

April 2017

The Bridge No. 16

**Newsletter of
Ponte Sant'Angelo
Methodist Church Rome**



Minister's letter

The tulips and narcissi out on the manse terrace tell me that Spring has arrived! The profusion of flowers is a sure sign that winter is at an end. The bursting of bulbs long hidden in the ground and inactive is an eternal reminder of the cycle of death and resurrection. I thought the amaryllis bulb I replanted last year had ceased to be, but a new shoot has emerged with a promise of more to come! Jesus likened his own life to the grain of wheat that “unless it falls in the ground and dies” will not multiply (John 12: 24). We are to be the followers of the one who leads us to the Cross with the promise of Eternal Life made manifest at Easter beyond.

In many churches there will be a bare scene with a rock tomb prepared for a burial with a line of crosses on a distant hill called Calvary, the “place of the skull”. Most criminals crucified there received no such dignity in death but were left to rot. But Jesus had friends who recognized that he was unjustly killed. His crime? To love too much. To love all people even to the end, even proclaiming on the cross “Father, forgive them”. It was the love of an everlasting ever faithful God who wanted to save his people for all time. If only they would believe.

So the bare garden becomes at Easter a garden full of flowers, fresh as the dawn of this Resurrection day on which the followers of Jesus discover the empty tomb. May our Lenten hearts which have followed the way of the Cross be made glad by the joy of knowing Christ's resurrection. And may we make space in our hearts and lives for the flourishing of the promise of the hope of eternal life for us l all who believe as Easter People.

May you all have a very happy Easter!

Pastor Tim



Intern Report

It seems the longer I am here, the quicker time seems to pass! With only 4 months left here in Rome, I am hoping that time will once again slow down a little so I can make sure I am fully taking everything in! However, the closer to summer we get, the busier things seem to be!

March has been a good month, full of the usual activities, as well as a few extra things added in! For example, I was able to attend the first ever **Anglican Evensong in St Peters** with other members of Ponte Sant'Angelo, which was really

wonderful to be a part of! We were also well represented, considering we are such a small congregation!

The **Young Adults Group** continues to do well, with an average of about 5 of us meeting every two weeks. Although it is quite a small number, I have been encouraged with the dedication of those coming and the openness that has developed within the group. We have a really wonderful time of studying the Bible with one another and praying for each other, and our wider communities. I hope and pray that the group will continue to grow and flourish, and that through it we would all grow to know more of who God is and what His plans and purposes for us are. I also continue to help at the **Italian Methodist Youth Group** on Friday evenings at Via Firenze. This has been a great opportunity for me to not only practice my Italian, but to also get a glimpse into how Italian churches do youth and young adult ministry, and of course it's been a wonderful chance for me to make some really good friends!

I have also continued to teach at the **Joel Nafuma Refugee Centre** in St Paul's twice a week, and continue to really enjoy my teaching there. I have started to notice the relationships I have with the students are growing, and with that the lessons become easier and more fun! Though each week I am guaranteed at least one new student who has no clue what is going on! I recently attended a Lebanese fundraising dinner put on by the centre that was fantastic. The next one is on **Wednesday the 12th of April** and will be a Nigerian meal. If anyone is interested in going, please ask me for more details!

Lucy Cowpland

World Church and Relationships with other faiths

Welcoming the Stranger by Angela Macquiban

This was the title of a series of excellent talks I attended recently at the Lay Centre, given by a range of speakers with experience and expertise in issues of immigration and support for refugees here in Rome. Some were Lay Centre Leadership Scholars, spending a period of time living together as a community from different parts of the world and representing different faith traditions as Muslims, Christians and a Buddhist.

Donna Orsuto, the Director of the Lay Centre and Edmund Power, former Abbot of St Paul Outside the Walls, introduced the series by looking at the Biblical perspective of Hospitality. In Genesis 18 Abraham welcomes three strangers who tell him he and Sarah will have a son in their old age and he will have as many descendants as the stars in the heavens. In Matthew 25 Jesus tells the parable of the sheep and goats - "I was a stranger and you gave me shelter".

The Flight into Egypt of the Holy Family has been depicted in many and varied ways in Christian Art and this was the subject of the talk by Prof Barbara Aniello of the Gregorian University. She focused at length on the famous painting by Caravaggio in the Palazzo Doria Pamphilij which made a great impression on me when I first saw it, depicting Joseph holding a musical score while an angel plays the violin and Mary tenderly cradles Jesus. It is an enigmatic work of art full of theological symbolism.

A speaker from the Jesuit Refugee Service gave us an up to date overview of the current plight of refugees around the world.

Half of the 65.3 million refugees today are children. Pope Francis has urged religious communities to offer accommodation to families fleeing violence and persecution, stressing the importance of four verbs: welcome, protect, promote, integrate. Refugees are not strangers but our brothers and sisters. We must challenge negative attitudes and prejudice against migrants. She spoke about the work of Mediterranean Hope supported by the Methodist and Waldensian churches in Italy along with the Sant'Egidio Community. Humanitarian Corridors are now enabling vulnerable people from Syria and Lebanon to get special visas to reach Europe in safety, rather than risking their lives in dangerous sea crossings. One refugee from Kenya told us how a Franciscan community in Rome had welcomed him and treated him as a member of the family, healing his 'inner' wounds through spiritual counselling.

Archbishop David Moxon of the Anglican Centre, who presented our church with a Lampedusa cross at the end of our Anniversary year, is involved with the Pope and other religious leaders in combatting human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery. He spoke about The Road to Integration: a Common Goal that brings Christians Together. The root causes of people leaving their countries are often linked to failure to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In Rome the Sisters of Consolation rescue trafficked sex workers from brothels and care for them. Many global manufacturing companies are being challenged to investigate their supply chains and ensure they are not using slave labour. The Global Freedom Network is lobbying for improved legislation, enforcement of laws and increased prosecution rates.

The final session in the series looked at Hospitality beyond Boundaries: Christians and Muslims Responding Together to

the Refugee Crisis. A Jesuit priest who has studied Arabic spoke about visiting a refugee camp in Greece and meeting people whose homes in Syria had been completely destroyed. It was a very moving account which I felt gave the whole issue a human face as he described the trauma they experienced, compounded by the negative reaction they received on arrival – a complete contrast to their own culture of hospitality back in their home communities. Many unaccompanied minors had seen their parents killed or been sent off by them in the hope of a better future. Mental illness, malnutrition, ill-treatment by the authorities all contribute to a lack of hope. Trained helpers are desperately needed to provide for basic physical and psychological needs.

A refugee from Mali told his story of fleeing to Niger, then Libya. He witnessed the killing of family members before getting on a boat for the perilous journey to Italy, to be rescued by a Maltese ship. Conditions in the holding camp in Malta were dire but with a fake passport he made it to Italy. After living on the streets in Rome he eventually got refugee status and now has a job working at a refugee centre.

A Muslim academic originally from Turkey but now in Rome spoke about Syrian refugees in Turkey. One woman, a cardiologist, fled Turkey and is now in Brussels, but has no job or status there and is battling depression. We heard that San Eustachio church provides meals for refugees every day, most of them Muslims. To end this final session we had an inter-faith time of worship, led by Lay Centre students from Brazil, Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Italy, Mozambique and Iraq. We committed ourselves to work and pray for peace and justice and find practical ways to welcome the stranger.

The Easter Offering service this year will be held on Sunday 14th May. Envelopes to support the work of the Methodism in the World Church will be available on Easter Day and Sundays afterwards.

Report on Pastor Tim's visit to Cuba. He writes:

Apart from coming back with gastro-enteritis which made my journey back anxious and uncomfortable (I don't recommend it as a way of losing 16 kg in a week!!), I had an interesting time representing the World Methodist Council at the committee meeting of the Global Christian Forum in Havana Cuba. This ecumenical body has only been in existence for 19 years and includes not only traditional members of the World Council of Churches (Orthodox, Roman Catholic and historic post-Reformation Protestant Churches, but also Pentecostal, Independent and Charismatic churches which are the fastest growing in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Having had a conference in Albania last year on Persecuted Churches, it was interesting to hear the follow up to that, with the personal witness of the Syrian Orthodox Archbishop in exile in the Lebanon. In a country like Cuba, it was important to engage with Christians there who, though not persecuted, were very much restricted after the communist revolution. While traditional churches were not allowed to be built. Mission/worship centres in growing areas emerged and the government was forced to tolerate this development as the faith was maintained and indeed strengthened. Government ministers we met told us it was OK for Christians to be party members (though not many are!). Havana itself looked like the set for a 1950s film in the USA. Sadly many of the beautiful buildings of the early 20th century when it was the jewel of the Caribbean are decayed but

a programme of reconstruction is underway in the thawing of relationships with the West helped by Pope Francis` visit last year. Sadly also the people who begged for money were mostly academics, students and teachers, unable to get the support they needed, often seeking employment and a new life they hoped in the States. In the Trump era of barriers erected and divisions exacerbated fears for the future were expressed.

SUNDAY SERVICES AT PSA

2nd April Informal service led by Pastor Tim (Rome Marathon this day)

9th April Pastor Tim leads a **Holy Communion service** for Palm Sunday

13th April 7.00pm **Maundy Thursday Communion Service** with the Revd Titus Pratt, Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Ghana preaching.

16th April Pastor Tim leads a **Holy Communion service** for Easter Day followed by POT LUCK LUNCH

23rd April Pastor Tim : Preacher the Rev. Nick Jones from Birmingham followed by Church Council

30th April Pastor Tim leading the service. **THIS WILL BE A COMMUNION SERVICE BECAUSE OF THE LARGE DUTCH GROUP ON 7TH.**

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS:

We welcome the arrival on 23rd March of Ammad, a son for Bapi and Caroline, brother to Nadia and Sofia, and grandson for Mario and Nelya.

CHURCH COUNCIL (12.02.17)

We noted the purchase of a **grand piano** to replace the former one taken away by our previous concert organiser. In addition Marcello and our organist Simone have found a **new organ** to replace our aged and wheezing instrument. Both of these are great assets for us as we seek to enhance not only our worship but also our space as a venue for good music making. We thank them for their efforts to achieve this and look forward to reaping the rewards in hearing good music in our church.

We would like to promote a **season of prayer and bible reading** in May and June this year from Ascension Day (25th May) until Pentecost and beyond. Further details will be announced nearer the time and resources made available but please reserve the following date

Saturday 3rd June : An afternoon of Reflection and Worship at a convent (eremo) in Casaletto near to Alessia and Federico`s home. A time for all to come together to sing and pray and study the bible.

Another date agreed by the Church Council was a ticketed fundraising dinner on the fifth floor of Via del Banco di Santo Spirito 3 on **Thursday 29th June** in the evening with the chance to end on the terrace to view the fireworks for the city's feast day!

We were glad to co-opt Alessia onto the Church Council. She will take the lead in promoting a bid for enhancing our teaching facilities.

Finally there is a sign up sheet at the back of the church for those wishing to give a lily or lilies in memory of a loved one or in thanksgiving for Easter. These will be arranged by Leslie Kiely who has overseen our festival flowers in the past year.

Pastoral Group Initiative

At our last Church Council meeting we discussed the pastoral life of our church.

On a Sunday we are welcoming and many of us find it easy to engage with newcomers, visitors and tourists both before and after the service over coffee and tea in the schoolroom.

Many of us lead busy lives during the week and have our regular routines and then of course there is the proportion of the congregation who work full or part time or study.

Would you be able to donate some of your time to visit a church member, who struggles to get out easily, and chat over a cup of tea?

Perhaps you would be willing to do some shopping for someone who does not have a car?

Maybe you could assist a newcomer to Rome and to our church by offering some advice? When you arrive in a new place it is rarely easy and coming to Rome without speaking Italian can be very difficult and sometimes a few 'pointers in the right direction' can be invaluable. Often questions and answers can be conducted by e-mail or telephone. As a stranger it is always comforting to know that there is someone you can call on should the need arise.

As a diverse group of Christians from different backgrounds, nationalities and ages we could be the most incredible resource!

We would like to establish a network of members who would be willing to visit or help members of the church when necessary and as the need arises.

The Church Council feels that this already goes on in an informal way and so it would also be great to know what people do to help others. If we were made aware of a particular need, or if you regularly assist with for example shopping for a member who struggles to get out, then we would hope to be able to fill in should you be away or unable to perform the task as you normally do.

If a member is ill or in hospital it would be wonderful if we could call on someone from the pastoral network to make a visit on behalf of the church and report back.

Pastor Tim already tries to get contact details for newcomers and then follows up by e-mail, but it would be terrific if someone from the congregation could also make contact by telephone or e-mail and offer help and/or advice. Whilst we might not know the answer to everything we may well know 'a man who can!'

I hesitate to use the name Pastoral Committee because to me this makes me think of meetings and discussion. We actually just need to be pro active and communication by telephone, text and/or e mail or a quick chat on a Sunday morning should usually be sufficient.

I am very willing to coordinate such an initiative so let's start the ball rolling.

For now, please contact me if you are interested in being part of such a network. You can speak to me before or after the

service on a Sunday or drop me an e-mail or a text, contact details below.

In addition please let me know if you already help or visit a church member on a regular basis and then I can report back to the Church Council.

If we could aim to be able to advertise each week in the notices that we have a Pastoral Group and if you are new or are an existing member with a particular need and that you can make contact with us for assistance, I think that would be a worthwhile and useful service to offer.

This initiative is bound to evolve as it develops so for now it will be a 'work in progress'.

I look forward to hearing from you, as we need a collaborative approach to produce a team effort!

Lindsay Twomlow

Call, text or what's App; +393291877027

E Mail; twomlows@btinternet.com

BIBLE STUDY

There are various opportunities to engage in Bible Study at PSA.

If you are free on Wednesday mornings, do come and join us at 10.30 once every two weeks for coffee, fellowship and study. If you are not free in the mornings and would like to form part of an evening class twice a month, please speak to Sandra. The next dates for the morning group are 8th and 22nd March.

Alessia and Federico run a home group in Via del Casaletto 63 (buzz Montelli Milani). They will meet on April 1st and 22nd,

and May 6th and 20th. For more information speak to Alessia and Federico or call them on 3381675680.

Young Adults Group

The Young Adults Group will now meet at the new time of 6.30pm every second Tuesday to continue their study in Ephesians over some tea and coffee. If you would like more information or are interested in coming, please speak to Lucy or email her on lucy.meorome@gmail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

Ecumenical Garden Dedication and Blessing:

After four and a half years, the Ecumenical Garden will be ready to be more widely enjoyed and used by those who have worked so hard to restore this special monastery garden at S. Gregorio al Celio! On **Saturday May 20th from 4-7pm** there will be a blessing and dedication ceremony, tours of the entire monastery site and prosecco and other refreshments afterwards. This will be a time for celebrating the culmination of a project that has involved many ecumenical friends. All are welcome to join! Please speak to Tim for more details.

SUMMER COURSES

In the summer months, we are hosting 3 courses in the Methodist Ecumenical Office. These are:

Radical Hospitality (25th May – 1st June) for people who would be interested in experiencing engagement with the theme in the context of a church set in a multicultural city with

the contemporary challenge of migration and hospitality for the stranger.

Methodism and Ecumenism (5th-12th June) for anyone who has an interest in ecumenical issues, and who wants to think through issues of what it means to be a Methodist in an ecumenical context.

Photography and Spirituality (15th-20th June) for people with an interest in photography and open to exploring how this might link with spiritual values and insights. Those of other faiths or no faith also welcome.

As we get ready for this course, we could do with a little inside knowledge, please. We'd like to introduce course participants to some photogenic areas of Rome that are off the usual tourist tracks. What are your favourite, least well known parts of Rome? Please can you email Lucy with your ideas and tell us why these areas are special for you.

If any members of the congregation would like to join in any of the courses on a non-residential basis, please see Lucy or email her on lucy.meorome@gmail.com

SUMMER CAMP FOR THE YOUNG AT ECUMENE

The Italian Methodist church invites all youngsters from 5 to 13 to join in a summer camp at the Ecumene centre in Velletri, just outside Rome in a magnificent location. The camp will be held from Friday 9 June through to Sunday 11 June and is a great opportunity for our kids to interact and hear God's word in a joyful environment. This camp takes place every year and a great time is always had by all. There will be details later about cost and arrangements, but PSA is always willing to subsidize

in case of need. A knowledge of Italian helps, but there is always a good mix of nationalities. Please let Pastor Tim or Sandra know if you are interested.

Weekly Offerings [P=Cash, E=Envelopes, BB=Birthday Basket]

Totals for January, February and March

Jan	P 485,25	E 2306,50	BB 100,00	TTL 2890,95
Feb	P 586,33	E 1606,00	BB 120,00	TTL 2312,33
Mar	P 304,97	E 1191,00	BB 132,00	TTL 1617,97

You will note that collections were down in March from previous months, even though attendance was not. We do wish to remind regular members of the congregation that even when they are not able to be with us, the bills for the church still have to be paid! Please consider giving regularly through the envelope scheme, or other ways. Please have a word with Marcello Marinelli, our treasurer, if you need advice.