also includes confronting our differences.

2. I have approached dialog with another attitude: *experiencing without judgment; listening for understanding rather than just for agreement or disagreement.* Listening with an open mind and heart provides a different, more caring, quality of interaction…waiting for the Spirit to reveal new insights. In the presence of genuine commitments, I feel I am on holy ground. Then, after listening, I try to reflect, critique, and sort through, what I hear in light of my own experience, my biblical understanding, my beliefs and tradition. By appreciating other perspectives, I find that I often broaden and deepen my own beliefs and experiences…rather than losing them.

3. I call this ‘*mutual illumination*’ in which each person is willing to open oneself to the inward message of the other as well as share one’s own experience and ideas. In an open and trusting exchange with an adherent of another religion I may learn about practices and teachings that are not consciously in my own tradition, yet may enlighten, clarify, or challenge some aspect of my belief and practice.

Three Challenges or Opportunities.

As I have carried these attitudes into interreligious conversations, I have observed various challenges and opportunities.

1. One is the challenge of *hospitality.* If we are to learn from each other in dialog we need an attitude and atmosphere of hospitality rather than hostility. Hospitality approaches persons from various traditions as possible bearers of some truth. It involves listening undefensively...
and appreciatively to them. We also have a responsibility to graciously speak our truth as a gift to others.

Such hospitality raises questions like: Can we respect various religious traditions while being deeply committed to our own? How hospitable are we to other traditions? Do we have an exclusivist attitude – that ours is the only way? Or, an inclusivist attitude: that other views of truth are not so much wrong as incomplete awaiting the fullness of our message? Or, a pluralist attitude – that truth is not an exclusive possession of any one tradition; we open up our commitments to the give and take of mutual discovery? What is your position?

2. Reconciliation coupled with compassion is absolutely indispensable as we approach interfaith interactions. Bro Roger of the Taizé community has said that reconciliation among Christians begins with the grateful discovery of the best of the gifts of God in the various Christian traditions; and thus can be a ferment for reconciliation and confidence for believers and for the whole human community … including those who do not share our faith.

3. These attitudes of reconciliation and hospitality could have creative consequences for peace within our communities, peace among religions and peace in the world community. How desperately we need that peace among religions, as Hans Küng said. The hostility we observe within religious communities as well as among religions violates what is best in every religion. I’m sure you believe along with me that it’s high time the world religions join together in giving a witness of mutual respect and understanding to the world community so that political, ethnic and nationalistic divisions are overcome and that religions make a mighty contribution to peace.

There seems to be a movement of the Spirit in our day inspiring folks toward such an attitude. Will we take this wonderful opportunity we have to meet heart to heart with a rich diversity of people, to increase the level of appreciation, understanding, reconciliation, and peace among us? I certainly hope so.

CHRISTMAS NEWS

17 DECEMBER CHRISTMAS CAROLING PARTY – 19h30 to 22h30: caroling starts at 18h00 at Alma Marceau (we will meet at the torch monument). We will end at the American Church for Christmas treats and cheer.
The African Fellowship: Ten Years of Celebrating Family and God’s Grace

By Christa Leste-Lasserre

Since World War II Africans have been immigrating by the millions into France. They now represent 42% of all immigrants in the country, and most of them live in Ile de France.

But despite these numbers, only a handful of the African immigrants come from protestant Christian backgrounds in their home countries. These people left behind their small home churches – churches full of warmth, joy, praise, and unity – to take on the challenges of immigrant life in a very different foreign land. It’s often a tough path, and, separated from their support systems back home, it can be isolating as well.

Some of those African immigrants have found their way to the American Church in Paris. And although they could worship here and praise God and sing and pray as they did before back in Africa, the experience still didn’t feel quite like “home.”

In December 2001, the African Fellowship of the American Church in Paris was founded, so as to help these expatriated African Christians “constitute families away from home,” according to Emeka Ozoukwu Be, from Nigeria, and the Fellowship’s first Chair.

“It’s a place where we can come together and share our emotions, our sentiments, our nostalgia for our continent,” Emeka says. “And though it’s not always an easy task to come by, we strive to always live up to our creed: Unity, Love, and Fellowship – all of which are in the marrow of the bones of our churches in Africa.”

They began with just a few founders, but today there are more than 80 registered members with at least 50 members at each meeting. Coming together every communion Sunday after the 11:00 church service for a traditional meal and praise and worship session, the group has outgrown its original meeting place in the 2nd floor library and now meets in the Thurber Room on the first Sunday of each month.

Now as the Fellowship comes to its tenth anniversary, it’s time to celebrate the group’s incredible growth, their growing involvement throughout the activities of the church, and above all the blessings that God has given them.

“We are so grateful to God for this fellowship,” says Cameroonian Elizabeth Eposi, the new chair-elect who will begin her three-year term in January. “And we are also so grateful to him for this wonderful community of the ACP that we’re a part of.”

By coming together in faith as a people of a similar origin, the group can offer not only love and support but practical assistance as well, Elizabeth says. “Africans have many of the same problems as other immigrants, but those problems are not always handled the same way,” she says. “In the Fellowship we can discuss our personal problems and get guidance and leadership from each other and from other knowledgeable people in the church, and together we can pray that the Almighty will continue to guide us.”
As a founding member, Elizabeth has been able to watch the African Fellowship grow and evolve, becoming stronger as a group and more and more active in the church in many different areas – an issue that the leaders are going to “insist on” even more and more, she says. They’ve also started organizing events, like the recent African Fashion Show which was held at the church and provided a window into the creative and cultural artistic apparel designs of their continent.

But despite the changes in the group, the essence remains the same, according to Elizabeth. “We’re still the same people,” she says, “with still the same goals: loving and caring for one another, and being a family away from home.”

And that family away from home isn’t just limited to Africans, Elizabeth and Emeka say. “Our door is always open to all Christian brothers and sisters,” says Emeka. He means it, too – as everyone that walks through their fellowship door is literally named “Brother” or “Sister.”

It’s a fellowship of faith and love, support and strength, family and friendship, solidarity and encouragement, warmth and comfort, familiarity and unity, and blessings and gratitude.

“We are so thankful to God that we have made it to 10 years!” Elizabeth says. “And as long as God gives us the life and the strength to go on, we will.”

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**CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT:** The children’s worship team is preparing for the live nativity service to be held on 11 December at the 11h00 service. There are several ways for adults to join us: manger scene creation, set up of the manger, break down of the manger, or a helping hand with behind-the-scene preparations. To volunteer please contact us at childrensworship@acparis.org.

**WERE YOU A PART OF THE CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE LAST YEAR?** We are interested in offering that service again but will need some volunteers to help out. Please contact Ilinca at the church office at secretary@acparis.org if you are willing to be a part of a team to help make that a special time for families. Thank you!
Those of you who have been at the American Church for any length of time are probably aware by now that exploring the relationship between faith and science has become something of a regular feature of our adult education program, beginning with our Creation and Creative Community series in 2009 and continuing with Holmes Rolston III’s thought-provoking Lenten Lectures entitled ‘Three Big Bangs - Matter-Energy, Life, Mind’ this Spring.

Well, it seems that we are not alone in feeling that this is a conversation to be taken seriously in a church context. We are very fortunate to have been invited by the John Templeton Foundation to be the sole non US-based congregation to participate in their Scientists in Congregations Initiative, a wide-ranging project aimed at encouraging churches to ‘become communities where the life of science and the life of faith are experienced as spiritually enriching and intellectually stimulating.’

We are therefore excited to be able to offer a number of group studies on the subject throughout 2012 as well as presentations by leaders in the field of faith-science interaction. We very much hope that these will not only be informative but also open up a genuine dialogue that will be mutually beneficial for those involved with science (which means anyone reading this or any article written or viewed on a computer or other electronic device) as well as theology (which again means all of us who try to reflect on our faith, not a professional ‘elite’). Popular recent books by authors such as Richard Dawkins on one side and anti-scientific religious fundamentalists on the other have led to a widespread caricature of the relationship between science and religion as being locked in an inevitable conflict, a zero-sum, winner-takes-all game which must ultimately result in the elimination of one or the other. Our conviction is that such stereotypes are both inaccurate and unhelpful, and one of the purposes of our participation in the Templeton Foundation initiative is to do what we can to move beyond them. Much productive work in this area has been done in academic settings in recent years but has yet to make its full impact on and to be shaped by local churches. It is this situation that the Scientists in Congregations Initiative seeks to address.

Our aim is therefore to foster a climate of trust in which anyone interested will have the chance to discuss challenging issues in an open, responsible and charitable fashion. If the relationship between faith and science is not conflictual as a matter of logical necessity, it is certainly true that it has frequently proved stormy in practice. This fact requires us to face some hard questions:

- Is there a relationship between the Church’s difficulty in responding to modern scientific inquiry and the Western European disillusionment with institutional Christianity in recent decades that we see around us in cities such as Paris? If so, what can we and should we do about this?
- How does modern science impact our theology of creation, our view of the human being as created in the Divine image, our thinking about the Incarnation, evil and suffering? How does it challenge our notions of Biblical interpretation?
• How should we view scientific advances in domains such as neuroscience or genetics? Should the scientific enterprise be perceived as a threat or rather as an opportunity to approach Christian faith with greater intellectual honesty and creativity?
• How can we as Christians be equipped for engagement in the world in such a way as to avoid a harmful cognitive dissonance between our religious beliefs and the conceptual framework with which we have to operate on a daily basis in school or in the workplace?
• How is technological change (particularly the internet) impacting the way in which we conceive the acquisition of knowledge and the location of ‘authority’? Are we, as some commentators claim, witnessing a revolution as profound as that brought about by Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press? With what opportunities and challenges does this present the Church?

These are just some of the topics with which we will hopefully be dealing and where we need your input as active collaborators; if you are in any way engaged with scientific practice or education, or if you are simply a church member looking to explore these issues with others, the Templeton Foundation Initiative is about you and your point of view.

As our initial focus we will be using the ‘Test of Faith’ study developed by the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge (a fantastic resource for anyone interested in cutting-edge contemporary debate: http://www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/faraday/index.php). This highly stimulating DVD-based course, which features contributions from internationally-known scientists and theologians, is specifically designed for church congregations and is accessible to all regardless of the participants’ level of scientific knowledge. We plan to offer this study starting in late January – watch the ACP worship bulletin for further details.

Further information on the Templeton Foundation Scientists in Congregations Initiative can be found on-line at http://www.scientistsincongregations.org/aboutus.

CHRISTMAS NEWS

THE LOVE IN A BOX Christmas ministry is now underway with a table in the theater after the 11 A.M. service. This year we will also be collecting children’s small toys, and children's warm clothing articles as well as complete boxes (shoe size). The instructions for what to put in the children’s Christmas box will be in the bulletin. Please come by and participate in this wonderful ministry which reached over 2500 needy children last year.

CHRISTMAS COOKIES AND EGgnog! To make sure there are plenty of cookies for the Christmas Eve eggnog reception at 23H00, we will be cutting, baking and decorating on Saturday, 17 December, 14h00-16h00and Thursday, 22 December, 10h00-18h00, up in the church kitchen. No age limit, no expertise needed, and come along at the times you can, whether for an hour or a few hours. Please call Alison for information and/or to confirm participation, at 01 47 53 04 56 or email: awbenney@wanadoo.fr
The annual Candlelight Christmas Concerts are a special yearly event in the ACP calendar. For many of our members, friends and folks from the wider Paris community, this musical celebration of Christ's birth is an integral part of their Christmas season. With the church decked out with pine boughs, a large tree covered with white doves and tiny white lights, and candles glowing, a wealth of seasonal music will be presented. The program includes music by Bach, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Christmas Spirituals and many traditional carol settings. Participating in this year’s program on Saturday, 10 December at 17h00 and 20h00 are the ACP Adult Choir, the Celebration Ringers, the ACP Bronze Ringers, the ACP Youth Choir, Voices Choeur International and the “Sotto Voce” Children’s Choir. The audience will be invited to join in the singing of familiar carols in English and French. Tickets are 20 euros (numbered, reserved seating in the front rows), 12 euros (regular adult seating) and 7 euros (students and children). They can be purchased at Coffee Hour after the 11h00 service, or during the week at the reception desk. The proceeds benefit the missions of the American Church.
Savior of the Nations, Come

ACP’s 13h30 Service Band “Still Point” releases its first CD, a compilation of Christmas music recorded in the ACP Catacombs and live during the 13h30 worship service. Following is an interview with Natalie Raynal, Director of Contemporary Music.

Q: How did the idea to do an album come about?
Natalie: Members of the congregation frequently ask us for worship music from the 13h30 service. I couldn’t even imagine such a project. For one thing, we don’t own the rights to most of what we sing in the service and an all-original album was way too daunting a first project. But then last summer I listened to a recording of an ACP Café and was quite frankly blown away by the quality of what the band was able to do musically, live, with no mixing. I can say that since I’m not speaking about anything I was singing. I was really riveted by what these guys were able to share musically and what came across even without any production. It made me believe that perhaps we could pull off a CD that would be a blessing to the ACP community.

Q: What’s on the album?
Natalie: Like ACP Café, the album features new arrangements by worship band members of material we love. In this case, Christmas classics with one original composition by Il-woong Seo, Joseph’s Christmas; a song that explores what Joseph must have felt that first Christmas Eve. It also includes Joy to the World, recorded live in the 13h30 service and with the help of ACP’s Adult Choir.

Q: How did Fred and the ACP choir get involved with the project?
A: Fred was incredibly supportive and so helpful from the start. He suggested possibly collaborating with bells in Savior of the Nations, Come, which was a huge encouragement from the start. I admire Fred as a composer so much, bringing something I’ve arranged to him was intimidating to say the least. For Joy to the World, we had wanted to boost the recording of the congregation by having the choir sing the call and response and antiphonal bits, but when Young (our sound engineer) and I heard their rehearsal, we were immediately like, “this is exquisiste, we have to include as much of them as possible.” So Fred and the choir indulged us and, on the spot, sang a gorgeously harmonized verse of Joy, a cappella. That
became the intro and outro for the song, which we recorded live in the 13h30 service.

Members of the “Still Point” band during rehearsals and recording in the ACP Catacombs.

Q: Everything else was recorded in the Catacombs?
A: Yes. Thanks to Dan Haugh. The Catacombs was the ideal recording space; homey and worshipful and full of ACP history. And thanks to band member and professional sound engineer Young Seo. Without Young such a project would have been unthinkable. With minimal equipment he’s pulled off something that I hope will be a blessing to the congregation. That was the goal.

Q: Why name the worship band after almost 4 years?
A: What I love most about the ACP and this group is maintaining and making the most of the uniqueness of individuals with such very different tastes and backgrounds and together creating something new. ‘Contemporary band’ is just way too bland a title for this ever-evolving family of musicians. We’ve been kicking around possibilities for ages. While we were in London for the Worship Central conference, I threw it out and it seemed to catch.

Q: What is Still Point?
A: It comes from my favorite poem, Burnt Norton of T.S. Eliot’s Four Quartets. The Still Point of the turning world, nether flesh nor fleshless…refers to the incarnation of Christ where the timeless enters time and changes everything. Worship is always a still point. Where Life in Christ becomes central and tangible to us. We encounter and rejoice in the all-sufficient God who loves us. Except for the still point there would be no dance; and there is only the dance. Amen!

Q: How can people buy a copy of Savior of the Nations, Come?
A: On 2 December ACP Café will be the official album release (in the Theatre at 19h30 pm.) We will perform songs from the album and there will be Christmas-y refreshments. The CDs cost €10 and will be on sale at ACP’s Reception and in the coffee fellowship time following the 11h00 and 13h30 services through the month of December. For more information on the album visit the website.
Late last September, Patti Lafage flew to Uganda to join the Rafiki Village there, after several months of waiting in anticipation, and training sessions. Rafiki Uganda was built in 2003 and is now home to 102 resident orphans plus 72 local children who attend the pre-primary, primary, junior and senior secondary schools. Patti, who sang in Fred Gramann’s Choir, says that the Lord has truly been at work here moving friends, family, churches and even some people she did not know personally to support me for this mission. On these pages, Patti shares stories of “how God has been working to help (her) to contribute to His transforming love in Africa.”

Dear Friends,

Yes, when He looks in Uganda, He will most definitely find people of strong and vibrant faith. In just a few short weeks, I have had the opportunity to witness that faith at work in Rafiki staff, workers and teachers as well as in our children, both residents and day students. Fervent and spontaneous prayers, attentive and thoughtful Bible study as well as heartfelt renditions of the week’s hymn, a cappella and al fresco, testify to this faith. But more importantly, all work hard to make Rafiki’s vision a reality.

Are there challenges?
Most definitely! Rafiki Village Uganda is on a magnificent park-like site on a low hill surrounded by higher hills. We are blessed with plenty of rain and our own well which provides excellent drinking water. However, we are several miles from the nearest town by narrow, steep, and slippery roads deeply gouged by rain run-off. For most supplies we need to go into Kampala, a 40-minute drive made “interesting” by speed traps, slow trucks, speeding buses, swarming “boda-boda” scooters and squads of ruthless mini-bus taxis. Little wonder that our Gatekeepers welcome us back warmly and even gratefully when we return from a foray.

But we don’t forget that many of our teachers, workers and Day Students travel these same roads, on foot, for as long as three hours round trip, in order to come to the Village. This means starting off at dawn, in all kinds of weather. It also means cleaning tons of red mud from several hundred shoes each day at the gate. Indeed, Ugandans are particularly conscientious about their clothes and shoes – always neat and clean despite the difficulties.

Our power generators are expensive to run and the public grid is overtaxed. So providing our three school buildings with lights and fans and the dining hall and kitchen with power during all hours of operation is the priority. ROS homes have every comfort, including power on a schedule which means that flashlights are sometimes needed to help us finish our lesson plans. How blessed we are though; almost none of our neighbors have power at all.
Our eight Senior IV students are taking their final state exams, in every subject, at a nearby public school testing center where hundreds of students from all over the district are competing for the all-important secondary school “O Levels”. Conditions at the testing center leave much to be desired, and our students can be the target of envious public school students who try to make things difficult for them. So four of our teachers accompany them to insure their safety and comfort, while the other teachers conscientiously cover their classes with our remaining students. We all pray for their success on these exams and that our younger students take their advice to work and study hard while they still have time to do so.

Another challenge lies in doing full justice to the excellent Rafiki Schools Curriculum based on Classical and Christian educational values while integrating the Uganda standard curriculum, a full and demanding program. Lengthy debates in a climate of understanding and mutual respect among Ugandan and ROS staff make this possible.

Meeting Rafiki’s very high standards in childcare and education keeps everyone busy almost 24/7, but this is done with love and a real appreciation for the privilege of working with our children.

Thank you for your continuing interest in the work God is doing through Rafiki and His plans for me.

With much love and gratitude,

Patti Lafage

A BIG HUG
Soon I will have dining hall duty but already I like to go to there some nights at 5:15PM while the children and Mamas are having their dinner, just to visit. We have several sick children at the moment, and last night there weren't quite enough mamas to go around so I got to hold Sam, a very tall six-year-old who was recovering from a stomach virus, on my lap for a long cuddle during dinner. It was So-o-o-o sweet. That's what I came for! The last little boy I held like that was Christopher, and the one before that may have been Charles.

THE CRESTED CRANES
Today outside of the dining hall at the children’s breakfast hour (7AM...), the Childcare Director & I saw two flamboyant Crested Cranes, the national bird of Uganda and becoming very rare in populated areas like ours. They were proudly strutting their stuff right across our lawn down the hill from the children’s cottage number 6. They are held to be very good luck.

RAFIKI CHILDREN
Our children are beautiful. Interesting, rather angular facial bone structure, dark brown skin shining with health. Huge expressive eyes and smiles. Since Universal Primary Education - free of charge - has been provided for all Ugandan children, the existing public schools have been flooded with students, leading to overcrowding and difficulties related to sheer numbers of children. Hygiene is one of these. So, among other policies, law requires all primary school children to have shaved heads. Of course our Rafiki School, though private and with very small classes, respects that law. Our resident children have three outfits of clothing each. Their "play clothes" consist of sturdy sports-type sandals, comfortable shorts (some of the girls have skirts) and sleeveless tops or shirts. These are mainly used clothes, kept clean and mended by the Mothers. T-shirts with ads, logos or emblems are particularly appreciated. For school, each child has a nice pair of black lace-up shoes which they keep clean, even in the rain, and polish daily. Their uniforms have been made locally for them: short sleeved white shirts for everyone, bright blue pinafores for the girls, long loose shorts for the boys, up through primary.
Surrounding schools have bright pink or emerald green uniforms, and we see many other colors walking along the road after school. We are talking about children who are morphologically thin, and ours eat only healthy food, and plenty of it. They grow fast, so the uniforms vary from long to short before going to another child. The secondary students wear brown skirts or pants with blue sweater vests. The Day Scholars, who come from across the street or from five miles away, are provided with the same free uniforms, and manage somehow to keep them neat and clean. For church on Sunday, like all Ugandans, the children and Mamas dress their very best. The girls have nice dresses; the boys have long pants or dressy shorts. Their shirts are stylish, clean and perfectly pressed. They look “smart” and feel good about it.

**BEHAVIOR**

Our children are well-trained and well-behaved, at least during school hours or when a teacher, Mama or staff member is present. They know how to line up, wait patiently, do as told, follow routines. Organized sports, free play and simple “down-time” allow them to just be children for several hours of each day. They rarely seem “needy”, rarely resort to attention grabbing tricks. When asked to come forward in class, to write or draw on the board, receive their graded papers, or perhaps a compliment, they wear serious, even solemn, expressions. But when they return to their seats, their irrepressible smiles tell it all. I have seen a few children face illness and even surgery with bravery, and bounce back quickly to join their peers. In the Ugandan culture, children are taught to look down when in the presence of an adult. We want them to look up into our eyes, to speak up, to greet us. They are well able to integrate the two sets of behaviors and to know the difference.

**UGANDAN TEACHERS**

My fellow teachers are an amazing group. Five young men, and 18 young women, bright, competent and conscientious. Most are Bagandan, representing the ethnic group originally from here around Lake Victoria, the central region of Uganda, and which gave the country its name. These people obviously enjoy, or feel they merit, a measure of status thanks to their origin. They have beautiful dark brown, smooth and shiny skin. Their strong facial bone structure, wide smiles and peaceful expressions are striking. Their sense of humor and sensitivity to compliments make them seem very approachable. Their English is, to my ear, the closest to what I'm used to. There are some sounds they say differently and a lot of “freedom” with English verb simple vs. continuous tenses. Several are from the “western region” and are quick to acquiesce that “Yes, that's where the President comes from". I can already hear their phonetic particularities. A few are left to be identified – can figure them out in the next few months.

**MY MORNING ROOM**

Do you remember books describing mansions of old in which the Mistress spent the morning in her Morning Room? I imagined her seated in a room with lots of windows, writing letters to her family or perhaps writing out the day's menu for the Governess, as in *Rebecca*. Well, I have a morning room here. Its two windows face east and south east, so my morning exercises, physical first then spiritual, are accompanied by routinely spectacular sunrises. It being “rainy” season, interesting clouds shape the bright corals, fiery oranges, darks blues and grays. It all happens rather quickly, like the Eiffel Tower Bastille Day fireworks in one ten-minute show. Sleep late on week-ends and miss that? Are you kidding?

**BIRDS OF UGANDA**

Yesterday I began to notice the birds and flowers in our park-like Rafiki Village. There are huge black magpies with yellow striped wings which squawk like monkeys as they chase each other around in the trees. They gorge themselves on our guavas, but there are plenty left. In
the morning, if the smaller bird noises haven't waken me, the small flock of Glossy Ibis (about two feet tall, fat brown bodies on tall stick legs with a curved beak which reaches down to the ground) provide an automatic wake-up caw. A couple of small, curious and friendly Red-billed Fire Finches live around my front door somewhere and are always on the sidewalk to greet me. They look like our French “rouge gorge” but are a deep shiny dark fuchsia color. And a couple of Pied Wagtails are often there waiting, too. In town, the huge Marabou Storks (1m50 tall!) nest in trees all along the city streets and are known for cleaning up the garbage. It's a good thing they are useful 'cause they sure are ugly!

I'll have to find a book on the trees and flowers. We have huge mango trees, orange trees that are masquerading as lime trees for the moment, jackfruit trees, and another that is now dropping wonderfully sweet-smelling fruit like small apples. A night-blooming jasmine outside my bedroom window perfumes the corner inside and out. Little wildflowers spring up unexpectedly in corners of sidewalks and well-mowed lawns. It's like paradise.

The Village is like a Virginia college campus – beautifully kept lawns, shrubs, trees, spacious and widely spaced buildings. All kept in perfect condition by many workers. When I arrived at the end of September, only the 102 resident children were here since it was school vacation. The Day students came back on 10 October. So during GAMES I only “worked” for about 3 1/2 hours per day supervising art projects, teaching 2 Gospel songs to a “pilot” choir of 10 boys about 8 and 9 years old. They loved it almost as much as I do!

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An invitation from former Youth Pastor Ginger Strickland

God willing and the people consenting

The Right Reverend Pierre W. Whalon
Bishop-in-Charge
of the Convocation of American Episcopal Churches in Europe
will ordain

Virginia Lisbeth Strickland

to the Sacred Order of Priests
in Christ's One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church
on Sunday, the eleventh of December,
in the year of our Lord two thousand eleven,
at eleven o'clock in the morning

Church of the Incarnation
209 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

Your prayers and presence are requested.

Clergy – Red Stoles
Reception to follow in the Parish House
NOVEMBER AT ACP: The month in review
(Photos by Fred Gramann)
(Photos on cover page courtesy of Kristie Worrel)
Marché de Noel, 19 November 2011
Many thanks to the Marché de Noel volunteers

Music and Light: A World Premiere

‘Musique en couleurs is a creation, a new concept in classical music’ - N. Romanenko

‘The idea is to give to the notes all their colour in order to find both their depth visually as well as their dramaturgy or, on the other hand, the higher levels which the melody can inspire.’ - J. Rouveyrollis

Through the ages musicians have dreamt of playing in colour. Are sounds and colours not mixed in our perception?

The notion of the inter-play between color and music is not new and many are they who have experimented with it: Steven Spielberg, notably in ‘Close encounters of a Third Kind’; Olivier Messiaen after meeting Charles Blanc-Gatti afflicted with synopsie: the perception of colors associated with sounds; the 18th-century Jesuit, Louis Bertrand Castel who built a light emitting harpsichord; Voltaire predicted a great future for him, passing by Frédéric Kastner: pyrophone and singing lamp, Alexandre-Wallace Rimington: organ with colors, Alexandre Scriabine, Arnold Schoenberg, Edgar Varese together with Le Corbusier, up to the present times with the likes of Pink Floyd.

Specialists in the field of chromo-therapy believe that classical music can generate a sense of well-being, and the marriage with color can affect aptitudes and emotional development.

Nathalia Romanenko, pianist and ACP member, and the lighting designer, Jacques Rouveyrollis have collaborated for several years now to bring this project to fruition.

The Mayor of Lyon, Gérard Collomb is providing the means by which this concept can be presented as a world exclusivity. On the occasion of the “Fête des Lumières”, a grandiose festival which takes place each year in December, one of the finest theatres in Lyon, the “Salle Molière” will be available for Nathalia Romanenko and Jacques Rouveyrollis to present a programme of Chopin and Liszt.

Among the enthusiastic sponsors of this event are: La Ville de Lyon, the Conseil Général du Rhône, “OmeoArt”: Boiron’s cultural association, the Toupargel Group, and BioMérieux.

The fashion designer, Diane de Furstenberg will provide Nathalia Romanenko’s gowns for the concert.

Practical information
A series of concerts is planned from 8 to 10 December 2011, (during the Fête des Lumières), salle Molière in Lyon.

Contacts:
City of Lyon – www.lyon.fr
Association “Extraordinaria Classica” - www.extraordinariaclassica.com
Nathalia Romanenko’s website – www.nathalia-romanenko.com
SUNDAY SERMON BIBLE STUDIES meets in the G2 between the 10h00 and 11h00 service. Please contact Kristie Worrel for more information kristieworrel@hotmail.com. More details about the Advent series, on pp. 4-6.

TUESDAY WOMEN’S BIBLE STUDY meets from 10h30 to 12h30 here at the church. All are welcome. We will be studying Be Mature: Growing up in Christ, a study of the Book of James by Warren Wiersbe. If you have small children, the church nursery is available for a nominal fee. Please let us know if you’d be interested so we can ensure that we have the proper number of childcare givers. Questions or more information, contact our coordinators: Jennifer Jourlait at jenniferjourlait@mac.com and Diedre Grizzle: sanc2fied@yahoo.com.

SIMPLY CHRISTIAN - Why Christianity Makes Sense by N. T. Wright. Have you ever wondered why humans in all places and times have yearned for beauty, truth, spirituality, and justice? Bishop Wright contends that it is because we hear the echoes of God's voice -- the same God who created the world, is known through the children of Israel and Jesus Christ, and who is at work in the world through the Holy Spirit. Connecting to this God through worship, prayer, scripture and the church leads to life that is full and abundant. Contact MaryClaire King.

ACP MEN – come for coffee, conversation, prayer and fellowship. Any men interested in further information or in being added to our e-mail list should contact Ed Hyslip (gtmmsinc@gmail.com) for information about address and door codes.

CALLING ALL MULTICULTURAL COUPLES. Our next gathering will be on 9 December, Friday. Bring a dish to share and join the fun. For more info, contact Monica Basset or Susanna Anglada at monica.basset@free.fr or susanna_anglada@yahoo.com.

THE KNITTING GROUP welcomes newcomers and experts, and others in between – all are welcome. Some of us are knitting now for Mission Outreach, and some for ourselves and our families. After Christmas, some of us will be making an afghan together -- anyone can join in. We can guide you toward Paris knit shops, patterns, online resources, local knitting events and more. Drop in; bring a friend; check it out. Monday afternoons at 17h00. For more info, contact Antoinette Wolfe at alawolfe@gmail.com or Elizabeth Rand at ehrand@gmail.com. We will be taking a 3-week break over the holidays. Please note that we will NOT be meeting on 19 and 26 December, and 2 January.

MOVIE DISCUSSION GROUP: The movie group's December choices are 50/50 by Jonathan Levine, Hara-Kiri: death of a samurai (mort d'un samourai) by Takashi Miike and Carnage by Roman Polanski. See any or all at your convenience in the cinema, then join the group for discussion on Thursday, 15 December at 19h30 in room G2 of the church basement.

WOMEN’S RUNNING TEAM. If you are interested in being part of the ACP running team (men and women are welcome) please contact Kim at woac_president@yahoo.com. We will be looking for other races to run. Several have already signed up for various races in the coming months!

FRIDAY MISSION LUNCH. Every Friday, the Mission Lunch Program provides a free, cooked lunch at the host church (American Cathedral, 23 avenue George V, Paris 8e) to those in need. ACP organizes the lunch on the second Friday of each month, but volunteers are needed every week for cooking, serving and cleaning-up. Contact: Kristie.
Moms in Touch Prayer Group: Do you believe prayer makes a difference? Would you like to join with other moms as we lift up our cares and concerns for our children and their schools to our loving Father? Experience the joy of replacing anxiety with peace and hope when we pray scripture together. Moms in Touch groups are in 120 countries and now English language groups are forming in Paris. Contact Carioline at MomsInTouchParis@gmail.com.

An Invitation! Are you a greeter or an usher at the 9h00 and/or 11h00 services? Are you interested in becoming one? This invitation is to you! Please come to a meeting on 4 December, 12h30-13h30, in G2. We will take a refreshing look at this essential ministry and have some refreshments, too! For any questions, please contact Anna Zweede at a.zweede@numericable.com.

Do you attend the 11h00 service on Sundays? Perfect, because we could use your time (one hour) twice a month at the 1:30 service with the ACP children's worship. Please contact Jeanette Laugier at childrensworship@acparis.org.

Looking Ahead to 2012

1 January, Sunday New Year's Day Services: 11h00 (Traditional worship service) and 13h30 (contemporary worship service) only. Please note that the church will be closed on 31 December, Saturday, as from noon.

A special dedication concert for the newly restored Steinway Concert Grand Piano 17h00, in the sanctuary. Free admission - Reception follows.