



An initial investment

The history of the American Church in Paris goes back 160 years to 1857 when the original church was built on rue de Berri on the Right Bank near the Champs-Élysées. Presidents Ulysses S. Grant, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson all worshipped there. When the congregation had outgrown that building, a new church was built in the late 1920s in the neo-Gothic style on the quai d'Orsay with the help of several wealthy parishioners. It included the church house and the sanctuary, but the ACP was not yet "The Spire on the Seine," because there was no steeple.

Reverend Joseph Wilson Cochran, realizing the importance of a steeple to tie the two buildings together, went to the U.S. to solicit funds for a spire, but the country was in the middle of the Great Depression. The pastor was turned down by those who had lost fortunes. But one well-to-do man in New York with the initials ACJ had had his money in gold instead of the stock market, and he was willing to pay for the steeple. All he asked was that his name not be disclosed.

The pastor honored that request, but in the archway over the door leading to the church house, immortalized the anonymous donor by having the initials "AJC" carved in the stone. And the spire has become an icon of the Paris skyline.

That's just one story in a rich history of Christians making investments in the ACP to ensure there was a building here and that it was maintained for the ACP's extensive mission in this great city. Now it is up to us, with our contributions large and small, to ensure that the gospel is preached to all comers, the needy receive help, the church's magnificent musical tradition continues and lives are enriched with a myriad of activities and programs.

Exploring God's Word on giving

As Christians searching God's Word about giving and about relying on God when we give, we find several principles, instructions and promises in both the Old and New Testaments.

Among those words of wisdom:

– All we have belongs to God, and we are stewards of what He's given us.

Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us. (1 Chronicles 29:14)

– We are to give to God first, not give Him what's left over. That practice honors God with obedience, shows where our heart is and forces us to trust God.

Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops. (Proverbs 3:9)

– This trust moves us toward relying on God rather than spending our lives worrying whether we'll ever have enough.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life...do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself." (Matthew 6:25...6:34)

– As the story of the widow's mite illustrates, it is not the amount of the gift but the act of obedience and sacrifice that is important to God.

"I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others." (Luke 21:4)

– As for amounts of contributions, noblesse oblige:

Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you. (Deuteronomy 16:17)

– As a rule, God doesn't ask us to test Him, but He does in Malachi and adds a promise.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." (Malachi 3:10)

– Paul reminds us of that promise by God and also implies we aren't supposed to feel pressure or squirm in our seats during a stewardship sermon but assume a spirit of generosity.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (II Corinthians 9: 6-7)

– Stewardship includes time and talent as well as treasure, and if you give of all three, you can save the church from having to pay for the time and talent.

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

Going by the numbers

Did you know that the ACP paid 225,000 euros for repairs and utilities last year? Or that it had staff costs of 753,000€? In addition, it spent 69,000€ on missions, 105,000€ on programs and 25,000€ on security.

God's mission in Paris carried out through the ACP costs about one and a half million euros annually, and we are responsible for raising almost 600,000€ of it. People from churches in other countries are sometimes surprised to learn that the ACP doesn't raise 100 percent of the revenue needed to operate. It is very fortunate in that rentals of ACP property raise almost half a million euros per year and a wedding ministry raises hundreds of thousands of euros (175,000€ last year). And in fact, as a "mission" of the American and Foreign Christian Union, the ACP receives AFCU funds covering the salary and benefits of its senior pastor.

That left the congregation with the responsibility of raising approximately 45 percent of the money needed to operate the ACP last year. Leaders this year hope that congregational giving improves by about 2 percent over 2016, to 590,000€, to meet the 2017 budget.

That's to continue two traditional services with organ, piano, adult and children's choirs and handbell choirs as well as the contemporary service with a band; Bible study, prayer and fellowship groups including the African Fellowship and Filipino Fellowship and men's and women's ministries; ministries for children, youth and young adults; and supporting missions in Paris – Foyer de Grenelle, Friday Mission Lunch, Homeless Ministry, Serve the City Paris, Refugee Ministry, SOS Help – and in Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Lebanon, the Philippines, Uganda and Habitat for Humanity projects; in addition to Thurber lectures and more enrichment programs.



Giving options

Contributions in either euros or dollars are welcome and are received during the offertory time in services, by the church receptionist or by mail to: American Church in Paris, Attention: Accountant, 65 quai d'Orsay, 75007 Paris.

If you want to get a statement for tax purposes, include your name and address with your contribution. Checks in euros should be made out to American Church in Paris. Checks in dollars should be written to American and Foreign Christian Union (ACP's parent organization), designating the check "for ACP."

You may also make electronic transfers and can arrange a one-time or regular electronic transfer by contacting the church accountant at acctg@acparis.org or using the AFCU website to make a transfer by PayPal.

The ACP welcomes other forms of financial gifts such as stocks and bonds, making a provision for a gift to the ACP in your will, designating the ACP as a beneficiary in your life insurance policy or creating a charitable remainder trust. For more information, go to the ACP website, acparis.org, and click on "Support us."

STEWARDSHIP

A Function of Discipleship



YOUR GIVING MATTERS!

Your giving directly contributes to the ongoing mission of *The American Church in Paris*. We are a community of more than 40 nationalities who believe our mission is "to bear witness by word and deed to the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, to provide a place of English language worship in the American Protestant tradition and to engage in ministries and services that enrich the lives of residents and visitors in Paris." Read more to find out how you and your giving can help us to continue to be a dynamic Embassy for the Kingdom of God here in Paris impacting the world for Christ!