See a new look to the Spire?
A Special Thank You to Gigi Oyog for her many years of service as the Spire Editor.
Gigi resigned in December after many years of faithful service and Camilla Macfarlane graciously has taken over this responsibility. Thanks to both Gigi and Camilla!
Rev. Dr. Scott Herr
Dear Members and Friends of the ACP,

“Happy New Year to you!” is one appropriate greeting for this time of year. It also would be appropriate to greet one another on January 6th and the following week with “Happy Epiphany!” Epiphany comes from the Greek work (ἐπιφάνεια) which sounds pretty much the same as the English pronunciation. It is used in II Timothy 1:10 as the word “appearing”: “It has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

The western church has celebrated this feast day as the feast of the Magi. The “Wise Men” really didn’t show up at the manger, although that’s where we usually see them. They came later seeking the Christ child. It is also celebrated as the appearance of the Spirit over Jesus at his baptism when the voice from heaven declared, “Behold, my beloved Son!”

The importance of this day for us is twofold: Remembering the magi, Epiphany celebrates the first gentiles (Greek: ἔθνος) to whom the true nature of Christ was made “manifest.” The Wise Men bowed down and worshiped Christ as King. As gentiles, this is a big day for us, reminding us the prophets foretold God’s intention to shine light on all the people who walked in darkness.

Focusing on the baptism of Jesus, it was people who literally gathered at the Jordan, the edges of civilization who saw the appearance of the Spirit over Jesus at his baptism when the voice from heaven declared, “Behold, my beloved Son!”

This is “good news” for us to hold onto as we turn over another calendar year. I hope this gives you confidence (literally con – with; fide – faith) as you approach the future. Some of us look forward with hope and anticipation of what God will do, but I also wonder if some of us are also afraid and worried? I must admit that I’m ambivalent when it comes to looking ahead. Did you know the Greek word for worry is "μερίζω". The word stems from the verb merizo (to divide) and nous (which means mind). Isn’t that the image of the Roman God Janus, from which the name of the month January comes?

Looking both directions at the same time, it seems like the same idea. I’m both full of hope, but full of worry when it comes to teenagers, health, time management, transitions, etc. My friend Frank Mills shared these quotes recently: Max Lucado writes, "Worry gives small problems big shadows." Montaigne said: "My life has been full of terrible misfortunes, most of which never happened." Corrie ten Boom wrote: "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength." Perhaps we all need to focus more on how God grace and truth is appearing to and through us?

I look forward to welcoming and working together with our new pastoral team: The Rev. Bedford Transou is returning as the Visiting Pastor in charge of Wedding Ministries with his lovely wife Carol, and The Rev. Glen Thorp is our new Interim-Associate Pastor coming for the first time with his lovely wife Jeannie. Please extend to them the ACP world-wide welcome as they share their gifts and equip the saints for ministry and mission over the next six months. I also look forward to engaging the culture with our faith and science focus in the coming months. With the support of the John Templeton Foundation grant for Scientists in Congregations, we will be doing an introductory study of the Faraday Institute’s Test of Faith beginning January 19th at Thurber Thursdays. In the meantime, don’t miss Calvin College Professor Rebecca DeYoung’s lecture on January 12th on Vices and Virtues. Some of us will be getting ready for radio broadcasts in February!

One more important point to remember about Epiphany: You not only are recipients of the message of Epiphany. You also are part of God’s Epiphany to the world! Amazingly, Jesus said, “You are the light of the world!” That’s right: you and me as the Body of Christ are still manifesting the light of Christ as we show his love and forgiveness. May we as “the Beacon on the Seine” continue to shine brightly as we enter a new season of ministry and mission, sharing in worship, learning and loving not only with one another, but with this great city and the world!
Fresh Beginnings.

It is that time of year again! The time when we vow to begin healthy habits, wake up early each morning for extra productivity, exercise and read more, and write to all of our friends and family.

**New Year's resolution time!**

Perhaps you have experienced what has plagued me for many years. Around December 31st and January 1 I am inspired and motivated to begin afresh and so resolve to do things differently. Some years, I make it through a month or two. Other years, my resolutions have ended by January 2nd! Often we set ourselves up for failure with exceedingly grandiose ideas of change. Now, I am in favor of high expectations, especially when we have an extremely capable and loving God providing for us. However, this time of year can serve us more effectively if we take time to pause, be still and reflect, especially in the midst of the frenetic pace of our daily activity.

A wonderful spiritual discipline from the early church is called The Examen, practiced and made popular by the Jesuit priest St. Ignatius.

The prayers and methods of praying suggested here are based on nearly five hundred years of Jesuit spiritual tradition.

They could help you grow in intimacy with God and experience Jesuit spirituality first-hand. St. Ignatius believed that he received a gift from God that not only enriched his own Christian life but was meant to be shared with others.

The gift was a "method," a way to seek and find God in all things and to gain the freedom to let God's will be done on earth. This way of praying allowed Ignatius to discover the voice of God within his own heart and to experience a growth in familiarity with God's will. Jesuits call this prayer their daily *examen of consciousness*. 
The Examen of Consciousness

This is a prayer where we try to find the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we reflect on our day. This prayer can be made anywhere: on the beach, in a car, on the bus or metro, at home, in the library. Many people make the Examen twice daily: once around lunchtime and again before going to bed. There are five simple steps to the Examen, and what follows is just one interpretation of these five steps in discerning the movement of God's Spirit in your day. Through this method of praying you can grow in a sense of self and the Source of self; you can become more sensitive to your own spirit with its longings, its powers, its Source; you will develop an openness to receive the supports that God offers.

1. Thanksgiving
   Lord, I realize that all, even myself, is a gift from you.
   - Today, for what things am I most grateful?

2. Intention
   Lord, open my eyes and ears to be more honest with myself.
   - Today, what do I really want for myself?

3. Examination
   Lord, show me what has been happening to me and in me this day.
   - Today, in what ways have I experienced your love?

4. Contrition
   Lord, I am still learning to grow in your love.
   - Today, what choices have been inadequate responses to your love?

5. Hope
   Lord, let me look with longing toward the future.
   - Today, how will I let you lead me to a brighter tomorrow?

This resolution and daily practice is worthwhile and certainly has the potential to transform this New Year, for ourselves and those around us. May we begin this year looking back in reflection to see God's love and provision and grace protecting and guiding us. May we look ahead with anticipation and excitement and pray for God's spirit to guide us in the upcoming year. My prayer is for a renewed desire to be saturated in God's Word each day and to have fresh eyes and ears to witness His grace all around us.

Take, Lord, and Receive.
Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding, and my entire will.

All I have and call my own. Whatever I have or hold,
you have given me.
I return it all to you and surrender it wholly to be governed by your will.
Give me only your love and your grace
and I am rich enough and ask for nothing more.

- St. Ignatius, from the end of the *Spiritual Exercises*
"Have a good trip." These are familiar words. In recent weeks Carol and heard this cheerful phrase so many times that it echoes in our brains. It was nice to hear these words as we anticipated returning to The American Church in Paris. It was a privilege to come to The American Church in Paris before and perhaps more precious to return so soon. We hope we are not overstaying our welcome. It is a joy to return and we are grateful for the well wishing of friends at home.

"Have a good trip" is a useful and much appreciated expression of good will, but it is quite inadequate as a description of what's about to come, and leaves too much unsaid. So many of our trips are more than just “a trip”. It's not as though we googled “trip” and picked one. Some of our trips have a purpose beyond this. For Carol and me, our many trips to, and through, Paris has never disappointed, but this one is especially rich with purpose. This time we settle in for six months and will be a small part of the city, of the neighborhood, and of The American Church. We will continue friendships and make new ones. We will renew our skills in the French version of “keeping house”. We will frequent familiar places and discover new ones. There will be delightful events - some unplanned and unexpected. For example, last January as I took out the garbage early one morning, I was thrilled to hear a welcoming "Bonjour Pasteur" from across the deserted street. This gave me a new sense of purpose and identity in Paris. I have been a pastor for many years, but not here in Paris. This gave substance to the “trip”.

Has this familiar phrase always been used? Did they say this to Marco Polo? Did they tell Abraham to "have a good trip"? What about Neil Armstrong - or Saint Paul? At this season of Christmas and Epiphany do you imagine that the wise men from the East were told to "have a good trip"? Matthew's gospel says they "rejoiced exceedingly" as the star came to the right place. When they saw the baby they "fell down and worshiped him" These wise men had an exceedingly good trip. What about our own coming and going? Is it too much to expect to find anew God's gracious presence with us?

As Paul was planning a trip to Rome he sent them his famous letter. He tells them he plans to share with them a "spiritual gift...that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.” At my ordination the preacher chose this very text. I, in turn, had chosen the preacher, but I was taken aback when he chose this text. I disliked the audacity of suggesting that Paul's grand plan, with its bag of spiritual gifts and its “mutual encouragement” might be somehow connected with me and people I would visit. I was very wrong. This is what happens all the time. I just hadn't noticed. I had ignored God's gracious rescue of our clumsy efforts at mutual encouragement. Isn't this "mutual encouragement" what can happen in all that we do together- in our times of worship and reflection and service?

Perhaps I am being overly serious. It would be a pious pose to not mention that we enjoy Paris parks and museums and monuments. We enjoy the Comédie Française and fancy stores and foie gras, and whenever there is free time we will enjoy our time and life here in Paris. And as you can see, Carol and I are delighted and blessed to return to The American Church in Paris. Being part of this community of faith is the substance of this particular trip. We thank God for you, and for this very "good trip".
Thoughts from  
Dr. Rev. Glen Thorp  
Interim Associate Pastor

The above photo we sent for this newsletter was taken at Genesee Home, Northern California. It is our favorite retreat setting, where there is no internet or cell phone service. I had been asked to emcee a banquet the next Saturday and had not received the complete list of speakers, so I asked to borrow the office computer to check email.

The first letter I opened was from Scott Herr asking if I would be open to serving as an Interim Associate Pastor in the American Church Paris. It came as a total surprise, but things moved fast after that and here we come!

When we were asked to send a photo, we chose to send the photo that was taken where our new adventure was to start! Here is a brief bio of us to start our introduction to you …

I was born in California, USA, raised bi-culturally and bi-lingually in Guatemala, Central America, where my parents were missionaries under the Presbyterian Church.

I served as Pastor in a variety of communities and types of churches including Chartering a Presbyterian Church in North Los Angeles County, Redevelopment Churches in Denver, Colorado and North Hollywood, California, and retired after 13 years as Pastor of Community Presbyterian Church, West Covina, California.

Both my wife and I enjoy traveling, and after retirement, I started playing tennis again… until I had rotary cuff surgery six weeks ago.

I’m married to Eugenia (Jeannie) Thorp who was born in Colombia, South America and also grew up bi-culturally and bi-lingually in Colombia where her parents also served as missionaries under the Presbyterian Church. Jeannie has done volunteer work, and her hobbies include needlepoint and photography.

I’m looking very forward to beginning a six-month assignment as Interim Associate Pastor this month at the American Church in Paris and getting to know all of you! See you soon!
It’s Epiphany, not an epiphany
By Thomas Macfarlane

As opposed to an epiphany (a sudden feeling or inspiration), Epiphany is one of the oldest Christian holidays.

Epiphany is a time that celebrates the shining forth of Christ Incarnate, commemorating three central events:

His visitation by the Magi,

His baptism in the river Jordan,

And the miracle of the wedding feast (where water was turned into wine).

These three events are crucial to the reality of Christ’s revelation as the Son of God to mankind. The traditional date of Epiphany is January 6, with the earliest mentions of it dating back to the 4th century. The word is Greek in origin and translates as a manifestation of a god, or a revelation.

In Western Christian traditions, it counts the twelfth night after Christmas, and also signals the beginning of the Season of Epiphany, which on the church calendar leads to Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the Lenten season.

With this knowledge we can better understand the meaning of songs like “The Twelve Days of Christmas”, or carols like “We Three Kings”. We can also note in the Sundays following Epiphany that they are referred to as Second Sunday after Epiphany, etc. Here in France we can also see it in the bakeries, where the traditional “galette des rois” (kings’ cake) is available everywhere.
The 2011 Stewardship campaign, *Come You Who Are Blessed by God*, is yet another example of how God is working through us and with us at the ACP. In hearing personal testimonies from members of the ACP, in thinking and praying about our own gifts of finances and service, in talking about Stewardship, and in recognising all the ways we are blessed, we have grown in our journey of faith together.

But, maybe the act of pledging is new to you. Perhaps it is not something with which you are familiar? Or you are familiar with pledging, but you just aren’t comfortable with it? Or maybe you’re a life-long pledger and think nothing of completing your Gift of Financial Resources form? Here’s some information to help decipher a “pledge”.

Stewardship ... is a way of life, a transformational way of living, and a belief that God is the source of all that we have and we are merely being good stewards of what God has given us. It is the responsible planning and management of resources (financial affairs, property, health, environment, etc.).

A Pledge ... is more than a one-time or annual donation. It helps create a relationship between you and God.

Important things to know ...

- Your pledges are what allow ACP to be responsible stewards of all that Christ has given us.
- A pledge is not a firm commitment, it is not a legal requirement, and it is not an obligation.
- The amount you pledge is confidential. The pastors, the council, the finance committee, your friends at the ACP ... none of these people know the exact amount of your pledge. Only the church accountant knows the amount you give as he is responsible for sending year-end tax letters.
- The pledges you make have a direct impact on the life, mission and ministry of the American Church in Paris. Your pledges are the backbone of the budget that the Finance committee puts together, with input from committees and council. This budget is presented to you, the congregation, for approval at the annual meeting.
- The number of times that concepts of stewardship are mentioned in the Bible are too numerous to put here! Try it – google “Bible Stewardship” and be amazed!
- If you have not yet pledged, *it is not too late*. If you have already pledged, *thank you*! If you have questions about stewardship or pledging, do not hesitate to contact a member of the Finance & Stewardship committee, or email us at stewardship@acparis.org

Faithfully,
The ACP Finance & Stewardship Team

Julia Kung (Stewardship Chair), Julie Couston, Sue Orsoni, Noemi Plaza, Dave Smidt (Finance Committee Chair), Dustin Smith, Megan Staley
YOUTH and YOUNG ADULT ACTIVITIES
By Lisa Prevett

YOUNG ADULTS EVENTS FOR JANUARY
Come and join us every Tuesday for either Bible Study or Pizza Night, as we share fellowship and conversation.
For Pizza Night come at 18:00 to help cook and from 19:00 for dinner and the talent showcase!

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 3rd</td>
<td>19:30</td>
<td>Bible Study in the Catacombs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 5th</td>
<td>19:30-20:30</td>
<td>Men's Bible Study (at the home of Paul Grayson, 109 Rue de l'Université)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 20th</td>
<td>19:00-22:00</td>
<td>Youth &amp; Young Adult Laser Tag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 24th</td>
<td>18:00/19:00</td>
<td>Pizza Night and Talent Showcase! (in the Thurber Room)</td>
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YOUTH EVENTS
Youth Group meets on Sundays from 15:00 – 17:00 pm for fun, fellowship and Bible study in the Catacombs. Please feel free to bring friends along – they are always welcome at ACP events!

Youth Worship (11-13 years)
Resumes on January 8th and meets each Sunday during the 11:00 worship service in The Youth Catacombs. Follow the cross during the service to gather in the theater.

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday 8th, 15th, 22th, 29th</td>
<td>15:00-17:00</td>
<td>Youth Group in the Catacombs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday 8th</td>
<td>15:00</td>
<td>Youth Parents Meeting in G2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday 20th</td>
<td>19:00-22:00</td>
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Contact Rev. Dan Haugh (youthpastor@acparis.org) for more information about Youth and Young Adult events. You can also follow us on Twitter (www.twitter.com/danhaugh) Or connect on Facebook (www.facebook.com/haugh.dan)
THURBER THURSDAYS

Resumes on the 12th of January!

Thurber Thursdays is an adult community gathering and growth time that is open to all.
We share a meal at 18h30 and the evening program begins at 19h30 to 21h00.
(A 5€ donation is requested to cover the cost of the meal)

On 12 January, Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung will be presenting her book, Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies. Her book explores the traditional teachings on the seven deadly sins, and the way that contemporary culture trivializes, psychologizes, or even dismisses the seven deadly sins as if they have no serious moral or spiritual implications.

Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung (PhD, University of Notre Dame) is associate professor of philosophy at Calvin College and wrote the "seven deadly sins" entry for the Encyclopedia of Christianity.

New Thurber Thursday Series: Test of Faith

January 19th through February 16th

Join us as we watch and discuss the Test of Faith documentary over the course of five Thursdays. The main message of the documentary is that there are many practicing scientists who have a sincere Christian faith, even at the highest levels of academia. All of us can share their experience of awe when they find out more about God's creation through science. These scientists also help us to explore a number of issues that affect our own lives. On the ACP website there is a link to the trailer, “Test of Faith”.
ACP African Fellowship
You’re invited to the installation of Elizabeth Eposi as the new Chairperson, and the fellowship luncheon on January 8, 2012!

ACP Filipino Fellowship
Weekly studies and luncheons continue!

For more information ~ Contact Virginia Jacinto at vjacinto76@gmail.com
Announcing an exceptional event at the American Church:
The REDEDICATION OF OUR STEINWAY GRAND PIANO!

Atelier Concert Series

Sunday 15 January at 17H – free admission

The Guastavino Trio:
Jane Shelly, flute
Tom Hudson, cello
Sara Kohane, piano
with Tobé Malawista, soprano
Music by Handel, Wheeler, Martinu, Liszt and many others

Sunday 22 January at 17H – free admission

Carol Mundinger, clarinet

A SPECIAL EVENT CONCERT!

Sunday 29 January
At 17H – free admission

Announcing an exceptional event at the American Church:
THE REDEDICATION OF OUR STEINWAY GRAND PIANO!

Peter Bannister, piano
Thomas Macfarlane, piano
Laurana Mitchelmore, piano
Catherine Nitikine, piano
Nathalia Romanenko, piano
Debra Takakjian, piano
with Carol Mundinger, clarinet
Verouchka Nitikine, organ

Music by Chopin, Liszt, Debussy, Ravel, Mussorgsky
Some History of Josephine, Our Beloved Steinway

Built in New York in 1888, our Steinway concert grand piano is a historical instrument that has just been completely restored in Yonkers, New York thanks to generous gifts by the Filipino Fellowship of the American Church and past members David and Laura Moore.

The piano was given to the church by Hattie Alvah Strong (1864-1950), pictured at right, wife of Henry A. Strong, the first President of Eastman-Kodak. A well known philanthropist, Hattie’s list of charitable activities and honors includes the establishment in 1927 of a retreat near Paris for face-wounded veterans of the French Army for which she received the Legion of Honor, the establishment of the Hattie M. Strong Foundation in 1928, and gifts of various buildings to hospitals, educational institutions and social service agencies in the United States, Europe, Asia and Africa.

A rededication concert will be held at the American Church on Sunday, January 29th at 5 p.m. We are pleased and honored that the great-granddaughter of Mrs. Strong, Sigrid Reynolds, will be with us for the concert.

The program will feature some of the outstanding concert artists we have among our own church membership: pianists Peter Bannister, Thomas Macfarlane, Laurana Mitchelmore, Nathalia Romanenko and Debra Takakjian, and clarinetist Carol Mundinger. Guest artists will include Catherine and Verouchka Nitikine, piano and organ duo.

Admission is free and a reception will follow.
Late last September, Patti Lafage flew to Uganda to join the Rafiki Village. Rafiki, was built in 2003 and is now home to 102 resident orphans plus 72 local children who attend the pre-primary, primary, junior and senior secondary schools. Patti, who sang in Fred Gramann’s Choir, says that the Lord has truly been at work here moving friends, family, churches and even some people she did not know personally to support her for this mission. On these pages, Patti shares stories of “how God has been working to help (her) to contribute to His transforming love in Africa.”

More Impressions of Uganda

It’s been three months already as a missionary at Rafiki Children’s Home near Kampala, Uganda! Thousands of surprises and fantastic experiences have crowded into these short months.
Here are a few more highlights:

Back to School – “La Rentrée”

January marks the beginning of a new school year in Uganda. We are excited about new curriculum materials, written especially for Rafiki Schools, and having a reading education specialist come for two months. Procurement of school supplies for this New Year took my colleague and me into Kampala with a long list, several million shillings in cash and the name and address of the wholesaler, located on a crowded one-way street in a busy commercial district. The place had moved, but we found it, and two hours later we emerged with twelve cartons containing a thousand pens (not the famous French manufacturer since the risk of fake labeled pens is too high), two thousand pencils, and a thousand exercise books, hundreds of erasers, folders, markers, and reams of paper…. About six people helped load my car then directed me to back out and up over a sidewalk to get out of the store’s delivery zone which had filled to overflowing in the meantime. Back at Rafiki Village, some of our older boys were thrilled to unload the precious cargo and find out what brand, what kind, how many…they understand how blessed they are to have these supplies.

- Continued -
Green Grass

Out driving the other day, I noticed - thank the Lord! - A rope stretched across the road in front of the car, about waist high. It was attached to a huge skinny ‘ole cow with towering horns that had been tied to graze on one side but had figured out that the grass really was greener…you know how it is. There were lots of people around, as always, so a she was quickly shooed back to her side by a helpful young man. His reply to my heartfelt thanks, (as is so often the case with those who help out on all kinds of near troubles on the road): “You are most welcome, Mummy”. (or Madam, sometimes). Next time, will I be brave enough to shoo the cow myself? It looks easy enough…

Powerful Problems

It seems lately that the electric power has been much more on than off, so the habit of counting on power only during official generator hours had been forgotten. After church last Sunday I put a chicken into the modern electric oven with ginger, cardamom and other yummy things. It had been cooking about ½ hour when the power went off. Knowing power would be back on at 6:30, it was OK, crackers to tide me over then off to the school to work on the library move project then supervise the children’s early dinner and then choir practice. That chicken will smell great and just be ready at 7PM when I come in the door. How did it smell at 7PM? Not so great after all. The power had come back on much earlier so the poor chicken was burnt to a cinder and the cheap aluminum pan may have seen its last chicken.

But I have to think about our neighbors who do all their cooking out of doors on small charcoal cookers or sometimes over pits of firewood. They make do (very well, by the looks of it) with the most rudimentary cooking utensils made of thin aluminum. The national dish, matoke, is made by peeling small green matoke bananas, cutting them into pieces (they are hard as bricks at this point so a machete-type instrument is handy) then boiling for 2-3 hours until soft. Then mash and serve with G-nut (like peanut) sauce. Yum. But what a lot of work, and the quantities of charcoal needed are sadly leading to deforestation.

‘Tis the Season

Life is hard here for our Ugandan neighbors. The fertile land feeds all generously thanks to extremely hard work in the subsistence gardens, work done mostly by the women and girls, and the livestock. But you see mostly smiling, strong, healthy-looking people and lots and lots of babies and young children. And always, especially now during holiday season which lasts through February, music and festivities prevail. God seems to smile on this place.
Opportunities for Personal Growth and Outreach

DO YOU ATTEND THE 11h00 SERVICE ON SUNDAYS? Perfect, because we could use your time (one hour) twice a month at the 1:30 service with the ACP children's worship. Please contact Jeanette Laugier at childrensworship@acparis.org.

AN INVITATION! Are you a greeter or an usher at the 9h00 and/or 11h00 services? Are you interested in becoming one? This invitation is to you! For any questions, please contact Anna Zweede at a.zweede@numericable.com.

SUNDAY SERMON BIBLE STUDY Sunday morning between the 9am and 11am services, in G2. Contact Kristie Worrel for further information at kristieworrel@hotmail.com.

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

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

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

CALLING ALL MULTICULTURAL COUPLES. Bring a dish to share and join the fun on Jan 13th at 8pm in the Thurber Room. For more info, contact Monica Bassett or Susanna Anglada, at monica.bassett@free.fr or susanna_anglada@yahoo.com.

THE KNITTING GROUP welcomes newcomers and experts, and others in between – all are welcome. Some of us are knitting now for Mission Outreach, and some for ourselves and our families. This month, some of us will be making an afghan together – anyone can join in! We can guide you toward Paris knit shops, patterns, online resources, local knitting events and more. Drop in; bring a friend and check it out! Monday afternoons at 17h00. For more info, contact Antoinette Wolfe at alawolfe@gmail.com or Elizabeth Rand at ehrand@gmail.com.

MOVIE DISCUSSION GROUP: The movie group's choices for January are Martin Scorcese's "Hugo Cabaret," David Cronenberg's "A Dangerous Method," Clint Eastwood's "J. Edgar" and Jeff Nichols' "Take Shelter." See any or all in the cinema at your convenience, then join the group for discussion on Thursday, Jan. 19, at 7:30pm in the church basement, room G2.

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

FRIDAY MISSION LUNCH. Every Friday, the Mission Lunch Program provides a free, cooked lunch at the host church (American Cathedral, 23 Avenue George V, Paris 8e) to those in need. ACP organizes the lunch on the second Friday of each month, but volunteers are needed every week for cooking, serving and cleaning-up. Contact: Kristie at kristieworrel@hotmail.com.

MOMS IN TOUCH PRAYER GROUP: Would you like to join with other moms as we lift up our cares and concerns for our children and their schools to our loving Father? Experience the joy of replacing anxiety with peace and hope when we pray scripture together. Moms in Touch groups are in 120 countries and now English language groups are forming in Paris. Contact Caroline at MomsInTouchParis@gmail.com.
December in Review

The All-Church Christmas Party
With Caroling and Lots of Christmas Treats!
The 2011 Candlelight Christmas Concert
at the American Church in Paris

The Candlelight Christmas Concert
December 10, 2011
Fred Gramann, Music Director
A Real Story of Christmas Joy
Small is Beautiful Too

By Yoshiko Okubo-Miquel

Some years ago, my husband, François, was diagnosed as having the Lewi Disease and has been hospitalized since. His disease encompasses a group of “neuro-degenerative diseases”, in which you will find more familiar ones such as the Parkinson’s, the Alzheimer’s and the Huntington’s, all somewhat similar.

The community in the hospital is composed of diversity of people who are “linked” only by illness, and whose communication means are quasi defective. But I soon discovered that one cannot live by shutting his/her door, however cozy the interior may be, as we are living in a society. Any society is composed of human relationships, even in a hospital.

Every year when the Christmas period approaches, the hospital staff’s joyful decoration stops at the door of each patient room. The “festivity”, “laughter”, and “joviality” of Christmas do not seem to penetrate into the patients. Whatever the stage of illness they may be, patients demand “attention”, a full and complete attention paid ONLY to him/her. They are not concerned with “one interest” drawn to “plural patients” collectively. This is a cardinal rule with these patients, so then how can we offer joviality in midst of the busiest season?

On the 2nd Advent Sunday, Kerry Lieury asked me if François would be interested in having people visit him and sing Christmas carols. I was delighted with the idea. However, I was not quite sure if this event could really take place. Kerry is an extremely busy woman: full time working mother and wife, member of the Associate Pastor Search Committee, and singing in the Choir. On top of all these activities, the Choir Annual Concert was to be held that weekend! Where will she have extra energy for something or someone else? Hospitals are surely not the place where people like to show-up with enthusiasm…

Contrary to all my reservations, it did happen the following Sunday as planned. It turned out that not only Bettina Skaff Chéhab joined the Kerry’s band, but also, Kerry’s husband Jerome came along to accompany the band with the guitar. A Trio was thus set up. What was amazing was that, the Trio, which seemed to have been “instantly” set up, went through 1 hour rehearsal before coming to the hospital. What a remarkable energy and good will!
In François’ tiny room, we all fitted in wonderfully and we sang about 10 carols. François remembered some of the carols and joined us. *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* and *Jingle Bells* were his two favorites.

The Trio did not spoil François and slowed down for him when singing the *Jingle Bells*. “It’s *Dashing through the snow*… not crawling in the snow, you see?” they said. François thus forced to strongly concentrate in following the swift rhythm, in addition to getting the words right in English that he remembered. Inside his head, sleeping neurons that received a sudden whip must have panicked, and run around in all directions, bumping and stumbling. François was sparkling with excitement!

It was joyful and fun. We all laughed and enjoyed singing heartily. The Trio was excellent comedians (*oops*, I mean musicians). You know Kerry, but I don’t think you can ever imagine how fun(ny) Bettina and Jerome can be! Eureka! It was truly a jolly treat for us.

François had been losing his voice recently and could only whisper, but as we went on singing, *his voice* started to come out! Then, when the party was over, François, who had been having difficulty to stand, *wanted to stand up* and thank each one of them. These small gestures might be insignificant and imperceptible for others, but for me they were miracles!!

Pastor Scott always told us that pastors cannot do everything. Each member of the ACP must take initiative and use imagination, creativity and competencies gifted to all of us to reach out. Scott also told us that “to show-up” is an essential element. Out-reach action cannot yield fruit with “squeezed-out” time from a fully stuffed agenda or with the “left-over” energy. It is because those who wait for the outreach expect a full attention specifically to them. It is a commitment, but it must be “spontaneously” done so that it will be “fun” for all.

The event happened in a tiny room in the 15th arrondissement on a small scale, but the result was not only “1 individual effort x 3”. It multiplied. The impact that this out-reach brought was immeasurable for all concerned. It is truly thanks to people who can apply the message of the Pastor into practice. These people are the living witness of how the Body of Christ can bring joy to the world!

Yes, the Sunday afternoon was very special in so many wondrous ways. The capital experience is that TOGETHER we have enjoyed and felt God's presence all along, each five of us, Francois included, gave and received joy.

For me, December 11, 2011 was one of those days that you feel so pity it has to end. While all the participants of the event and their families finished that day with the tasty Lebanese sandwich for dinner (this is another long story…), I stayed up until the very last minute appreciating the early Christmas present I was able to open!

*Thanks be to God!*
ANNOUNCEMENTS

A New Members Class is scheduled for January 29 at 12:30pm. If you are interested in becoming either an Affiliate or a Full Member of the American Church in Paris, please plan on coming to this orientation!

The Confirmation Ceremony will take place on February 12, at whichever service you regularly attend.

So mark your calendars!
RSVP to Camilla Macfarlane at communitylife@acparis.org

A big thank you to Gigi Oyog for her many years of service to The Spire Newsletter

On another note ♫
The Contemporary Service Band, Still Point’s Christmas CD is for sale for 10€ !!
Children’s Music Program Schedule

Rehearsals begin again on Wednesday, January 18!

2-3:00 pm   Prep hand bells
3-4:00 pm   Children's choir / cherub choir
4-5:00 pm   Youth hand bells
5-6:30 pm   Youth choir

Contact Bonnie Woolley at youthchoir@acparis.org for further information

Youth Choir with The Ateneo Glee Club of Manila
~ A Year in Review ~
Do you remember?

Cherubini Requiem and the Shubert Mass in G
Franck Chastrusse with The ACP Adult Choir and Luxaeterna Chorus

Youth Choir

Mother’s Day Pancake Breakfast

Ginger’s Ordination

Easter and the Hallelujah Chorus!

The OLD kitchen

Left: Filipino Fellowship’s 25th Anniversary

Right: African Fellowship’s 10th Anniversary
Fred and Nancy’s 35th Anniversary Reception

Pastor Dan’s Inauguration

Thanksgiving Service with the Cathedral and Rabbi Tom Cohen

Sept 11th Ceremony

BLOOM!

Children’s Nativity Pageant

Vacation Bible School

The Ministry Fair

Thanks to all the contributed to this issue of The Spire!

If you would like to make a submission for next month, please contact Camilla Macfarlane at spire@acparis.org