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Photo by Fred Gramann

Would you like to propose articles, write, proofread, do layout or take photos? Contact Alison Benney at Spire@acparis.org  Note: Deadline for the March Spire is Friday 13 February.
A few weeks ago when Spire editor Alison Benny asked me to write a piece on love, who could have imagined that I would sitting down to write within a week of the dark days of terrorist violence which traumatized our fair City of Light, and the slaughter of over 2,000 Nigerians by Boko Haram?

As I said in my sermon the following Sunday, Jesus calls us to love our enemies... We don’t start there, of course, but that’s the ultimate expression of divine love. “Christ died for us while we were yet sinners...” We practice daily loving our family members. We learn by practicing loving our neighbors. But we are called to practice loving our neighbors who are not just from our own tribe or nation. We are called, like the Good Samaritan, to love whoever is in need around us, even when it puts us in harm’s way.

At our Thursday morning Bible study, just after the attacks and in the context of a discussion around what it means to “be filled with the Holy Spirit,” one of the men reminded us of KPI – Key Performance Indicators... We agreed the KPI for Christians is always love. In other words, the filling of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, is measurable. Our discipleship metric, our key performance indicator as the people of God, is how well we are loving our spouses, our children, our parents, our neighbors; and for Jesus, the most mature divine love is manifest in loving our enemies.

C.S. Lewis in his book, The Four Loves, draws a very helpful distinction between like and love. Lewis also differentiates between affection, friendship, sexual and agape love. It is this fourth type of “love” that is particular to Christian faith, and important to understand when we hear Jesus’ command to love our enemies.

Christian love is not primarily a feeling. It is volitional act, that at times pushes against everything we may naturally feel towards another person. Any married person will understand that there are times when you choose to love your spouse not because you feel like it, but because you have made a commitment to your partner.

In the same way, we practice loving our enemies not because we ever learn to “feel the love” for them, but because we have committed our lives to Jesus... Love is active. It may mean getting out there and marching in a demonstration, like the millions did around the world in solidarity with France the Sunday after the violence. It may mean feeding the hungry. It may mean taking time to listen to those who are shattered by violence and patiently pointing to the way of forgiveness. It may mean entering more seriously into political debate about what freedom really is. Whatever love means at this time, another good KPI is I Timothy 1:7: “for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.” And I John 4:18, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear...”

Another active expression of Christian love is the ministry of reconciliation. We need to help people make the distinction between Terrorists and Muslims! So, may we take this fearful and politically charged time in the history of our great city to look for intelligent, creative and loving ways to give witness to the gospel, and to live into our mission “to bear witness by word and deed to the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ!”

I encourage you to use our Lenten devotional reflecting on Micah 6:8 to explore ways in which you can practice love as a preparation for Easter new life. Love and the new life to which God is calling us will always reflect justice, kindness, and humility.

In Christ,
Multiplication of giving

By Chris Pruszko
Vice-Chair, Finance and Stewardship Committee

In November, the ACP Council members were given “Manna bags” from our Mission Outreach Committee (thanks to Paula Taquet-Woolfolk!) to distribute in the community. These bags were filled with non-perishable foods, bars of soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste, and socks, to give to the less fortunate. I took two, and the following weekend I hit the streets of Montmartre with my wife and son, looking for someone who might need them. We headed straight to the “resident” homeless man that sits by the BNP Paribas on our street. I know him, as he always has a smile. As we approached him, we noticed another homeless man giving him money. What a humbling and inspirational sight! God was truly at work.

Prov. 22:9 Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor.

We had the pleasure of following this generous act with giving each man one of the Manna bags - a true multiplication of giving!

This wasn’t the only place that I was able to witness the multiplication of giving. I have also seen it within the walls of the American Church, and especially towards the end of the year. Many of you will recall that the Finance and Stewardship Committee reported to the congregation that a decline in giving was impacting our finances and we were expecting an end-of-year deficit. Unfortunately, this financial situation coincided with the execution of a longer-term vision to help secure the future of our building with a three-year capital campaign, ACP 160.

We brought both the current financial situation, along with our campaign for the longevity of the church building, to the ACP congregation and asked for generosity. We received it. Both campaigns, the launch of our 2015 Stewardship Campaign, “We Give!”, and our ACP 160 Capital Campaign, were successful and bear witness to the magnitude of generosity among our congregation. While we may still likely have a deficit at the end of the year, it will be manageable, and while our ACP 160 Capital did not exceed its highest goal, it exceeded our minimum target. We are blessed!

I want to take this moment to thank each of you for your ongoing support of our congregation’s ministries and missions. Our leadership team will continue to work to ensure the most efficient and wise use of the funds you have entrusted to us for His Kingdom through the work of the ACP. Thank you!

Please look out for the ongoing Stewardship Focus series, highlighting the ways in which your giving reaches our congregation, city, and world. Also, a full ACP 160 update will appear in the March Spire.
The Rev. Dan Haugh  
Associate Pastor for  
Youth and Young Adult Ministries

I continue my reflections on what I will miss here in Paris. To be honest, February is the most difficult month for me and for many residents of our great city. With a slight vitamin D deficiency, the winter months of clouds and darkness do not bode well for my body or spirit at times.

Since I am not an avid skier, my plan over these past four years has been to travel to warmer climates and sunnier skies in February. Many Parisians take to the slopes during the 2-week holiday break in February. The Swiss and French Alps are among the most beautiful mountain ranges in the world and are located only a few short hours from Paris. Yet for me, a 3-hour TGV ride to the South of France to visit places such as Cassis, Montpellier or Nice provides a nice change of atmosphere and pace during the normally dark days this month.

Of course, 14 February is Valentine’s Day, and indeed there is no city more romantic than Paris. While the city does not celebrate this day quite like in America, one cannot go astray making a reservation at your local bistro with that special friend, significant other or spouse. The general ambiance of French restaurants or wine bars reflects romanticism at all times, but add a nice box of fine French chocolates, some freshly cut flowers and a bottle of wine, and you will have a Valentine’s Day to remember. Although many could argue this description is a typical weekend date here in Paris!

Personally, I have been blessed each February to attend the Youth Pastors Conference sponsored by the AICEME (Associate of Churches in Europe and the Middle East). Each year, my friends and colleagues from other international churches in our region gather together for a few days of fellowship, worship, learning and inspiration. It can be a lonely path serving in a large city away from your home country and culture. Fortunately for me, during my time here at ACP I have met incredible men and women serving in similar roles and contexts. I have cherished my time with them and can honestly say that their encouragement and example throughout the years, and especially during our times together in February, provided me much-needed support in my own ministry here at ACP. My last conference with these youth pastors will be in Basel, Switzerland and I eagerly look forward to connecting and reflecting together.

Through February can feel long, dark and dreary at times, it is helpful to know that the days are actually getting longer. The darkest days are behind us in fact. I believe this is true for our city as well in light of the tragic events in January.

Spring will arrive and light will shine forth through the clouds increasingly as the days progress, and winter melts into spring. As it does, may our hearts be lifted up with hope and our lives reflect God’s love and light.

In Christ,
Dan Haugh

Mark your calendars: 11h30 Sunday 22 March, ACP congregational meeting  
9h00 service + 11h service + 13h30 service = ONE BIG CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH SERVICE
A rare opportunity to hear Tiffany Musica is offered on Friday, 6 February, at 20h, at a fundraising event for Habitat for Humanity. This small group of ACP musicians usually performs at social centers, including geriatric hospitals, nursing homes and prisons. They, along with the Habitat for Humanity singers, will entertain and inspire with a repertoire of music from all styles. Don’t miss it!

Please join us for this special service which marks the beginning of a 40-day time of fasting in preparation for the celebration of Easter. The service will include the Sacrament of Holy Communion and the imposition of ashes.

Ash Wednesday service
18 February at 19h
Come on in!

Three years of Open Doors Ministry

By Anjlo Ajmal

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

By God’s grace, it’s been three years that we started the Open Doors Ministry at ACP in January 2012. Our Open Doors Ministry means that I open our beautiful sanctuary for visitors during the week. I welcome all our visitors with open arms and open heart, reflecting our ACP community. I have welcomed guests from many different parts of the world. I have received visitors with faith and those with no faith, and people who are struggling in spirit or mind.

Since 2012, more than 3,000 visitors have visited our sanctuary. There have been moments when I have seen tears in their eyes, when people were touched by the peace, when Moms instinctively asked their children to be quiet in the house of the Lord.

We get many people who had once been part of ACP, some members and some not, who want to re-visit the sanctuary. Some have been married at the American Church, and some of them brought their children, some with grandchildren, expressing their desire to bring their children to the church where their parents got married.

Our Open Doors Ministry is a great opportunity to share God’s love with believers, non-believers and people belonging to other faiths. One time four Muslim girls visited from Sweden. It was their prayer time, and they asked me for a place where they could offer their prayers. Of course, I asked them to pray in the Chapel.

I want to thank you all for your prayers and appreciation for Open Doors. I also want to thank Pastor Scott Herr and Alison Benny for guidance and support. May Open Doors continue to serve the Lord which is to serve others with open arms and hearts! Please do remember the Open Doors Ministry in your prayers.

Some comments from the guest book

I came to this beautiful church to see a window which was installed by my uncle Joseph Reynolds, from his Boston studio. This day has been made all the more special by Anjlo and Fred, who have been so wonderful in giving their time & sharing their knowledge of this wonderful church. My wife, Cheryl, her brother Scott, and my friend Winston will always be thankful for this fabulous memory of Paris, thank you! - Wilfred Kaises

A return to the church with my daughter and granddaughter, with memories of worshipping here from 1960-1965. A wonderful guide! - Cecile Shannon.

Many thanks to the American Church for giving a warm welcome and some peace in this busy city. Thanks for being open, so that one can pray in the house of the Lord. Warm hello to Pastor Scott. - Iliana Kasarska.

My husband Rand and I were married here in November 2007 by Pastor Ken. We’ve since had a little boy, Jack, and we look forward to bringing him here to visit. Thank you for the happy memories! - Hillary Waldvu.

We visited this church on our way to the Eiffel Tower; this was a very calm and relaxing beautiful church. The Tiffany windows are very nice & beautiful. We will remember this lovely house of the Lord our God. - the Stramondo’s from Jupiter, Florida.

Jérôme and I were flying to Spain last May. He was flipping through the in-flight magazine when he showed me a picture. “Do you recognize this?” It was a small photo of the ACP sanctuary! A Spanish reader had submitted it to the magazine along with a short article about his unexpected discovery of the ACP, where he had found a peaceful place and a “charming Pakistani guide”. He felt very welcomed and wanted to share his experience. What a great witness to visitors to Paris! - Kerry Lieury.

My husband Sam and I will be in Paris on 16 August (2014), and wish to visit the American Church. Seeing the church and visiting the interior is my top priority on this trip. My godfather and dear friend of the family, Richard Wessel, carved your six basswood statues in the pulpit of your church in 1984. Dick and Sue Wessel’s Christmas card that year depicted one of the statues. I told them then that I was going to get to Paris one of these days and see his work in person. I only wish my family and I had visited the dedication ceremony, and that Dick and Sue had each lived long enough to take me to Paris themselves. I am dear friends to this day with both of their children, Rae Ann and Christian, and still spend Christmas Eve with them and their families after all these years. - Carey Fox.

Note: Anjlo was recently blessed with the good news that, after a 4-year wait, his wife Lubna finally got a French visa and joins him in February!
A word from your ACP Council

Members and Friends of ACP,
Grace and peace to you from your Church Council.

As I write to you, it is a calm and quiet winter’s day in Paris, seemingly thousands of miles away from the events that shocked our city just last month. Many of us have begun to return to our regular activities, though certainly with a heightened sense of our surroundings and proximity to others. At moments like these, living our lives with grace is as important as ever.

I’m grateful for all of the varied ministry teams at ACP who tirelessly prepare and contribute to our church life, a source of grace. We are also blessed by the many “quiet” acts of faithful service that go on behind the scenes. We all contribute in our own way to the ACP family, and we are healthier, wiser, and spiritually stronger, thanks to the inspiring faith-driven commitment and tireless devotion to serve this place of worship.

We have recently passed Epiphany, and all of its celebration. Soon, we will enter into the Lenten Season, a time for spiritual transformation and renewal. In this spirit, Council is busy preparing for our annual congregational meeting on Sunday, 22 March. On this day, as last year, we will worship together in one combined traditional/contemporary service, with the meeting to follow. Our pastoral teams are working on the details and we will share it to all in due course, for now, we ask you to reserve this date in your calendar.

In the days of anticipation and preparation for Easter, may we continue to pray for strength and peace, thereby opening ourselves more to God’s love and grace.

In Christ,

Mark Primmer
ACP Vice Moderator

Bible readings for February

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January marked five months of my year-long stay in Paris. I embarked upon this journey knowing that I knew little about what God was going to show me, but that I was being called to come and see. So, in a great leap of faith, I set out for Paris to settle into a new country, a new community and church family, and a new job. And during these 5 months, I have seen a lot - but what I have been learning has not been observed by sight...but by listening.

In opening my ears, I have begun to hear new sounds. to hear the still small voice of God, a voice that knows no single location. I have heard the questions of our youth, the stories of our young adults, and the encouragement of our pastoral team. And most certainly, I have heard our songs of praise to The Lord in all three of our worship services.

Although I studied French for 8 years, immersion is so different from study. I have never heard the sound of French so accented, so fast, and so frequently! I have had to sharpen my hearing, to catch the meaning of what Parisians say to me en francais.

The same notion applies to my work at ACP. As an interdenominational church, I am also immersed in a culture of mixed theologies. Sometimes it is kind of like the Tower of Babel. As Christians, we are all working toward the same goal, but it's almost as if we are speaking different languages.

Matters of theology have a unique way of frustrating people when they do not agree. Consider how certain historical theologians become heretics because their lingo was not the "proper" lingo about God. Or how many churches have split into new denominations because the theological views they hold differ so much that they no longer speak the same language. Although I am strongly rooted in the Presbyterian church, that identity has been challenged by listening to others’ theological languages here at the ACP. I guess you could say I am learning French and inter-denominationalism at the same time.

The next note is more personal, a tune for my own heart about hearing the voice of God - not a booming voice from the Heavens, but like the one the prophet Elijah heard atop the mountain...a still small voice. This requires a lot of concentration to hear properly. Loosening myself from all the familiarities of home means I have some personal time to better listen to that still small voice.

My work with the youth and young adults has allotted me the pleasures of listening to good questions and life stories. The youth have been teaching me, with their challenging questions, just how hard it is to remain relevant today. The young adults have a lot to share about their own struggles with faith. As I listen, I continue to be reminded of how important it is to stand beside each other in community. We may be on our journeys, but we needn't walk them alone. Hearing their questions and stories is teaching me that the still small voice I hear is one which others hear in their own ways, reminding me that God is in all of our hearts.

God is certainly in the hearts of our staff, and their heartstrings pluck notes of joy in my ear. As Dan and I work together, I constantly hear from him ways to make our ministry relevant. From Michele, I hear encouragement about being a woman in ministry, good news I sometimes do not hear from certain perspectives on the Gospel. From Scott I hear lessons on leadership, simply through his example. These are sounds that inspire, pushing me to think about my own goals in ways I did not think I would. And I am taking notes on how to lead a community of faith in a metropolitan city, in an inter-denominational context, and in a contemporary fashion.

There is so much more to hear. For now, I have gotten a good start on listening, trying to hear clearly what God wants me to hear. New tongues, new theologies, a small voice heard more clearly, good questions and interesting stories, songs of praise and lots of lessons from our pastors. Certainly sounds good to me :)
**SPECIAL PRAYER**

Offered on Sunday, 11 January, following the terrorist attacks  
By Rev. Jean-Christophe Bieselaar

*I lift up my eyes to the hills –  
from where will my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth* (Psalms 121:1-2)

Today as we light the candle for God’s Global Vision of Compassion, Justice and Peace, we will first take a moment of silence to remember the victims of the vicious terrorist attacks this week at the Charlie Hebdo offices, at the kosher supermarket in Montrouge, and in Dammartin.  
Let us take a moment for silent prayer  
to honor the dead...  
to remember the living - those who grieve and those who have been injured  
A moment of silence

Eternal God, our only hope, our help in times of trouble  
We confess that this week we have all walked through the valley of the shadow of death. Listen to our cry for help, our King and our God, for we pray to no one but you.  
We are praying for those grieving the loss of their family members;  
For those who have been injured;  
For the police and those who have laid down their lives for our safety;  
For political leaders who have to show wisdom and discretion in order to keep the peace;  
For all of our religious communities in France - Christian, Jewish and Muslim - who are all affected by what happened in different ways.  
We pray for those demonstrating today to show solidarity with journalists and cartoonists, and to uphold the freedom of speech and the right to dissent that is so important in a democratic society.  
Bless our city and this country. Do not let threats multiply  
Hold back those who are impulsive, lest desire for vengeance overwhelm our common welfare.  
Teach us what it means to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God in these days. (Micah 6:8)  
And remind us that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38-39)

Eternel notre Dieu, notre seule espérance, notre soutien dans ces temps difficiles,  
Aujourd’hui nous affirmons ensemble que :  
Nous sommes Charlie ;  
Nous sommes Ahmed ;  
Nous sommes David ;  
Nous sommes une communauté ;  
Nous sommes les enfants de Dieu.  
Nous nous tournons vers toi et te demandons de nous enseigner à nous, tes enfants, ce que signifie de pratiquer la justice, d’aimer la miséricorde, et de marcher humblement avec toi.  
Rappelle-nous que dans tout cela nous sommes bien plus que vainqueurs par celui qui nous a aimés…. Donnez-nous l’absolue certitude que ni la mort ni la vie, ni les anges ni les domination, ni le présent ni l’avenir, ni les puissances, ni ce qui est en haut ni ce qui est en bas, ni aucune autre créature, rien, absolument rien, ne pourra nous arracher à l’amour que Dieu nous a témoigné en Jésus Christ notre Seigneur. (Rom 8:38-39)

Bring peace to France and to the world, through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace and Savior of us all. AMEN.
The Interfaith Amigos

“We believe that it is time for renewed and deepening interfaith dialogue to honestly and openly confront these issues. We need to find better ways to talk with each other, to refuse demonization, and to learn about the authentic truths in each other’s faiths.”

They are a Christian preacher, a Jewish rabbi, and a Muslim sheik, an imam. They call themselves the Interfaith Amigos. And they want to get the world really talking, understanding, across lines of religion.

Ted Falcon is founder and senior rabbi at Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue in Seattle. Don Mackenzie is a minister in the United Church of Christ. He recently retired from leading the University Congregational U.C.C. in Seattle. Jamal Rahman is a Muslim Sufi minister and co-founder of Seattle’s Interfaith Community Church, and an adjunct faculty member at Seattle University.

This is an excerpt from an article they published on Huffpost Religion on 18 January, after the Charlie Hebdo attacks, called “The Challenge of Exclusivity.”

We are only human, so none of us is free from some of the lures of holding to a belief that our tradition is actually better than others. Some of us...can utilize aspects of our sacred texts and traditions to define and defend that exclusivist position. But we have also seen that such a position is simply not necessary in order to honor and celebrate the religious identities that help define us as individuals and as communities.

Awareness of the exclusivism we adhere to is required if we are to successfully move beyond it and share with each other as a human family welcoming everyone. Certainly, this does not mean watering down our own belief systems and our own communities. In fact, we have seen, time and time again, that when one steps beyond the notion that their way is “the only way,” an even more profound appreciation of one’s own faith becomes available.

We are all chosen, we are all loved, and we are all embraced compassionately. The challenge is to honor the call of each of our traditions, to treat each other more compassionately, and to care for our planet more lovingly.

Seek greater awareness of the treasures in each tradition, and watch your commitment to your own way deepen!

Religious reactions to the Charlie Hebdo killings

By Amit Pieter

In light of the killings at the offices of Charlie Hebdo, the heads of different faiths have issued statements, commenting on the acts of violence, yet expressing hopes for the future.

Speaking aboard an airplane, Pope Francis I spoke for the Catholic Church, saying that he abhorred the violence but there must be limits on free speech. He said that a writer must not “abuse or offend.” For example, the Pope said, if anyone swore against his mother he could expect a punch in the nose: “That’s normal.”

The Muslim community hoped for quiet reactions when the new volume of Charlie Hebdo was published with yet another caricature of Mohammed on the cover. “They’re free to publish what they like, but it affects us,” said an Arab woman in Clichy. “It’s going to hurt us a lot.” Outside France, Muslim leaders condemned the weekly’s decision to publish another cover with a satiric caricature of the prophet. In general, world Islamic leaders have appealed for calm.

Jewish leaders have expressed support for Islamic leaders who promote peace. The murdered victims at a kosher market provoked horror and indignant reactions, but this has been a moment when cooler heads are able to recognize their cultural similarities.

The reaction of the Protestant churches of France, the Federation Protestant Français, was revulsion, and unacceptance of an odious act which touches “our hearts and our conscience.”

Most notably, a hardline Muslim cleric in Pakistan offered up prayers in his mosque for the souls of the members of Charlie Hebdo and the Jewish people killed in the kosher supermarket. This can only be a step in the right direction.

*Au nom du protestantisme français, nous exprimons notre révolte et nous condammns cet acte odieux qui touche nos cœurs et nos consciences.
Missed out?
If you can’t make it to Thurber Thursday, you can still enjoy our amazing speakers and discussions. The video is available on our website at http://acparis.org/thurber-thursdays-archives.

The Eternal Now - Finding God in the everyday
Debbie Bellingham

You are a busy person, with a challenging career and/or a much loved family. You would like to live in God’s kingdom, and be transformed into the image of Christ, but who has the time or energy? Debby Bellingham is a Spiritual Director, a licensed psychotherapist, an ordained minister, author and experienced retreat facilitator. You can learn more about her by visiting her blog. (www.thementoredlife.com)

Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King as Speakers for Change
Scott Cormode

What can religious leaders learn from how Lincoln and King changed the story of a people and in so doing changed the people themselves? Scott Cormode is Academic Dean and Hugh De Pree Professor of Leadership Development, School of Theology, at Fuller Theological Seminary. His most recent book is Making Spiritual Sense: Theological Interpretation as Christian Leadership. More at fuller.edu/faculty/scormode

ACP’s Lenten Calendar

ACP’s Lenten Calendar aims to help families and individuals be more spiritually connected with God and with one another during this holy season. It provides daily scripture and devotionals, as well as other projects, that center on our congregational theme verse for the year, Micah 6:8. He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Find the Lenten Calendar at acparis.org/lentencalendar
Saints alive - on ACP windows

By Alison Benney

You don’t have to be Catholic, or even Christian, to be familiar with saints. Most children know who St. Nick is, the Irish diaspora have spread the fame of St. Patrick, and thanks to Hallmark Cards we all know whose Saint Day is celebrated on 14 February.

But generally speaking, Protestants don’t share the veneration toward saints that Catholics do. So why did the builders of the American Church include one stained glass window dedicated to four saints in particular? Let’s take a look.

The saints window is located on the west side of the church, between the Gospel window and the Reformation window, and it features four apostles of Christian faith, two of which are women. They are the saints Francis of Assisi, Genevieve, Catherine of Sienna, and Christopher.

When I give the docent tours, my rationale for Saint Francis of Assisi is that he considered all living creatures, from the lowest ant upward, to be worthy of God’s love. His teachings are the inspiration behind the Blessing of Pets that is celebrated on his feast day, 4 October, in churches around the world, including at the American Cathedral. Francis was also responsible for the first Christmas nativity scene, and in 1224, he became the first recorded person to bear the stigmata of Christ’s wounds.

He was, of course, the founder of the Franciscans and, along with Catherine of Sienna, one of the two patron saints of Italy. He is also considered the saint of the environment, including at the American Cathedral. Francis was also responsible for the first Christmas nativity scene, and in 1224, he became the first recorded person to bear the stigmata of Christ’s wounds.

Did you know that Genevieve is the patron saint of Paris? The story goes that when Attila and his conquering Huns approached Paris in the 5th century, she encouraged people to not flee but rather to pray, because, of course, with prayer we are saved. It worked: the barbarians skipped Paris and plundered Orleans instead. Genevieve was born in Nanterre in 419 AD and moved to Paris to dedicate herself to Christian life. Clovis I founded an abbey for her, and later Louis XV ordered a proper church to be built on the site, and dedicated to Genevieve, but in 1791 the revolutionaries turned it into a burial place for distinguished Frenchmen, called the Pantheon. Genevieve is still watching over the city; a statue of her is located on the bridge from the Isle St. Louis to the Latin quarter. It portrays her standing and facing east, with a child protected at her feet.

Most people can guess where St. Catherine of Sienna was born in 1347, but did you know that she is one of the six patrons of Europe? She is also patroness of the Catholic American woman’s fraternity, Theta Phi Alpha. She dedicated her life to God from age 7, traveled extensively to advocate reform of the clergy, and worked to bring the papacy of Gregory XI back to Rome from Avignon. Catherine is known for her many letters filled with wisdom and spiritual guidance, and especially for “The Dialogue,” containing the intimate conversations or prayers that she and God shared with each other.

St. Christopher is, of course, the popular patron saint of travelers. His name means “Christ-bearer” and refers to the tale that he carried an unknown child across a river; during the crossing the child seemed heavy as lead, and Christopher had trouble bearing his load. When he reached the other side, the child revealed himself as Christ, saying “You had on your shoulders not only the whole world but Him who made it.” Thus his popularity with travelers, athletes, mariners and ferrymen, and the ubiquitous St. Christopher medals used both as devotion and as a blessing for safe travels.

While saints are people who have been sanctified, Pastor Scott reminds us of Paul’s words, that it is by being “in Christ Jesus” that we ourselves are sanctified, set apart, made holy for God’s work in the world. Being part of the communion of saints doesn’t mean that we have what it takes to get immortalized in stained glass. But we can be in that number when the saints go marching in.
There are approximately 30,000 marriages each year in France between a French and a non-French partner. The inevitable culture clashes complicate the already challenging adventure that is marriage. What are the specific differences and difficulties that such couples face, and what is the best way to deal with them?

Those were the questions that almost 100 people came to get answered at a recent conference at the American Church.

On Friday evening, 9 January, the multicultural couples group of the American Church in Paris and French Protestant publisher Editions Farel held a conference taught by Rev. Jean-Christophe Bieselaar, ACP parish associate, on the subject “10 ways to succeed your intercultural marriage.”

The conference was an opportunity to launch the book Reverend Bieselaar recently published: *Viv(r)e le couple interculturel!* (available in French and, in 2015, in English). More than one hundred people attended. A third of them were regular or occasional participants to the monthly ACP multicultural couples group; a third attended because of the promotion done by Editions Farel, and the last third came via the personal network of Jean-Christophe. There were many intercultural couples among the attendees and many ethnic backgrounds were represented – a wonderful and yet not unusual diversity at The American Church in Paris!

The context of the conference was actually quite challenging. A couple of days before, terrorists launched attacks in different parts of the city of Paris and killed 17 people. On Friday afternoon, a couple of hours before the conference, the périphérique at Porte de Vincennes was closed because of the hostages being held captives at a kosher supermarket there. The special forces police launched assaults both there and in Dammartin.

Throughout the afternoon Pastor Scott and Pastor Jean-Christophe met and discussed whether they should cancel that evening’s conference. When the hostage situations were resolved at the end of the afternoon, they decided to go ahead with the conference. Many attendees actually expressed how grateful they were to have an opportunity to be at The American Church in Paris, with a community and surrounded by so many different people sharing the same goal: living together in harmony!
For better or worse

10 steps to success in an intercultural relationship

During the multicultural workshop, Jean-Christophe addressed 10 issues that any intercultural couple will face.

Be and remain open to other people and cultures. Scholars have suggested that psychological predispositions exist in an intercultural relationship. Regardless of the reason for engaging in this kind of union, curiosity and open-mindedness toward other cultures and, most important, being willing to learn “other” and “new” ways of being will be necessary for a lasting intercultural relationship.

Prepare for the challenges of administrative & immigration procedures. Civil marriage with someone who is a foreigner involves complex procedures. However, requesting the right of residency for a foreign spouse, in other words, the right to live together, is even harder to obtain. This can negatively impact the couple, and particularly the foreign spouse who may feel rejected, despite his or her personal effort to learn a new language and a new culture.

In addition, some countries do not allow for dual citizenship and a cruel choice may have to be made to give up his or her nationality. Do spouses also realize that, in some cases, their children will not be able to keep both nationalities upon reaching majority and will have to give up one? An unpleasant dilemma for children, who will have to choose between the nationality of their mother or their father...

Develop communication skills and awareness. Communication is a double-edged sword – it can create and resolve conflicts. Within an intercultural marriage it involves choosing which language will be spoken at home, being informed about possible nonverbal communication, and understanding that direct and indirect communication styles exist.

Expect sacrifice and cost. The cost of an intercultural relationship is threefold. First there is a financial cost: intercultural couples need more money than other couples from the same culture because they will need to go back to the spouse’s country of origin to keep ties. Second, when one marries a foreigner he or she may actually be “marrying” his or her family in-law and become responsible financially for the well-being of an extended family that was never expected to be so large and so... demanding. Last but not least, there is a cultural cost of living far away from one’s country, community, and especially family.

Clarify expected roles. The role of a woman or a man in a given society or culture may be totally different in another culture. In some countries, women are expected to be well accomplished professionally and financial independent, while in another culture women are expected to be homemakers and to raise the children. When marrying someone from another culture there are sometimes expectations that he or she will fulfil a traditional ascribed role, but may not realize that the foreign spouse actually consented to “marry out” to escape the typical gender role assigned to a man or a woman in their culture!

Be careful with humor. Humor does not translate well from culture to culture. In France, humor may often take the form of mocking someone or may seem vulgar or inane to an outsider – or, in fact, offensive in another culture where humor may be more subtle, or simply skilful word play.

Find support. Intercultural couples will need to find friends, people and couples like themselves, who have gone through the challenges and hardships of an intercultural relationship. They will need the company of other intercultural couples who will listen to them without judging them or giving irrelevant feedback. Such support groups exist: associations for interreligious married couples, the “groupe de parole et de reflexion” that Jean-Christophe leads on a particular subject in Paris once a month in French or... the Multicultural Couples Group of The American Church in Paris!

Be realistic. Intercultural couples need to realize that the romance of courtship will not last forever, that the discovery of cultural differences that was so exciting may fade over years and that, like any other couple, spouses will go through a series of conflicts. These conflicts are actually opportunities to adjust to each other and to each other’s culture.

Practice forgiveness. Because it is so easy to offend one’s spouse whether willingly or not, consciously or not, to make mistakes, to misunderstand cultural etiquette, the ability to clearly express and grant forgiveness is essential in an intercultural relationship.

Adopt a strategy for adjustment. Intercultural couples will have to adopt their own strategy to cope with cultural differences. Several models exist but it is ultimately important to choose a coping mechanism in which spouses do not feel that they are giving up too much of their own culture, but rather one that taps both cultures and enriches their relationship.
Community group

Meet me at the meetup

All you singles out there! Valentine’s Day falls on a Saturday this year, so don’t sit home - go to a meetup and meet up with other singles. It’s easy to gripe about how hard it is to find new friends, but there are actually hundreds of meetup groups in Paris, linking people up with every interest possible. A quick check shows there is something for everyone, including expats’ gatherings, fitness meetups in the parks, and meetups for vegan, hikers and hackers.

Naturally, there are a number of singles groups, including at least one for Christian singles. Google Meetups and singles, and browse - participation in the gatherings is generally free, unless you create your own meetup group.

Meetup groups help people get involved locally, learn, teach, and share things, make friends and have fun. Most importantly, being part of a meetup group means you are a part of something bigger - both locally and globally. There are over 20 million members in over 100 countries. Meetup’s mission is to “revitalize local community and help people around the world self-organize. Meetup believes that people can change their personal world, or the whole world, by organizing themselves into groups that are powerful enough to make a difference.” So what are you waiting for? Get out there and mingle.

Festive February

This month Parisians take to the streets to mark a variety of traditional festivals. On Sunday 15 February, Paris-Carnaval celebrates the last hurrah before Lent, with a fancy-dress street parade from Gambetta to République. This year’s themes: knights, dragons and chatelaines. February 19 is Chinese New Year, with a week-long orgy of dragons, drummers and firecrackers in Belleville and in the 13th arrondissement, ringing in the Year of the Goat. The Six Nations rugby championship will feature two matches at the Stade de France in St-Denis (France-Scotland 7 Feb, France-Wales 28 Feb), which will surely spark some street celebrations of a different but equally festive nature.

www.carnaval-paris.org
quefaire.paris.fr, www.rbs6nations.com
What’s up in Paris

February event listings

By Karen Albrecht

Paris Magnum

City hall is hosting a free exhibit of 150 shots of Paris from the legendary photographers’ cooperative Magnum. Contributors include founding fathers Capa and Cartier-Bresson as well as their gifted acolytes Raymond Depardon, Martine Franck, Martin Parr and others. Historically charged scenes of workers’ protests and the 1968 riots share space with more whimsical images of the French capital and its inhabitants.


Salon International de l’Agriculture

Traditional favorite of French families and schmoozing politicos, the annual agricultural show is a vast, oversized county fair teeming with prize livestock and a dizzying array of French food and drink. The immaculately groomed pigs, cows and sheep are impressive, but the people-watching alone is worth the (considerable) price of admission.


New Frontier IV

After landscape and portraiture, the Louvre’s partnership with American art museums now explores the development of still-life painting in the U.S in the 19th century. Depictions of flowers, agricultural products and even period currency offer a fascinating glimpse into how a growing nation adapted the European artistic genre into its own vernacular.

Until 27 April, www.louvre.fr

Jeff Koons

Centre Pompidou is hosting the first major European retrospective for irreverent American art superstar Jeff Koons, whose most memorable works include a gilded Michael Jackson, floating basketballs, kitsch floral compositions and the iconic giant balloon animals.

Raphaëlle Peale, Corn and Cantaloupe © Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art

Until 27 April, www.centrepompidou.fr

Fashion Mix: Mode d’ici. Créateurs d’ailleurs

Opened in 2007 but only inaugurated (with a bare minimum of fanfare) last December, the politically challenged museum of the history of immigration occupies the former temple to France’s colonial glory. This themed show looks at the immigrant geniuses who have fuelled the French fashion machine over the centuries, from Englishman Worth in the late 19th century through Balenciaga, Miyake, Alaïa and the latest Belgian sensation Raf Simons.


Health in the Middle Ages

The 15th-century Tour Jean Sans Peur, once a part of the castle of the Dukes of Burgundy, is hosting an exhibit on how medieval Parisians thought of health and the human body, and showcasing the medical technology of the period. Ouch.

Until 5 April, www.tourjeansanspeur.com
Mozart’s two quartets were composed in 1785 for the first and 1786 for the second, at the same times as the Noce de Figaro. They are considered the first major works composed for piano quartet in the chamber music repertoire, scored for violin, viola, cello, and piano. Mozart received a commission for three to six quartets in 1785 from the publisher Franz Anton Hoffmeister, but the poor success of the first quartet prevented the rest of the cycle from being completed.

The Piano Quintet in E-flat major, Op. 44, by Robert Schumann was composed in September and October of 1842. As with most quintets for piano, it is written for piano and string quartet. Its first public performance was on 8 January 1843 with musicians from the Gewandhaus and Clara Schumann at the piano. Considered a major work of romantic chamber music, the model was adopted by Brahms, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky and César Franck.

**ACP Café**
**Friday 13 February**
**19h30 in the Theater**

Come enjoy live music and a catered dinner. Still Point will play new music and covers by U2, Coldplay and more. Free entry, snacks, drinks, with dinner catered by Kent’s Party Solutions. Everyone is welcome!
Originating in Left Bank studios in 1895, the Atelier Concert Series became part of the cultural activities at the American Church in Paris during the early 1930s. These concerts provide a performance opportunity in Paris for talented musicians of all nationalities.

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

**Sunday Concert Series**

**Dr. Felician Rosca** heads the organ department at the Music School of Timisoara University in Romania. After studies at the Ciprian Porumbescu Conservatory in Bucarest, he was a student of the organist and composer Xaver Dressler.

Dr. Rosca was awarded the highest honors in his country: a diploma from the National Music Conservatory in Bucarest, a doctorate at the Music Academy of Cluj-Napoca, and 1st Prize at the National Organ Competition in 1983 and 1985. He has concertized widely in Romania as well as in the USA, Canada, Austria, Germany, Russia, Moldavia, Danemark, Polond, Italy, Slovenia, Norwegian and France.

**A graduate of The New England Conservatory, John Miratore** has studied with Robert P. Sullivan, Frederic Hand and Oscar Ghiglia. The Boston Globe has described him as "a fleet-fingered and musicianly performer" and has characterized his playing as "...unleashing so many different varieties of tone and color in quick succession...a kind of aural iridescence."

Mr. Muratore has recorded for Arabesque and Albany Records and can often be heard live on WGBH Radio's Classical Performances with host, Richard Knisely. John is on the faculties of Boston University and Dartmouth College and is coordinator of the guitar program at All Newton Music School.

**Dimanche 15 Février 2015 à 17h**

Œuvres de
Federico Moreno Torroba,
Alexandre Tansman, Heitor Villa-Lobos,
Agustin Barrios, Frederic Hand
The Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year, is the most important traditional festival in China, and is celebrated for 16 days. The French-Chinese community in Paris is huge, and the New Year's celebrations have become very popular. Chinese New Year parades in Paris are famed for their elaborate decorations (red lanterns, grinning dragons, lions, and tigers, bright orange fish) and for their somewhat boisterous cheer, which usually involves small firecrackers that leave a faint scent of smoke in the air.

In Paris the Chinese New Year or nónglì Xinnian, Year of the Goat will be celebrated in The Marais, Bellville and the 13th arrondissement. Celebrations are elaborate, and comprise colourful parades with, as one would expect, impressive dragons. The official date of the Chinese New Year is 19 February, according to the Chinese astrological calendar. The year is believed to take on the nature of the animal of which the year belongs to. This year the Sheep or Wooden Goat is associated with warmth, kindness and artistic sensitivity. However, not all the virtues are positive, as the animal is also associated with hedonism and an over-dependency on others.

Several parades are scheduled over the 16 days of festivities, with the biggest and most popular of the annual parades held on Sunday 22 February in Paris’s 13th arrondissement. It will kick off at around 13h near Metro Gobelins, wind through Avenue de Choisy, Place d’Italie, Avenue d’Italie, Rue de Tolbiac, and boulevard Massena, and end at Avenue d’Ivry in south-central Paris. This is the oldest and most popular of the New Year parades, with over 200,000 spectators each year.

You can also catch a couple of smaller but still spectacular parades the day before, on Saturday 21 February. One parade leaves from near Metro Belleville at 10h30 on Saturday 21 February, and from around 3pm, more traditional dances, martial arts demonstrations, and other events will animate the area. Or catch the parade at 14h30 that starts from Place de la Republique. The cheerful procession of dancers, drummers, dragons and lions will wind through major streets of the 3rd and 4th arrondissements, including Rue de Temple, Rue de Bretagne, Rue de Turbigo, and Rue Beaubourg. There is even a parade for children at the Jardin d’Acclimatation on Tuesday 17 February, starting at noon.

People from all walks of life pour out onto the streets to witness the jubilant procession of colourful fish, splendidly hued flags and skilful dancers, theatre and musical performances. The Chinese restaurants take on a clamorous quality as they are filled to spilling over with locals and tourists, enjoying the festivities and celebrating New Year all over again.

The DVD “Celebrate 200” produced by French Connection Films is a visual and aural reliving of a unique worship service that marked two centuries of public English-speaking worship in the city of Paris.

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

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

The DVD can be purchased for 10 euros during the coffee fellowship on Sundays, or at the church reception desk.
The movie discussion group that meets monthly at the American Church in Paris is about to celebrate a big milestone: the 20th anniversary of its founding.

I love to point out that the group has met every single month, including August and December, since its first meeting in February 1995. But I don’t always reveal the truth about that first time.

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

Gradually, though, membership picked up, and the film choice became more democratic. There were, oh, two or three of us at the second meeting, where we discussed – and mostly dismissed – a film called The Shawshank Redemption that later went on to be the biggest cult hit in US history.

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

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

We reviewed around 50 movies in 2014. These are all first-run films: members see them when and where they like, in the cinema, and then we sit down with snacks, wine and other beverages to discuss them.

Some of our favorites from last year:

- March - *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, Saving Mr Banks.
- April - Nebraska.
- May - Short Term 12 (French title: States of Grace), Zwei Leben.
- July - Finding Vivian Maier.
- August – Boyhood.
- October - Pride.
- November - Le Sel de la terre, ’71.
- December - Mr. Turner.

June and September were kind of dud months; nothing stood out. But many of our other picks have done very well. In the recent Academy Award nominations, The Grand Budapest Hotel and Boyhood received best picture nods (among many other nominations), while Finding Vivian Maier and Le Sel de la Terre were nominated for best documentary.

Our 20th anniversary meeting will be a special celebration, but we will also be discussing films as usual. The meeting will take place on Thursday, February 19, at 7:30pm in room G5, and the movies we’ve chosen include more Oscar nominees: *The Theory of Everything* (playing here as Une merveilleuse histoire du temps), *Imitation Game*, *Into the Woods* and *Frank*.

I’m told this may be the oldest continual lay activity at the ACP, aside from the Atelier Concerts.* The group continues to bring in both ACP members (or attenders) and non-members. We have at least a few newcomers at almost every meeting. Everyone is cordially invited to join us on Thursday, 19 February – even if you’ve not seen any of the month’s films.

*If you think of other exceptions, let me know at movies@acparis.org.
Dear LIAB Volunteers,

Perhaps we are sometimes discouraged that one small act of kindness and giving of hope and light to a child once a year might not make a difference. But when we put all of our acts together, we can see the beauty of our efforts, much like the towering wall of love boxes that warmed our hearts this season.

You made a difference to 3,231 children this holiday season. We say this every year, but it is worth reflecting on again. For some of these children, this is truly the only gift they receive and it is a real highlight of their year. Think about what “we” have done together, the collective “you”; the beauty is that we are all included in what you have done to make this effort such a success this year.

You went out to purchase candy, hats/scarves/gloves, paper, pens, colored pencils, baby items, stuffed animals, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soaps, perfume, card games, and other fun gift with great care.

You placed them all in your specially-wrapped shoebox and brought them to the right place on time, during the busiest season of the year.

You drove carloads or truckloads of boxes to the Cathedral.

You gave your time (and your strength) and you helped us check through all of the boxes delivered.

You gave something of yourselves, and we thank you.

Thank you for your part in bringing us closer together this year. We look forward to doing it all again, together, at the end of this year!

With love, hope and light for you and your families,

Betsi and Judy

LIAB 2014 co-Chairs

As you are making your plans for 2015, would you please consider re-joining us again this year in this effort to show love, light and hope to more children each year? Drop us a line and let us know you are on board for 2015 - we would love to hear your suggestions and receive your feedback about your experience.

Yours, Kai-Marcel Grunert and Kristie Worrel
missionoutreach@acparis.org

Our thankful charities that received and distributed boxes and backpacks this year include:

- ACTION QUARTIERS / L’Armée du Salut (Alsace)
- AVEC ELLES (Paris / île-de-France)
- BONNE MINE (Bulgaria)
- CADA - Centre d’Accueil pour Demandeurs d’Asile (Paris / île-de-France)
- CAFDA - Coordination de l’accueil des familles demandeuses d’asile - (Paris / île-de-France)
- HELPING HANDS - (Paris / île-de-France)
- HILIGAYNON - (Paris / île-de-France)
- H.O.M.E. - (Paris / île-de-France)
- MAGALIMESNIL Association - (Paris / île-de-France)
- PARIS TOUS P’TITS / SAMU - (Paris / île-de-France)
- RELAIS HABITAT - (Paris / île-de-France)
- RESTOS du CŒUR - (Paris / île-de-France)
- SALVATION ARMY (Paris / île-de-France)
- SECOURS POPULAIRE/Copains du Monde - (Nord-Pas-de-Calais)

Our generous schools, communities, and organizations that gave multiple boxes and extra supplies this year include:

- The American Cathedral of Paris
- The American Church in Paris
- American Women’s group
- ASP middle school
- AUP Cares
- The Boy Scouts
- Bilingual Montessori School of Paris (3 locations)
- The Bridge International Church Paris
- British School
- Collège Blomet 75015
- The Cub Scouts
- Ecole Sainte Clotilde CE1 Bleu Paris 7ème
- Ecole Jeanine Manuel
- Ecole Montessori Bilingue de Rueil Malmaison
- EIB-The Victor Hugo School
- EIB Lamartine
- The Girl Scouts Overseas in Paris
- Giving Matters
- International Chamber of Commerce
- ISP Paris
- ISP Primary
- Kingsworth School
- Lennen Bilingual School - Preschool and Toddler
- Lennen Bilingual School - Primary School
- Lycée International St-Germain-en-Laye
- Malherbe International School Le Vesinet
- Marymount Paris
- The Muriel’s Club
- Murex (software company)
- The OECD
- United Nations Nursery School
- Yoga Group of Pauline Howat


Special thanks also to Auchan La Défense, Decathlon Nanterre and Charmante (clothing supplier) Aubervilliers for their assistance with all of the provisions for the Eastern France boxes and the extra supplies needed to complete boxes and backpacks.
Afeshia Pa! Happy New Year! We have started 2015 with the glory, grace and awesomeness of God. This year I pray that everyone will have a small moment to bless others around them with a word of encouragement, a prayer, a friendly smile or a simple thanksgiving offering. May 2015 be the best year you have ever experienced!

Here at ECTF, we finished December with a wonderful Christmas party for the 25 nursery students. They arrived in adorable jeans and pretty shirts ready to enjoy themselves to the fullest. I believe many of our students never experience having a party personally for themselves. Needless to say, we had a blast! I might have enjoyed it more than them. Our students are just too cute.

After a couple of amusing contests, counting to five and local dancing, the children were ready to be served their extremely large portions of rice and chicken or sausage stew. Some of the students were given a second plate, which is never a possibility at home. We also prepared fruit juice, cookies and candy gift bags which they happily returned to their families to enjoy together. When you are the youngest of the family, your needs are only met at a minimum level, if at all. So our mission was to give more than they can enjoy – and we succeeded!

Year 2015 shall be filled with more renovations, prayers, and the arrival of volunteers. It’s time to welcome individuals from far and wide to spend time in Afrangua and Abura Gyabankrom teaching the children computer literacy, English or math. There are numerous organizations that recruit volunteers from the United States or Europe to Ghana on short or long-term projects. What a joy it would be to have volunteers in one of my two villages interacting with the students. My students are still asking for Eric Taquet to return for a month or so.

Prayerfully, we might welcome our first volunteer before the Easter break. Projects Abroad has accepted us as a partner and is currently recruiting volunteers for us. More than likely, they will not stay in Afrangua or Abura Gyabankrom but travel each weekday to our classroom after school. I will organize the students to come according to their class level so they can cover the same level as presented in class by their teachers. This will be an after-school program for any student available between 2pm-5pm daily.

God has really blessed me for stepping out in faith from the moment He called me to establish a computer literacy NGO while I was in Paris. From one computer classroom in Afrangua, to a secondary one in Abura Gyabankrom, a nursery school program in Afrangua and now the prospect of welcoming volunteers from abroad. I wonder where God will take me next.

Mission outreach: Destiny Ansah (ex-Ryales) created a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Ghana, in 2012, called the Excellence Computer Technology Foundation. She offers tuition-free computer literacy lessons to 260 schoolchildren in two villages (Afrangua and Abura Gyabankrom), from kindergarten to 8th grade level. She also established a nursery program with 25 toddlers in Afrangua, by the grace of God.
Reverend Jeff Powell has returned as Visiting Pastor in charge of weddings, accompanied by his wife, Alba, and will be with us until end-June.

Dr. Powell was ordained in 1976 and served as a pastor in four Presbyterian congregations in Southern California. In 1992 he and Alba began their ministry to international English-speaking congregations and he served as Pastor/Head of Staff at the Tokyo Union Church (1992-1997), the American Church in London (1997-2001) and the United Community Church of Buenos Aires (2003-2006). During his ministry he specialized in the areas of evangelism and congregational renewal. In 2002, while on sabbatical, he served his first six months as the “wedding pastor” here at the American Church.

Alba Powell was born in Guatemala and grew up as an active member of a Presbyterian Church there. She trained as a primary school teacher and holds a masters degree in Social Work. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the US and has worked for California Children’s Services, the Tokyo Counseling Center and has done counseling in private practice. She has served the church as a Deacon, Sunday School teacher and co-director of the Logos Youth Club.

Pastor Jeff recently retired, and he and Alba live in Seal Beach, CA. They have three children and three grandchildren. They are both delighted to be back in town and involved again in ACP ministry.

The Powells are back in town

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Alpha answers
By Lisa Prevett

After an Advent season spent preparing, the Alpha Course kicked off with its Launch Party on 15 January. More than 50 people attended, for many of whom it was the first time that they had been to the American Church. The guests spent a great evening getting to know each other over wine and canapés and discovered a taster of what to expect during the 10-week course with an introductory session followed by dessert. The team are really looking forward to seeing what God has in store for everyone involved over the next couple of months.

We would also like to say a big “Thank You” for your prayer support so far and for those people who have volunteered to help out during Alpha. The course runs until just before Easter, so please keep praying for the team and guests as we explore fundamental questions about life and faith. If you would like to get involved or if you have a question about Alpha, please email secretary@acparis.org or go to www.acparis.org.

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ACP's New Member Orientation
Sunday 8 February at 12h30, in the Library 2nd floor

If you are interested in becoming a member of the ACP, please RSVP to communitylife@acparis.org to join the class. All are welcome!
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 2 and 16 February. The 45-minute program is an exciting and inspiring mix of music, interviews, sermon highlights, and discussion on hot topics.

We’re at 100.7 FM, Radio Fréquence Protestante, and we broadcast especially for friends who may be housebound or who would simply like more devotional time on a Monday evening. Don’t like the radio? Listen online at http://frequenceprotestante.com or tune in at your leisure via the ACP website.

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

If you have any questions, comments, ideas or would like to contribute to the show, be sure to contact us at acptoday@acparis.org.
**ACP Spire Diary – February events, meetings and concerts**

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<th>Special Events and Monthly Meetings and Concerts</th>
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<td><strong>Atelier Concert</strong> - Free admission, with free-will offering <strong>Julia Helena</strong>, piano. Works by Chopin, Beethoven, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Gershwin, Mompou.</td>
<td>Sunday 1 Feb</td>
<td>17h00 Sanctuary</td>
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<td><strong>ACP Today: Faith Talk in Paris radio show</strong> Tune in for inspiring music, interviews, and sermon highlights.</td>
<td>Monday 2 Feb</td>
<td>20h45 - 21h30</td>
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| **Thurber Thursday - Debby Bellingham,** Spiritual Director, licensed psychotherapist, ordained minister, author and experienced retreat facilitator  
*The Eternal Now - Finding God in the Everyday* | Thursday 5 Feb | 18h30; 19h30 Dinner; Lecture Thurber Room | Michelle Wahila associatepastor @acparis.org |
| **Alpha Course** Explore the meaning of life & ask challenging questions about the Christian faith: Alpha allows anyone to explore the Christian faith in a relaxed, informal and friendly way. | Every Thursday until 26 Mar | 18h30 dinner 19h30 course Thurber Room |
| **Sandwich Ministry**  
Breakfast preparation: Friday 19h30 at ACP  
Breakfast distribution: Saturday 08h00, meet at ACP | Friday 6 Feb  Saturday 7 Feb | 19h30 8h00 | Jurie Ane Feleo homelesssandwich@acparis.org |
| **Habitat for Humanity Benefit Concert**  
An evening of music presented by ACP’s Tiffany Musica and guest musicians. Entry is free; donations will help fund the team’s upcoming trip to Romania. | Friday 6 Feb | 20h00-22h00 Sanctuary |
| **Multicultural Couples Potluck Dinner**  
Fellowship and discussion on topics such as raising bicultural/bilingual children and cultural differences. Bring a dish to share. | Friday 6 Feb | 20h00 Thurber Room | Monica Bassett & Anja Wyss multicultural@acparis.org |
| **New Member Orientation**  
Please RSVP to communitylife@acparis.org to join the class. All are welcome! | Sunday 8 Feb | 12h30-13h30 ACP Library | Carol Brown communitylife@acparis.org |
| **Atelier Concert** - Free admission, with free-will offering **Virginie Turban**, violin; **Sara Chenal**, violin; **Nicolas Galiere**, viola; **Valérie Kohlrusche**, cello; **Janis Bilhaut**, piano  
Mozart - Quartet no. 1 in G minor for piano and strings  
Schumann - Quintet op. 44 | Sunday 8 Feb | 17h00 Sanctuary | Fred Gramann music@acparis.org |
| **Thurber Thursday - Scott Cormode,**  
Academic Dean and Hugh De Pree Professor of Leadership Development, School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary: *Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King as Speakers for Change* | Thursday 12 Feb | 18h30; 19h30 Dinner; Lecture Thurber Room | Michelle Wahila associatepastor@acparis.org |
| **Friday Mission Lunch (volunteers needed)**  
Every Friday a hot, nutritious meal is prepared for the homeless and needy. ACP is responsible for the meal on the second Friday of each month, but we are grateful for help with cooking, serving, and cleaning up every Friday. If you are interested and available, contact Kristie Worrel. | Friday 13 Feb | 10h00-14h00 The American Cathedral | Kristie Worrel fridaymissionlunch@acparis.org |
### Special Events and Monthly Meetings and Concerts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contacts</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ACP Café</strong>&lt;br&gt;Music from the Still Point band in a café setting. New music and covers by U2, Coldplay and more. Free entry, snacks, drinks. Dinner catered by Kent’s Party Solutions.</td>
<td>Friday 13 Feb 19h30 Theater</td>
<td>Natalie Raynal <a href="mailto:cmusic@acparis.org">cmusic@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>School Holidays / Vacances Scolaire - Winter / Hiver</strong></td>
<td>Saturday 14 Feb - Sunday 1 Mar</td>
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<td><strong>Church-wide Wedding Invitation</strong>&lt;br&gt;ACP member Pastor Anjlo Ajmal of the Punjabi Church and Ms. Lubna Mannan Khan cordially invite you to join them as they celebrate the blessing of their marriage at the ACP by Pastor Scott Herr. They would be honored for many to be present for this long-awaited moment!</td>
<td>Saturday 14 Feb 15h30 Sanctuary</td>
<td>RSVP to weddings @acparis.org by 9 February</td>
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<td><strong>Writers’ Group</strong>&lt;br&gt;Saturday 14 Feb 14h30-16h30 Room G2</td>
<td>Saturday 14 Feb 14h30-16h30 Room G2</td>
<td>Tenderay Chirawu <a href="mailto:writers@acparis.org">writers@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>Women’s Gathering</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sunday 15 Feb 12h30</td>
<td>Sunday 15 Feb 12h30</td>
<td>Kim Herr <a href="mailto:women@acparis.org">women@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>Atelier Concert</strong> - Free admission, with free-will offering&lt;br&gt;John Muratore, guitar&lt;br&gt;Works by Villa-Lobos, Torroba, Tansman, Barrios, Hand.</td>
<td>Sunday 15 Feb 17h00 Sanctuary</td>
<td>Fred Gramann <a href="mailto:music@acparis.org">music@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>ACP Today: Faith Talk in Paris radio show</strong>&lt;br&gt;Tune in for inspiring music, interviews, and sermon highlights.</td>
<td>Monday 16 Feb 20h45 - 21h30</td>
<td>100.7 FM Radio Fréquence Protestante</td>
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<td><strong>Ash Wednesday Service</strong>&lt;br&gt;Special service marking the beginning of a 40-day time of fasting in preparation for the celebration of Easter. The service will include the Sacrament of Holy Communion and the imposition of ashes.</td>
<td>Wednesday 18 Feb 19h00</td>
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<td><strong>Movie Discussion Group</strong>&lt;br&gt;<em>The Theory of Everything</em> (Une merveilleuse histoire de temps), <em>Imitation Game</em>, <em>Into the Woods</em>, <em>Frank</em>. See any or all at your leisure and join the group for discussion.</td>
<td>Thursday 19 Feb 19h30 Room G5 (exceptionally)</td>
<td>Rebecca Brite <a href="mailto:movies@acparis.org">movies@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>Sandwich Ministry</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sandwich preparation: Friday 19h30 at ACP&lt;br&gt;Sandwich distribution: Saturday 13h30, meet at ACP</td>
<td>Friday 20 Feb 19h30 Saturday 21 Feb 13h30</td>
<td>Jurie Ane Feleo homelesssandwich @acparis.org</td>
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<td><strong>Atelier Concert</strong> - Free admission, with free-will offering&lt;br&gt;Felician Rosca, organ&lt;br&gt;Works by Bach, Schneider, Enescu, Franck, Gounod, Knevel.</td>
<td>Sunday 22 Feb 17h00 Sanctuary</td>
<td>Fred Gramann <a href="mailto:music@acparis.org">music@acparis.org</a></td>
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For more information on weekly Bible Studies and meetings, including BSF International, Moms in Prayer International, and Youth and Young Adult events, please go to “What’s on at ACP” at [www.acparis.org](http://www.acparis.org).
More of You

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Still Point