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This window of the three kings is part of the Christmas stained glass window in the Chapel. It was a gift from the Twyeffort family, for the 100th anniversary of the American Church in Paris, in 1957.

Photo by Fred Gramann
Thoughts from
The Rev. Dr. Scott Herr
Senior Pastor

Dear Members and Friends of the ACP,

At a friend’s recommendation, I started reading the book *Revolution*, by French President Emmanuel Macron, recently translated into English. We both noted that President Macron has an uncommon respect for the elderly. He recounts the years that he enjoyed reading with his grandmother, and how she was instrumental in his early formation.

It got me thinking about two of the elderly in the Advent story that are often overlooked in this season associated with children, and of course this is the time we celebrate the miracle of the incarnation, how God is making all things new through entering into our world as a baby. Do you remember that old Zechariah and Elizabeth are part of the story, too?

It was just another day at worship for Zechariah. He was a priest, and he and his wife had elite lineage. He lived “blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord,” Luke writes. The problem was, they had no children, and that was for the gossips a sign that God did not look favorably upon them. They were an older couple, Luke mentions discreetly, “getting on in years.”

But Zechariah’s time came up to offer incense in the sanctuary of the Lord, and as he was going about the normal worship routine, an angel appeared to him. Zechariah was terrified and overwhelmed with fear. But the angel was bringing good news of a child to be born to his wife Elizabeth. And here is where the story gets interesting. Zechariah asked, “How will I know this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.” And because Zechariah asks a reasonable question, the angel gets a bit snarky and punishes Zechariah with muteness, at least until he saw the promise realized.

While all this was happening, the people were wondering what happened to Zechariah. Had he fallen asleep? Had he fallen ill? Why didn’t he come out of the sanctuary of the Lord? And when he did come out and could not speak, he motioned to them and they realized he had a vision. So Zechariah and Elizabeth waited for five months in seclusion, apparently because it would have been too much of a shocker for people to see this pregnant old woman. But the child growing within her was such a blessing for them, as Elizabeth affirms that God “looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.” Their child will be born John, of course, who will later become John the Baptist, the one who prepares the way of the Lord!

As we move through the wonderful events of this Advent and Christmas season and into the New Year and Epiphany, I encourage you to notice the people around you, both young and old. How is God seeking to bless us “from generation to generation”? What is the disgrace some people endure? How are we, like John, meant to prepare the way of the Lord for them through our embodiment of the gospel, through words and deeds, through our welcome and acceptance? The birth of our Savior initiated a different Revolution than President Macron talks about, but it is a revolution nonetheless!

In a time for many when it seems God is silent or absent, or both, I am thankful for the opportunity this season of Advent yields to light candles in the dark, wait, pray, repent, and long for the coming Kingdom of God to come near. I pray for our congregation to be a community where we don’t just go through another season of Advent and Christmas yada-yada-yada, but that we might have visions, and even get struck dumb with awe and fearsome wonder at what God is doing and seeking to do here and now in our lives and life together, to bring forth new life for each of us, young and old, so that our weary world rejoices again.

My favorite verse in the Christmas narratives is the end of the *Benedictus*, or the *Song of Zechariah* (Luke 1:78–79), “In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

May God’s hope, joy, love, and peace be with you and yours as we move through the holidays.

In Christ,

Scott
Bible readings for January

7 January  First Sunday after the Epiphany
Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

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

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

28 January  Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Psalm 111
1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28

Prayer Chain Team

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

If you would like someone to pray with you after services, a Prayer Team member is available.
Meet in the chapel next to the theater.
We know that Advent has arrived when John the Baptist shows up. In the first chapter of Mark we’re told that John has been deep in the wilderness of Judea living off the land. What a sight he must have been: wearing skins instead of clothes, hair probably down to his waist. Mark says he lived off of wild honey and locusts. (That means unfiltered raw honey from the comb. Maybe he dipped locusts into some of that.) Can’t you hear John’s family talking about him, “What’s happened to Johnny? He was always his own person, but now he looks like a wild man!”

I doubt John cared what people thought. He went into the wilderness to focus on God’s will for his life. Like his fellow Jews, he carried the words of famous prophets around in his head. He remembered the Prophet Isaiah’s words:

See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you...the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight’ (Isaiah 40:3).

John believed that he was that voice for his day. He didn’t express himself like Isaiah. No “prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,” from John. Instead he says, “Repent and be baptized!” leaving the subtleties to his predecessor.

What John and Isaiah did have in common was the predicament of their people. Though separated by hundreds of years, both prophets spoke to a nation in captivity. John’s Israel isn’t in a foreign land, but it is definitely living under pagan rule, as Israel had in Babylon. After more than 70 years of exile, Israel had adapted to Babylonian ways, values, and beliefs. Alien gods were pushing the great God of Israel aside.

John sees the same thing happening under the Romans. Along with their conquering legions the Romans brought legions of gods and goddesses. Their statues were displayed in public places...Jupiter, Juno, Mars, and Venus up on pedestals in front of public buildings. Their coins carried the image of the Emperor. John and Isaiah saw a people held under the thumbs of a superpower, being tempted by pagan values and glitz.

I wonder what they would think of our situation. Perhaps the seven deadly sins are a little old-fashioned, but aren’t Greed, Gluttony, Envy, Sloth, Pride, Lust, and Wrath well represented throughout our western culture? It wouldn’t take long to fill in appropriate examples for most, if not all, of them. And what about the wildernesses of drug addiction, violence, and poverty that plague the United States and other wealthy nations? Maybe the prophetic messages that came out of Babylon and Israel are appropriate for today.

To the people of Israel, so accommodated to the surrounding culture that they couldn’t find their way out, John says, “Get ready! The Lord is coming!” “You may not be able to find your way to God, but God is finding a way to you. Prepare yourselves!”

And how do we do that? John leaves no doubt: “Repent!” In the New Testament Greek that word means to change the way you think. In Hebrew it calls for even greater change: to turn your conduct, your will, and your heart around. In other words, your life! Isaiah may be more poetic: Every valley shall be lifted up, every mountain and hill made low,... but it’s the same idea. Repenting is like rearranging the whole landscape of your life.

Repentance is primary, but the prophets also preach forgiveness. Be baptized, said John, and God will forgive you. Isaiah promised that...all flesh shall see the salvation of God. That is their full message and our ultimate destination during Advent.

Advent is an opportune time to take John and Isaiah seriously. They are telling us to get ready because God is reaching out to our world. In fact, God is becoming one of us. The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:7-8).

As the Gospel of Mark tells us in its first verse, Advent is: The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Come, Lord Jesus. Come.
A special note from the Fondells

With the calling of Victor Greene as the new Youth and Young Adults pastor, we are preparing for their departure. Our last Sunday at ACP will be 7 January. We leave with full hearts and great memories, blessed beyond measure by the youth, young adults and entire experience of being part of the ACP family of faith. We've been especially blessed by Jake and Tricia Van Asten this autumn. Jake will continue to provide capable and steady leadership during the transition period as we wait for Victor's paperwork to be completed.

We are so grateful for God’s goodness in leading us to ACP. There are not enough words to express how meaningful this experience has been for us. We are confident that Victor will be a wonderful addition to the staff and that the students and young adults here will thrive under his leadership. Thank you for the love, warmth and support you have extended to us during this interim period. We will miss you all, especially the youth and young adults who have pulled out our youthful spirits and given us life and joy beyond measure. Thank you for surrounding us for these past 10 months. ACP is sealed in our hearts forever.

Looking for fellowship with other young adults, between 19 and 30 years old? Join the Young Adults group every Tuesday evening at 18h30, at the ACP. For more information, contact interimyouthpastor@acparis.org.

Note
Jodi and Doug look forward to a final gathering with the Sunday Youth group on 7 January, and with the Young Adults group on Tuesday 9 January.

Sunday Women’s Fellowship
Sunday, 14 January
12h15-13h30, ACP

Ladies, you are invited to join the Women's Fellowship meeting on Sunday, 14 January, in the Thurber Room from 12h15 - 13h30. We will be kicking off the new year welcoming Chinwe Akujuobi to share her story, “The Benefits of Walking Daily with Jesus: How my daily walk with Him made me who l am today.”

There will be coffee and some delicious treats available. If you would like to contribute to our healthy and not so healthy selection, we would be very appreciative. Childcare is provided by our wonderful church staff. You can find them on the garden level of the Church House. So please join us for this time of fellowship with other women and be blessed as we hear our sister share her faith story.

Did you know you can follow the American Church in Paris on social media?

@AmChurchParis /AmericanChurchParis
Victor Greene,  
Youth and Young Adults Pastor  
ACP welcomes Pastor Victor Greene, arriving Feb-Mar 2018

I was born in Dayton, Ohio, and from the age of 10 grew up bouncing around South Florida. I attended Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida where I drummed for the Worship Choir, and graduated with a degree in Practical Theology. While attending Southeastern, I interned in Los Angeles, California. After graduation in 2009, I spent five years in Concord, North Carolina serving a dual position as the High School Bible teacher and the Associate Youth Pastor at Concord First Assembly.

After a deep stirring to pursue further education, I enrolled at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina. During my three years at Duke University, I lived on campus as a Graduate Resident & Resident Assistant. As a student and through Duke's Field Education program, I had the opportunity to intern in South Africa, Chicago, and North Carolina. Despite growing up in the Assemblies of God, these internships confirmed to me that I was called to be ordained through the Disciples of Christ. In 2017, and after graduating from Duke with a Masters of Divinity degree, I enrolled at UNC Medical Center as a Chaplain Summer Intern. It was during that summer when I first felt a call to the American Church in Paris.

I am the youngest in my family, never quite hit a long–prayed–for–growth–spurt (thanks mom), and love arroz con pollo. In my free time, I love watching sports, writing, reading (again, credit to my mother), and have a love–hate relationship with the outdoors (i.e. enjoying God's grandeur that can be felt at the top of a mountain but also terrified of the critters, bugs, and several living things one most certainly has to go through to get there [that'll preach]). Though born in Ohio, I confess to being an addict of Vernors Ginger Soda and a die-hard Michigan Wolverine fan, thanks to my father who grew up in Flint, Michigan. Lastly and significantly, I am most passionate about the intersections of theology, social justice, and the arts.

What's going on?  
Tune in to ACP Today radio

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

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

Friends and visitors, what better way to keep in touch with the ACP family and learn about the latest ACP news? All our shows are downloaded to our website, at www.acparis.org/acptoday. Faith Talk from Paris – it’s a kind of souvenir that never gets old.

If you have any questions, comments, ideas or would like to contribute to the show, be sure to contact us at acptoday@acparis.org.
Christmas is a particularly lonely time for prisoners, as they are away from their families, alone in their cells, feeling left out of the festivities and even forgotten in prison. So this time of the year, and especially the Christmas worship services that are held at the prison, are extra important to them.

This year, four women from our church spent part of their Christmas holidays with women and young men “behind the bars.” Each of the three prisons we are serving in held a Christmas worship service, complete with special music and a time for fellowship, sharing cakes, cookies and soft drinks during a “coffee hour” at the end of the service. The inmates were each given small presents of chocolates and calendars as they left to return to their cells.

In addition to going to the prison where she regularly serves, Paula Taquet-Woolfolk offered to also come with her accompanist to sing Christmas songs at the women’s prison where I serve, for which I was very grateful. Needless to say, when Paula sang her final song “O Holy Night” near the end of the service, the women were in awe of the beauty of the music and the holy moment Paula created for them. Thank you for sharing your gift of music with us, Paula!

Plus, Brook from the MOPS group (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers) reminded me that the MOPS ladies would be glad to help out with something for the prisoners. Hmm. Might the MOPS ladies like to sign Christmas cards and write words of encouragement to the women inmates? Yes! And as soon as the American Church in Paris women’s group heard about the project, they wanted to sign the cards, too!

So we offered participants at the Christmas women’s event the opportunity to address their wishes on homemade greeting cards, which got filled up in no time.

So each of the 16 women inmates who attends the protestant worship services at one of our prisons received a beautiful card addressed to them

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Volunteer for the Breakfast and Sandwich Ministry

The Breakfast Ministry takes place on the first two Fridays/Saturdays of each month, with preparation on Friday at 19h, and distribution on Saturday at 8h.

The Sandwich Ministry takes place on the last two Fridays/Saturdays of each month, with preparation on Friday at 19h, and distribution on Saturday at 13h.

Contact: sandwichministryacp@gmail.com
by name, signed by many ACP women (first names only), wishing them a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and heartfelt blessings of peace, love and other individual messages. The cards were filled with loving messages in both English and French, as well as scripture references for the women to look up. We had so many signatures that we almost ran out of room on the cards! I distributed the cards to the women as they left the worship service, along with small gifts of chocolates and a few other items.

Thank you, Brook, for your heart to serve, and thank you to all the ACP ladies who spent a few minutes to send loving messages to women in prison.

All the worship services went very well, with inmates returning to their cells uplifted by the time spent together with the Lord. I wish we could take pictures to show you, but it isn’t allowed in the prisons.

When I visited the women in their cells a few days later, they told me how much they had enjoyed the beautiful music, and how touched they were by the cards. One woman had tears in her eyes as she spoke to me; others had their cards on their desks or taped up on their walls; and one dear woman wrote a card back to the ACP ladies, listing each ACP woman by name who had signed her card — all 17 of them! She instructed me to give each woman a kiss when I show them her card.

The women in prison surely knew they were not forgotten at Christmas. They could feel God’s love there with them.

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**Bring up the Bulletin**

Did you forget your copy of the Bulletin in the pew? Want to find the email of one of the pastors? Confirm the date of an event? Do it with the ACP app!

1. Download the app, and launch it.
2. Click on “messages” at the bottom.
3. Click on “Bulletins” at the top.
Please join our annual Women's Retreat, a day set aside for you to grow in your knowledge of Christ and develop a more attentive ear to His voice. Alison Millikan will be speaking on Experiencing God more in everyday life. Our morning session, “God is in the room” will focus on learning how to hear God’s voice and discussing some of the roadblocks that interfere with hearing God speak. The afternoon session, “God is in the room, now what?” will focus on hearing God’s voice for others, whether family members, friends, or strangers.

A retreat isn't complete without food and fellowship. You'll have time to enjoy a light breakfast and catered lunch while you meet and develop friendships with other women from the church.

**Our speaker**

Alison Millikan grew up primarily in Seattle, Scotland, and France as the eldest daughter of Presbyterian mission pastors and academics. Her relationship with God has always been a key part of her life. She has a strong desire to serve women and children, which has taken many forms throughout her life, from global mission engagement to working in child advocacy. Alison has put significant focus on what it means for people to experience intimacy with God, to have a place of value and significance in the church, and experiencing what God is doing in the world.

**Childcare**

For those moms who would like to attend the retreat and have young childcare, please consider having your children attend the Kid’s Retreat, a full day of activities and games supervised by the ACP nursery/toddler staff. We will provide snacks throughout the day, but request that you provide your child with a bag lunch. The cost is 5 euros per child.

**Registration**

Register at the Women's Ministry table during Sunday coffee fellowship or with the church receptionist during the week. The cost is 20 euros per person. We have a scholarship available if cost is an issue; we want all women to be able to attend! Please register early as places are limited. We are looking forward to sharing this wonderful day.

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**Sunday Worship**

- **09h00:** Traditional Service, with weekly communion
- **11h00:** Traditional Service, with choirs, children’s worship service; communion first Sunday of the month
- **13h30:** Contemporary Service, with children’s worship service, and live band accompanying sung worship
Sunday Atelier Concert Series

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

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

"De Bach à nos jours"
J. S. Bach – F. Busoni
Prélude de Choral "Nun komm der Heiden Heiland" BWV659a
Prélude N1 (WTC I) / Prélude et Fugue
L. van Beethoven
Sонате оп.31 № 2
F. Chopin
Ballade
B. Bartòk
Suite оп.14
S. Rachmaninoff
Prélude / Etude-tableau
D. Grotsky
"Tableaux d’en France" - sept pièces pour piano (2016)

Kyungmin PAIK
piano
Didier MATRY
orgue

César Franck
Prélude, Fugue et Variation pour piano et orgue
Félix Mendelssohn
Variations sérieuses Op.34 pour piano
Claude Debussy
Rêverie pour piano et orgue
Charles-Marie Widor
Andante sostenuto et final de la Symphonie Gothique pour orgue
Didier Matry
Reflet N°2 version piano et orgue
Marcel Dupré
Ballade pour piano et orgue

Would you like to propose articles, write, proofread, do layout or take photos? Contact Alison Benney at Spire@acparis.org. Note: Deadline for the February edition of the Spire is Wednesday, 24 January.
Museums in Paris are challenged to come up with new and original approaches to highlight the wealth of art and artists which may already be familiar to the public. On the 100th year anniversary of his death, the Musée d’Orsay pays tribute to Edgar Degas with "Degas Danse Dessin." This exhibit is named after a book written by poet Paul Valery, a close friend of the artist. Numerous documents, letters, and sketches offer an inside look at the creative process, while also revealing the friendship between the two men.

Degas was clearly driven to perfection. He followed the advice of painter Ingres to "Draw lines," and in the exhibit you will see many preparatory sketches made in advance of the final work. He studied the body in motion, then he enveloped it in fabrics, showing the drape and sheen as material moves with the wearer.

Degas is, of course, recognized for his depiction of ballet dancers. Yet surprisingly, the grace and elegance typically associated to the ballet is often missing in Degas’ works. The tableaux, pastels, sketches and small statues are very human and real, devoid of the ethereal. Dancers are often depicted in awkward poses that aren’t flattering. From classroom practice to onstage performance to their naked form holding a pose, he was clearly fascinated by the "petits rats," as the dancers were called.

Degas was also inspired by the majesty, the grace and the fluidity of horses. An entire section of the exhibit is devoted to small bronze statues, some paintings and optical toys of the period, which introduced the concept of moving images.

The exhibit seemed a bit disjointed and overly intellectual at times, but for fans of the artist, it offers fresh insight into his work process and his passions.

Musée d’Orsay, through 25 February

The Movie Discussion Group
19h30, Thursday 18 January
Room G2

This month’s movies to see beforehand:

Lucky
The Florida Project
Molly’s Game
Normandie Nue

Contact: movies@acparis.org
What’s up in Paris

Winter event listings
by Karen Albrecht

Artistic alchemy
French Post-Impressionist master Paul Gauguin is best known for his colorful oil paintings of idyllic South Seas scenes featuring lush vegetation and luscious nudes, but he was also an inveterate experimenter with other, highly varied media, techniques and subject matter. The “Gauguin the Alchemist” retrospective at the Grand Palais gathers some 200 top-quality works, including many iconic canvases but also Gauguin’s intriguing woodcarvings, sculpture, ceramics and fancifully decorated furniture.


MoMa Lisa
If you have been looking for a reason to venture outside the city limits to see the splendid glass-and-steel sailboat that is the Fondation Louis Vuitton, the new show “Being Modern: MoMa in Paris” is well worth the (very easy) journey. New York’s legendary Museum of Modern Art has lent some 200 artworks, chosen to illustrate the story of how MoMa’s collection evolved to its current stature. Along with works by Signac, Klimt, Magritte, Picasso and other early modern masters, the show features iconic Pop art and challenging contemporary creations.


Out of Africa
The early 20th-century Dadaist art movement thrived on madcap mash-ups of various art forms and artifacts, creating juxtapositions that challenged conventions and conventional wisdom. The “Dada Africa” show at the Orangerie, like Dadaism itself, hails from Zurich but draws on art from Africa and a wide range of other non-European sources. Arresting Dadaist works are displayed in company of the dramatic African masks, fetishes and statuettes and the uncannily graceful Asian sculptures that inspired them.


Holy Land(s)
This winter, two very different Paris expos showcase themes related to Christianity’s coexistence with other faiths. The Institut du Monde Arabe, hosts “Oriental Christians: 2,000 Years of History,” exploring the rich culture and artistic heritage of the Coptic, Assyro-Chaldean, Syriac, Armenian, Maronite, and other churches from around the Middle East. The Musée de l’immigration takes a fascinating look at pilgrimage sites and other sacred places that are shared by Christians, Jews and Muslims alike. Moving photographs and other documents bear witness that a sense of the spiritual can transcend difference and divisiveness.


Picture Perfect
Paris is still awash in echoes of the Big Apple, with New York’s Metropolitan Museum bringing to the Grand Palais a sumptuous selection of images celebrating the centennial of the birth of master photographer Irving Penn. Come and bask in the precise yet poetic fashion shots, the crisp yet velvety compositions in black and white, and the iconic yet idiosyncratic portraits of some of the 20th century’s most intriguing personalities.

Until 29 January

A year in the life
Titillatingly subtitled “année érotique,” the Musée Picasso’s new show documents precisely one year in the life of the modern master, zooming in on his production from 1 January to 31 December 1932. Picasso famously said that art was just another way of keeping a journal, and the hundred-odd paintings, drawings, engravings, and sculptures on display demonstrate that his diary for that year positively overflowed with the witty, polymorphously perverse energy that characterized Picasso throughout his long and colorful life. It may not be your idea of sexy, but it’s hard not to be bowled over by the variety, the intensity, and the sheer creativity of it all.

Alpha update
by Lisa Prevett

After 10 weeks of fabulous food and great discussion, the fall Alpha Course is drawing to a close. Back in September, we welcomed guests from our ACP family and the wider city of Paris with the invitation to “come and see” what life with faith is all about. For the past three months, the leaders and guests have journeyed together, looking at the basics of the Christian faith and asking some of life’s big questions. We’ve shared some exciting, honest and profound conversations and have seen God working in people’s lives, with some guests rediscovering their faith and others drawing close to Jesus for the very first time.

Some of the guests found Alpha via the ACP website or saw the giant banner hanging outside the church. For others, someone handed them an invite and encouraged them to come along and ask their questions. For the first time, ACP will be running consecutive Alpha courses — you no longer need to wait a whole year to come on the course or invite someone along...because Alpha will be back with the Launch Party on 11 January.

As we enter the New Year and start to think about our resolutions for 2018, why not make Alpha part of your new year’s resolutions? You could commit to praying for the course or helping out in the kitchen or as part of the welcome team. And you could even extend an invite to someone you know. We all know someone who has questions about life and faith but it isn’t always easy to discuss our faith with family, friends and colleagues. Giving them an Alpha invite and personally inviting them along to the Alpha Course is one of the easiest ways to reach out and give someone you care about the opportunity to come and discover more about God.

After the free Launch Party on 11 January at 19h30, the course will run weekly from Thursday 18 January, with a meal at 19h00 followed by a video talk and small group discussions.

Over 29 million people around the world have done Alpha – who will you invite to come and join the adventure?

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

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION
If you are interested in becoming a member of the American Church, please attend the orientation class on 21 January, 12h15 in the Library.
RSVP: membership@acparis.org.
“The eye with which I see God is exactly the same eye with which God sees me. My eye and God’s eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowledge, one love.” One seeing: this is the key to faithful living. One knowledge: this is a theme central to the writings of Meister Eckhart (1260 - 1328), which speaks prophetically to a hurried culture like ours, riddled with brokenness and burdened with anxiety. One love: if we could find a way to live into this, personally and as a society, we would be healthier and happier.

The challenge is putting such a depth-vision into practice. This talk offers the opportunity to do just this: to drink deeply from the wellspring of a vision like Eckhart’s that invites us to “make all things new,” beginning with our own lives. Courageous and even audacious, Eckhart’s language was well ahead of his times, offering us the kind of wisdom we need to live into the “new” life that faith promises. Such a vision, anticipating the reformers’ later emphasis on radical grace, embodies Jesus’ sense that “eternal life” invites us to live into ever deeper love—here and now. Come to taste the fruit of this bold visionary. Expect the stirrings of transformation.

Mark Burrows is well-known internationally for his writings and as a lecturer and retreat leader. A published poet with a doctorate in historical theology, he has devoted his energies as teacher and scholar to the intersection of theology and the arts, above all as mediated by the mystics. These offer us what he describes as “the most practical and life-changing sources” in our tradition.

Currently professor of theology and literature at the University of Applied Sciences in Bochum, Germany, he is the author (with Jon Sweeney) of a recent book of poems inspired by Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart’s Book of the Heart. Meditations for the Restless Soul* (Hampton House, 2017), a title one reviewer recently described as “brimming with passion, originality, and depth.”

- Rev. Tim Vance, Associate Pastor

Did you miss any of ACP’s Thurber Lectures this year? You can still enjoy our amazing speakers and discussions. The archived videos are available on the ACP website at acparis.org, under “Prayer & Learning.”

Serve the City Mission Project

Are you feeling the urge to help those less fortunate around you, but not sure how? Log on to facebook.com/servethecityparis. Here you will find great opportunities to a part of the Serve the City movement of volunteers, who are seeking to show compassion and kindness to the most vulnerable in our city.
On Tuesday, 31 October, eight women from ACP began a five-day journey walking from the Tour de Saint Jacques in Paris to the Cathedral Notre Dame in Chartres, following the Chemin de Saint Jacques de Compostelle. Our small group was made up of diverse individuals: the hopeful newcomer, the reluctant comedian, the joy-filled millennial, the enthusiastic administrator, the uninhibited entrepreneur, the wise matriarch, the observant consultant and the steadfast team player. Different backgrounds, yet all wanting to step out of the busyness of life and make space to seek God’s presence.

The 103 km route, which takes a train only an hour to complete, took us through beautiful villages, newly plowed fields, forests, parks, along slow meandering rivers, and wooded areas full of pheasant. The first day was a challenge. It seemed an eternity before we could shed the crowds and noise, the hard pavement and roads of Paris. And maybe it was difficult to shed the thoughts of things we had left undone or worries we normally carry on our backs.

The second day was more enjoyable, sharing stories about our lives, joking about “life in the forest,” among other things, and getting acclimated to the pace of the group. But we all sensed something more challenging on the third day. We each found ourselves straining in different ways. For some it was the physical toll of blistered toes and aching muscles. For others it was more relational; living in close quarters exposed parts of ourselves that we would have possibly preferred to keep hidden: we were being, rather than seeming. We dragged ourselves into Rambouillet, putting a bit of distance between ourselves as we walked. Our dinner together was somber and our shared time in the evening, a bit more guarded. I went to bed wondering what tomorrow would hold.

We were all thankful for the shorter distance of day four. Heading for Epernon, the sun was shining on the most spectacular views of nature. We stopped for lunch beside a beautiful pond filled with ducks, which reflected the old church in the

**Why?** When reading about Kim’s plan to go from Paris to Chartres on the Camino, I was immediately enthusiastic to get on that journey, where the purpose, I imagined, was to simply dedicate every day to the Lord and find days of peace as well as fellowship with the other women.

**Insight?** In the beginning, it felt astonishingly silent from the Lord, while I struggled with my physical limits even more. But every day, my body improved, every day, my breathing improved, and every day, simple thankfulness improved that I was just able to make it, with the Lord watching over me. – A pilgrim

The Refugee Task Force makes recommendations to the Mission Outreach Committee on ways to motivate members of our congregation to help alleviate the refugee crisis in Paris. The task force is looking for new members. If you would like to join or see what we do, please contact Ursula Perrier at ursulaperrier@gmail.com.
distance. Initially dividing ourselves into two groups, we all came back together, squishing ourselves around a small picnic table, sharing our food and laughing together. It’s hard to resist an inviting table when Jesus is the host!

On our final day’s walk, the longest distance we’d cover, there was a hopeful anticipation that pushed us along through the rain and headwinds. I think there was a touch of sadness as well; our time together was drawing to a close. As the kilometers passed by and we saw the spires of Chartres Cathedral in the distance, our pace quickened and the laughter increased. We just needed to climb that final hill, because the church is, of course, built on the summit. Our destination was only a hundred meters away. And then, we had arrived!

Before entering the Cathedral we embraced one another, to share a thank you and congratulations. We had a celebratory dinner that night, knowing that the following day we would return to Paris. We woke up Sunday to a beautiful sunrise over Chartres. We had breakfast together and moved into a time of quiet, individual reflection as we walked the labyrinth. Then we gathered as the body of Christ and celebrated communion, remembering that Christ wants to accompany us on the journey, that we just need to take the time to invite him to join us.

While it was a shared pilgrimage, it was also very much an individual journey. We will each spend time unpacking all that we experienced. Each day offered its lessons of the beauty of nature, the peace of silence, the weariness of bodies, the determination of the will but most importantly, the wonderful grace and love of the Father who met each of us in our devotions, quiet moments and our group interactions.

I’m glad I didn’t take the fast train to Chartres. I don’t want to race to the next goal for the day, for the week, for the month, for the year. I’d like to slow down and focus on the journey itself. It really is all about the journey and Christ wants to be present with each step I take.

"Walking the Camino felt like an immense spiritual release and lightness. Though the road offered aches and pains, the physical act of walking it out helped me to focus on the beauty of God’s creation and release all my stress and worries to a God who offers the world to me. An incredible blessing that left me wanting more and planning my next pilgrimage!" – A pilgrim

"God is with you in all that you do."
- Genesis 21:22
Rafiki Foundation’s two missions, as I’m always reminding ACP friends, are to help Africans know God and to help them raise their standard of living. The Rafiki Widows’ Program aims to do both.

Rafiki helps organize groups of needy women within our various local African church partner denominations who meet regularly to study the Bible and to teach, learn and produce high-quality handmade craft items. We order and purchase selected items for sale in one of our two shops located at Home Office in Florida and over the Internet. We purchase directly from the women who in turn bring grateful testimonies of how they are able to pay children’s school fees, install electricity or glass windows in their home, and then purchase craft materials for the next order.

Earlier this month, 18 ladies representing five different Rafiki Uganda church partner widows’ craft maker groups met for a semi-annual leaders’ Bible study training day. We reviewed the foundational biblical principles of salvation by Scripture alone, by Faith alone, by Grace alone, through Christ alone, and glory to God alone. We learned and practiced the ACTS pattern for prayer: adoration, confession, thanks, and supplication. We demonstrated Rafiki Bible teaching methods using lessons from study material prepared especially for Rafiki’s use in Africa. The ladies testified to the sad truths we know: the multitude of self-styled “Christian” pastors who draw large followings and personal wealth by preaching the “prosperity” gospel and distributing “healing” water. *Sola Scriptura.*

After fellowship over a lunch of sweet potatoes with ground nut sauce, spicy cooked cabbage and fresh garden pineapple, the ladies displayed some of their products brought that day to fill Rafiki orders. They enthusiastically traded secrets on places to find the best bargains on materials, then bought, sold and bartered among the group.

These 18 ladies departed with fresh ideas and renewed energy to continue leading the Rafiki Bible Study in their home church groups where they will collectively impact about 80 additional women.

Rafiki missionaries have been greatly encouraged by the turn-out and the highly active participation as we led the meeting. It was a joyful day. *Sola Deo Gloria!*
Going to Ghana
by Anna Zweede

I spent two weeks in Ghana earlier this fall.
That might not sound like a big deal to you. Trust me, it was.
I went because God told me that’s where he wanted me. Yes, literally. One morning a year ago. Let me just insert here that I have not only never been to Africa before, but never anywhere out of the ordinary. I’m a suburban WASP. Pushing 60. A middle-school teacher, heavy into planning and routine and the predictable. Not your typical “going to Ghana” material.

In light of the improbable mandate I had received, I turned to my friend Carolyn Bouazouni, who is liaison person for The Living Truth Foundation in Elmina, Ghana, run by Anna Cobbinah. Carolyn was enthusiastic and put Anna and me in touch. I also turned to my cousin, Rev. Dr. Peter de Vries, a pastor in Pennsylvania who has long-standing ties with Ghana. He not only was supportive but even arranged that we be there at the same time. The only difficulty was that he kept asking me what I wanted to do and I kept replying that I had no idea. I’m here to say that he is a master planner and a very patient man!

We spent a few days in Accra, two days in Elmina and Cape Coast, and the rest of our time in the Volta Region. I learned a few – too few! – words and hymns in Ewe. We worshipped at Evangelical Presbyterian churches and were also invited to attend a funeral. I loved that hymns are often accompanied by drums and other percussion instruments, and that dancing is a natural and integral part of any church service.

We toured the slave castle in Elmina and were allowed to visit the Ankaful Main Camp Prison thanks to Anna Cobbinah. My heart broke as I stood in the place where my Dutch ancestors imposed horrifically inhuman conditions on thousands of fellow men and women, all the while proclaiming their devotion to Christ.

I had the privilege of spending time at the E.P. Seminary in Peki, where Peter taught a full course and I led two English-language workshops. I discovered that having plans change, even when that went as far as having to make up course content more or less on the spur of the moment, can be totally fine and a lot of fun.

Peter’s connections opened doors for me at the Presbyterian Church of Ghana headquarters and the Ghana Prison Ministry, as well as University College and two primary/secondary schools in Ho. Everywhere, absolutely everywhere, we were told, “You are welcome.” This is not a catch-phrase, uttered mechanically as a greeting. It is a gracious invitation, extended unselfishly and lived out. People invariably made time to talk and listen. What a gift. What an example!!

It may be that God’s purpose has been fulfilled, that I just needed to get out of my comfort zone and into the unexpected. Or perhaps this is about building bridges and fostering relationships. Between schools, or choirs, or churches, or NGOs... And though I still think I’m an unlikely candidate, I feel hugely blessed by the opportunity and excited to see what’s next.

Looking for help with your French or your English language skills? Join the ACP Conversation Course every Thursday night, from 18h-19h30, at the ACP. Just show up. Or, for more info, contact: Haig Gorton at haiggorton@yahoo.com
The American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU), our US partner in ministry, has established endowment funds to help sustain our long-term ministry. Gifts from estates are a fundamental way these endowments are funded. If you would like to participate in growing these endowment funds, please contact the AFCU at AFCUHeritage@AFCUBridge.org

Curious about Christianity?
Got questions about the meaningfulness of life?
You’re not the only one.

Find out more at the Alpha Launch Party
19h30, Thursday 11 January
American Church in Paris, 65 quai d’Orsay, 75007 Paris

Alpha is a 10-week course of exploring different aspects of the Christian faith. No question is too simple or too tough, and everyone is welcome. For more information, contact alpha@acparis.org connect with us on Facebook or see our website at www.acparis.org
Here’s your first annual update on the Christmas Day movie, a tradition in many families, whether at the cinema or in the living room. Everyone has their favorites. I’ve never quite understood the appeal of *A Christmas Story* (“You’ll shoot your eye out, kid.”) Give me *Die Hard* any Christmas Day. (“Now I have a machine gun. Ho ho ho.”)

New English-language releases with holiday themes are generally scarce in Paris cinemas. This year there is a grand total of one: *A Bad Moms Christmas*, a vulgar comedy sequel that the Rotten Tomatoes critics website describes as having twice the moms and half the laughs.

For French speakers or those with French-speaking children, the choice is a bit wider. *The Star* (L’Étoile de Noël), a US animated feature showing here only in French, had a lukewarm critical reception but French audiences seem to enjoy it. There is also a new animated feature starring the Moomins, the balloon-like creations of Finnish illustrator Tove Jansson: *Les Moomins attendent Noël*.

In the realm of recent animated features without a specific Christmas theme, things look better. The new Pixar, *Coco*, has been almost universally praised. So has *Paddington 2*, sequel to 2014’s *Paddington*, a live-action film with a computer-animated hero winningly voiced by British actor Ben Whishaw and accompanied on his marmalade-flavored adventures by a who’s who of UK stage and screen. (Reviews indicate it’s not necessary to have seen the original.) Both these new releases are guaranteed to keep the grown-ups amused as well.

Two other movies for the whole family are being released near the holidays. *Wonder* by Stephen Chbosky is based on R.J. Palacio’s popular book about a young boy with a disfigured face who gradually wins over his schoolmates. And *Kedi* by Ceyda Torun is an award-winning Turkish documentary (likely with a French narration and/or subtitles) about the street cats of Istanbul.

Another Christmas tradition, especially popular among teens, is the blockbuster, usually unrelated to the holiday except by date. This year’s, opening 13 December, is *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*.

Those who prefer to rent a film online or at the local video store have a much wider choice of Christmas fare. Some of the best-known – and best – holiday offerings, while they may have a reputation now as feel-good movies, are in fact far more bittersweet, from Frank Capra’s postwar classic *It’s a Wonderful Life* to the mixed blessings of Richard Curtis’s *Love Actually* (2003). And holiday-themed wartime dramas such as *A Midnight Clear* (1992, set during the Battle of the Bulge, about a German surrender going horribly wrong) and *Joyeux Noël* (2005, based on the Christmas “truce” of 1914) can be downright depressing.

Unabashedly cynical modern crowd-pleasers such as *Home Alone* (1990) and *Bad Santa* (2003) stand in marked contrast to the simpler sentimentality of earlier times, which brought us *The Shop Around the Corner* (1940), *Christmas in Connecticut* (1945), *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947) and *White Christmas* (1954) – as well as the 1944 musical *Meet Me in St. Louis*, a series of seasonal vignettes including Judy Garland singing possibly the world’s saddest Christmas song, “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas,” thus driving little Margaret O’Brien to paroxysms of tears and a frenzy of snowman smashing.

And oh, all right, if I have to pick one of the many, many versions of *A Christmas Carol*, let it be the Muppet one (1992). God bless us, every one!

The first movie discussion group in 2018 meets on 18 January at 7:30pm in room G2. The films to see beforehand are *Lucky*, *The Florida Project*, *Molly’s Game*, and *Normandie Nue*.

For more information: movies@acparis.org.
A while back, I dropped by the American Cathedral on a Friday morning to deliver a few things to Kristie Worrel for the Marché de Noël (held at the ACP on 18 November). What a hum of activity there was in the kitchen! Smiling volunteers were serving a large crowd of guests at the Friday Mission Lunch, held every Friday, rain or shine, at the American Cathedral.

Among the volunteers, I recognized Linda Crichton, a woman I have known for years and with whom I spoke regularly when I worked in the Annie Vallotton Christian Lending Library. She was very happy to be serving. When I was asked about writing an article for the Spire, I immediately thought of interviewing Linda.

I wondered why she had chosen to serve at the Friday Mission Lunch. She told me that she had heard of the FML and came in one day to investigate. She was impressed by the number of delicious, nourishing meals prepared on a small budget, and she was awed by the amazing team effort in place to produce a good hot meal for the homeless. “People in Paris like to eat out,” she told me. “It’s moving to see them chat and wait to see what they will be served. And many of these people don’t know where their next meal is coming from.”

So Linda joined up. She found that the FML team is well-organized and close-knit. She loves working under the “traffic control of Kristie Worrel and Italo Marchini,” who come faithfully to the Cathedral every Friday. Everyone does a job, and if there is a need for something to be done, one of the volunteers who is free immediately takes over that task. Before serving the guests, the team gathers to say this prayer together:

“Bless, O Lord, this food to our use, and ourselves to your service. And make us mindful of the needs of others, for Your love’s sake. Amen.”

The volunteers then serve the women guests first, followed by the men.

Before Linda became a regular at the FML, she worked in the British Embassy for 30 years...and she didn’t like cooking! Inspired by her work at the FML, she has bought four cookery books, and her UK family is simply amazed. With a little effort, Linda is excited to be able to serve good food. At the FML and at home, Linda cooks to nourish guests and most of all, to serve God. “It is so satisfying,” she says with joy.

Would you like to help out at the Friday Mission Lunch?

Every Friday from 10h to 14h, the Mission Lunch Program provides a free, cooked lunch to the homeless or hungry in Paris at the American Cathedral. An ACP team of volunteers organizes the lunch on the second Friday of each month. We also welcome volunteers every week for cooking, serving, and cleaning-up. Please contact Kristie Worrel at fridaymissionlunch@gmail.com if you are interested in volunteering.
**ACP Spire Diary – January 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Events and Monthly Meetings and Concerts</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult Fellowship</strong></td>
<td>Friday 5 Jan</td>
<td>From 20h</td>
<td>Daphne 30plusfellowship</td>
<td>Email contact for location @acparis.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singles and pairs, join us for fellowship every first Friday of the month in a lounge café setting, sharing testimonies, talking about the highs and lows of your life with brothers and sisters in Christ.</td>
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<td>email contact for location</td>
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<td><strong>Alpha Course launch party</strong></td>
<td>Thursday 11 Jan</td>
<td>19h30</td>
<td>Thuber Room</td>
<td><a href="mailto:alpha@acparis.org">alpha@acparis.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Alpha Course is an opportunity to explore the meaning of life, ask questions and learn more about the basics of the Christian faith in a relaxed, informal and friendly environment. This 10 week course is free and open to everyone, and kicks off with a launch party.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friday Mission Lunch (volunteers needed)</strong></td>
<td>Friday 12 Jan</td>
<td>10h-14h</td>
<td>The American Cathedral</td>
<td>If you are interested, please first contact: Kristie Worrel <a href="mailto:fridaymissionlunch@gmail.com">fridaymissionlunch@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Every Friday a hot, nutritious meal is prepared for the homeless and needy. ACP is responsible for the meal on the second Friday of each month, but we are grateful for help with cooking, serving, and cleaning up every Friday.</td>
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<td><strong>ACP MOPS (mothers of children ages newborn-18)</strong></td>
<td>Friday 12 Jan</td>
<td>10h-12h</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mops@acparis.org">mops@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td>Free childcare available.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Writers’ Group</strong></td>
<td>Saturday 13 Jan</td>
<td>14h30 - 16h30</td>
<td>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 Fellowship</strong></td>
<td>Sunday 14 Jan</td>
<td>12h15-13h30</td>
<td>Herr apartment</td>
<td>Kim Herr <a href="mailto:women@acparis.org">women@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td>Ladies are invited to hear Chinwe Akujuobi share her story, “The Benefits of Walking Daily with Jesus: How my daily walk with Him made me who I am today.” Childcare available on the garden level of the church house.</td>
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<td><strong>ACP Today: Faith Talk in Paris radio show</strong></td>
<td>Monday 15 Jan</td>
<td>20h45-21h30</td>
<td>100.7 FM, Radio Fréquence Protestante</td>
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<td>Tune in for inspiring music and interviews.</td>
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<td><strong>Movie Discussion Group</strong></td>
<td>Thursday 18 Jan</td>
<td>19h30</td>
<td>Room G2</td>
<td>Rebecca Brite <a href="mailto:movies@acparis.org">movies@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td>Movie selection: <em>Lucky, The Florida Project, Molly’s Game,</em> and <em>Normandie Nue</em> See any or all at your leisure; join the group for discussion.</td>
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<td><strong>Multicultural Couples Potluck Dinner</strong></td>
<td>Friday 19 Jan</td>
<td>20h</td>
<td>Thuber Room</td>
<td>Monica Bassett &amp; Anja Wyss - <a href="mailto:multicultural@acparis.org">multicultural@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td>Fellowship and discussion on topics such as raising bicultural/bilingual children and cultural differences. Bring a dish to share.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Atelier Concert</strong></td>
<td>Sunday 21 Jan</td>
<td>17h</td>
<td>Fred Gramann <a href="mailto:music@acparis.org">music@acparis.org</a></td>
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<td>Free admission, with free-will offering Denis GROTSKY- piano</td>
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<td><strong>New Member Orientation</strong></td>
<td>Sunday 21 Jan</td>
<td>12h15</td>
<td>membership @acparis.org</td>
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<td>Please RSVP to <a href="mailto:communitylife@acparis.org">communitylife@acparis.org</a> to join the class. All are welcome!</td>
<td></td>
<td>19h45 program Thuber Room</td>
<td>Tim Vance <a href="mailto:associatepastor@acparis.org">associatepastor@acparis.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thurber Lecture - Prof. Mark Burrows will speak on “Heart-Work of Love: Meister Eckhart’s Vision of Wholeness in a Time of Fragmentation.”</strong></td>
<td>Wed. 24 Jan</td>
<td>19h meal; 19h45 program Thuber Room</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Atelier Concert</strong></td>
<td>Sunday 28 Jan</td>
<td>17h</td>
<td>Fred Gramann <a href="mailto:music@acparis.org">music@acparis.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Free admission, with free-will offering The baroque ensemble &quot;La Livri&quot;</td>
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ACP Spire, December 2017/January 2018
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 24 January</td>
<td>Heart-Work of Love</td>
<td>Mark Burrows</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meister Eckhart’s vision of wholeness</td>
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<td>in a time of fragmentation</td>
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<td>Tuesday 13 February</td>
<td>God is in the Room</td>
<td>Greg Millikan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Biblical theme of God’s presence</td>
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<td>with us in everyday life</td>
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<td>Wednesday 21 March</td>
<td>The Stranger</td>
<td>Ralston Deffenbaugh</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There once was a refugee family named</td>
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<td>Joseph, Mary and Jesus</td>
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<td>Thursday 12 April</td>
<td>The Whole Gospel</td>
<td>Eugene Cho</td>
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<td>What does it mean to embody both the</td>
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<td>great commission &amp; great commandment?</td>
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<td>Thursday 24 May</td>
<td>Exorcising Prejudice</td>
<td>Charles Amjad-Ali</td>
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<td>The Reformation and the other (Jews &amp;</td>
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<td>Turks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 31 May</td>
<td>Tragic Pasts and Ambiguous Futures</td>
<td>Charles Amjad-Ali</td>
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<td>Our inter-religious world</td>
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<td>Wednesday 20 June</td>
<td>Embracing the Other</td>
<td>Grace Ji-Sun Kim</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The transformative spirit of love</td>
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</tbody>
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**2018**

The American Church in Paris
19h00 - 21h15 in the thurber room