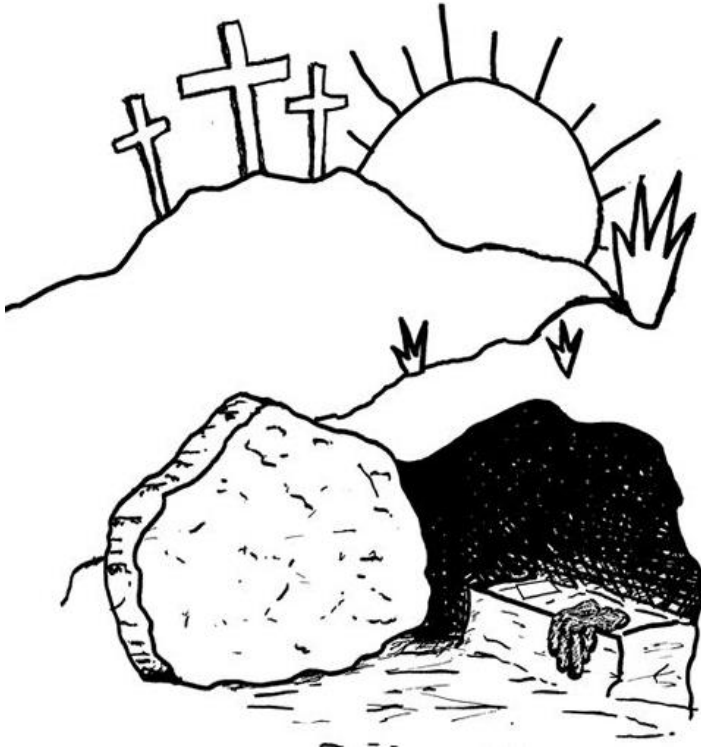


**April 2019**

**The Bridge No. 37**

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



## Minister`s Letter

Dear friends,

Last month we took the theme of **Journeyings** as we received visitors from the UK led by Jill Baker here on pilgrimage (see later article by Jill on this). For them and for us, it was a good start to the Lenten journey on which we have embarked, as we follow Jesus and the disciples journey up to the city of Jerusalem. Pilgrims get sore feet and tired limbs. Journeying comes at a cost!

As we have reflected, the entry and the reception he got later were mixed. He lamented over the city knowing that the fulsome welcome he received with cries of “Hosanna to the Son of David” would turn to shouts of “Crucify him!” from the crowds later in the week. This was the city that killed the prophets and stifled opposition. The Psalmist had asked the people to “pray for Jerusalem” (Psalm 122) with good cause.

When the short term prospects look difficult and bleak, we Christians remember the resurrection hope that lies beyond the cross and the grave. For many in Britain at the moment the future is uncertain in the wake of votes against the Withdrawal Agreement and no deal and in favour of a more measured response after further reflection and negotiation.

For those washed up on a foreign shore after perilous journeys across the sea, or those attacked in a foreign land in their places of worship, or those waiting with loved ones who are facing increasing frailty and ill health, our task is two-fold: to show the compassion Christ showed to others and to offer hope through sympathy, as fellow sufferers who experience the present things patiently in the sure hope of the resurrection victory to those who endure to the end.

Last month, I reflected with others on the poetry of George Herbert the 17<sup>th</sup> century priest-poet who died before he was 40. He wrote these words on Easter which I share with you:

*Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise  
Without delays,  
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise  
With him mayst rise:  
That, as his death calcined thee to dust,  
His life may make thee gold, and much more, just.*

*Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part  
With all thy art.  
The crosse taught all wood to resound his name,  
Who bore the same.  
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key  
Is best to celebrate this most high day.*

*Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song  
Pleasant and long:  
Or, since all musick is but three parts vied  
And multiplied,  
O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,  
And make up our defects with his sweet art.*

May you experience the Easter joy as we pass beyond the Cross and the Grave. **Pastor Tim**

## **INTERN NEWS**

The past few weeks have felt incredibly busy with a residential, pilgrimage by Methodist Women in Britain to Rome and a visit from friends. The various talks and seminars I have attended have provided much to reflect on, and to be challenged by.

One talk was at the Lay Centre by Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, a professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies. The talk was called, "Of Pearls and Prodigals: Hearing Jesus' Parables as Jewish Stories." Dr Levine explained that the more we know about the historical context to Jesus' parables, the more we can

understand what they would have meant to the people that heard them first. The word 'parable' comes from the Greek word 'parabole' which means to set side by side, that is, to put two things together, and in doing so, see something new. Interestingly, Dr. Levine explained that, as we do not have any other 1<sup>st</sup> century Galilean storytellers to compare Jesus' parables with, they are a distinct literary genre. Dr. Levine gave examples of different parables, explaining that, like metaphors, they have different meanings depending on who you ask. The brilliance of the parables, Dr. Levine argued, is that after 2000 years, they continue to provoke. They are designed to challenge the audience, and to "comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable".

During the internship residential in London, we were treated to talks by some very interesting figures. We explored, in particular, the role of the press and media with Kaya Burgess, a News Reporter and Religious Affairs Correspondent at The Times. We discussed the role of the media as a watchdog, holding others and themselves to account, as well as the importance of engaging with different opinions, and always reading critically. We talked about how press coverage provides platforms for certain issues, the pros and cons of this, and the effects this has on public opinion.

We also had a very interesting session with Rachel Lampard, who works for the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT). JPIT is an ecumenical body, made up of the Baptist Union, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, who work together for peace and justice. We discussed JPIT's recent paper on Brexit (featured in March's edition of the Bridge), particularly the challenges for the Methodist Church. The session concluded with us creating a hypothetical statement, to be released by the Methodist Church on the eve of Brexit, to reassure Methodists, and others, around the country. As a group, we reflected on ideas of humility and truth-telling, listening with open hearts and finding hope in difficult circumstances.

**Rachel**

## **CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS**

In the week of International Women's Day we were invited to an event at the Union of International Superiors General (UISG) next door to us on the Lungotevere. It is the headquarters of Catholic women's religious communities worldwide and we had already attended a few of their interesting events and got to know some of the sisters who work there.

This year's theme was 'Women as Promoters of Hope'. It was the initiative of two of the many ambassadors to the Holy See who are currently women, HE Elvira Velasquez of Peru and HE Sally Axworthy of Britain. They were on a panel of speakers including the president of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations, Dott.ssa Flaminia Giovanelli of the Vatican and Dott.ssa Martina Liebsch who is the Policy and Advocacy Director of Caritas.

The Peruvian ambassador said that women play a crucial part in the Latin American church and their voices are getting stronger in public life. Quoting Pope Francis she said 'Hope in Latin America has the face of a woman'. The President of the WUCWO told us that 70% of solidarity actions worldwide involve women in campaigning on issues such as violence, trafficking, sexual exploitation, support for refugees and migrants and care for the environment.

The British ambassador gave examples of UK diplomacy working with religious organisations to combat many global problems today. She highlighted the evil of rape as a weapon of war and working to bring the perpetrators to justice. In the Democratic Republic of Congo religious Sisters take in and rehabilitate survivors and are given training for this as well as pastoral work. The British government is also working with Talitha Kum, an organisation run by Sisters in combatting human trafficking and modern slavery, one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (8.7).

We watched a video about discrimination in India against Dalits, where women face the dual burden of being female as well as Dalit, or 'untouchables'.

There was encouraging news from Flaminia Giovanelli who told us that the number of women in leadership roles in the Holy See is growing, although there is still much to be done. Since Vatican II there have been justice and peace committees although she said that prophecy is often at odds with institutions! Her work with young people has helped them see they are the church in the world.

Finally, Martina Liebsch spoke about aspects of Caritas's work in helping people to help themselves including enabling Dalits in India to know their rights and the promotion in Africa of the Right to Food. Caritas has done a survey into leadership within the organisation which pointed to cultural and religious barriers for women. Social motivation was shown to be high in Caritas recruitment and many donors ask about the proportion of men to women in the organisation.

This very informative and inspiring event ended with an opportunity to question the panel members and some lively discussion ensued.

**Angela Macquiban**

### **RICE BOWL APPEAL**

This year, the Lent Rice Bowl Project is raising money for ACT Alliance (Action of Churches together) supporting their work in Sulawesi, Indonesia. ACT Alliance is a global alliance of more than 145 churches and related organisations working together in over 120 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people.

Indonesia frequently suffers from natural disasters. In October 2018 a 7.4 magnitude earthquake triggered a tsunami in Indonesia. Pictures of devastation were seen around the globe. Communication infrastructure was badly damaged, and entire communities were cut off. Over 1500 people are known to have died in the disaster, and over 70,000 have been displaced. Members of the ACT Indonesia Forum, already responding to humanitarian needs after an earthquake in Lombok, immediately began to respond in Sulawesi as well.

Through ACT churches began to provide health care in Palu, treating patients in the yard of the Palu Grand Mosque. Trucks carrying tarps, sleeping mats, blankets, bottled water, hygiene supplies, and more were later sent to Central Sulawesi. Together as churches we have provided water to about 1200 people in Sidera, a village that has received survivors from three other nearby villages. After the first acute support ACT continues the work with shelters, nutrition, psycho-social support, sanitary, and educational work.

**Jill Baker writes:**

### **ROME –THEN AND NOW**

From Cornwall, Glasgow and many points in between 19 women made their way to Rome on Shrove Tuesday to participate in a pilgrimage organised by Methodist Women in Britain. Entitled 'Rome - Then and Now' the five-day itinerary began with an exploration of the ancient sites of the Eternal City, moved through engagement with the legacies of Paul and Peter and finished by worshipping with Protestant Christians in Rome now. Pilgrim leader Jill Baker offered morning & evening reflections on short passages from Acts and Romans, focussing each day on one of the following words.

**Thankfulness:** Arriving safely inspired thankfulness in us all, as did the warm and generous hospitality of our hosts/guides, Rev. Dr. Tim & Mrs. Angela Macquiban (as well as the sunshine we enjoyed all week). Tim is pastor of Pont Sant'Angelo Methodist congregation, meeting on the ground floor of a remarkable building which also houses The Wesley Hotel and the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome (MEOR). This wonderfully-situated building, on the banks of the Tiber, opposite Castle Sant'Angelo and with views of the Vatican, became the base for our peregrinations. Angela and others ensured we were comfortable and given a good breakfast each day to sustain us as Tim led us (at a great pace!) around the treasures of this city.

**Hope:** Every day we discovered signs of hope in Rome, a wilderness converted to a garden, a community dedicated to inclusion, a group of migrants working to help others to see Rome through their eyes... but never more so than the afternoon we spent with Fiona Kendall. Fiona is a mission

partner in Rome, appointed jointly by the Methodist Church & the Church of Scotland to the organisation 'Mediterranean Hope'. This project of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI) has been set up to provide welcome to Italy's many migrant arrivals. They have a multi-faceted approach; physically meeting people at ports and airports to ensure they are well treated, whilst also lobbying government and working to promote a culture of welcome. As in much of Europe at this time, racism is on the rise in Italy and unscrupulous politicians play on popular xenophobia to fuel hostility. Actively discovering legal loopholes has enabled Mediterranean Hope ([www.mediterraneanhope.com](http://www.mediterraneanhope.com)) to establish humanitarian corridors into Italy for many people.

**Grace:** Any encounter with the Apostle Paul must cause the pilgrim to reflect on grace. We travelled by bus beyond the ancient city wall to visit Bede College and the Basilica of St Paul's Without the Walls. I found myself very moved to pause at the burial site of this giant figure of Christian history and reflect on how Paul's life, teaching and depth of understanding of the impact of the Gospel have shaped my life... and how much more they could do so. By mistake we left two pilgrims on the bus as we disembarked at Bede College - thankfully they were soon restored to us, and showed much grace!

**Boldness:** St. Peter's Basilica feels like the beating heart of the city of Rome. We visited early in the day before the queues built up, but were still astounded at the huge number of pilgrims/tourists/visitors who, all day every day, come to visit this site of Christian worship and veneration. Bold Christian witness is an integral part of the story of Rome, the many tombs and memorials of martyrs testify to this. Gold and glory, mosaics and mystery, Pieta and piety, vast space and intimate theophany... St Peter's had much to offer to us all.

**Convinced:** Perhaps most famously in Romans 8:38 Paul shares his overarching conviction that 'nothing can separate us from the love of God'. We reflected on the strength of conviction which led to martyrdom, we



reflected on our own convictions and we met Christians of several denominations who live out their convictions now in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Rome.

In the evening of Ash Wednesday we gathered with many of these at the Basilica of St. Ignatius of Loyola (a last minute change of venue as the intended church was double-booked!) and received ash crosses on our foreheads. For some Methodist pilgrims this was the first time they had experienced 'ashing' and found they needed the courage of their convictions to do so & to walk onto the City streets and eat in a public restaurant so emblazoned.

**Full:** On our final day, the first Sunday in Lent, we were delighted to worship with the international, English-speaking congregation of Pont Sant'Angelo. The service was led by Tim with Jill preaching on 'Empty or Full?' noting that Luke's account of the temptations begins this story of emptiness and barrenness with the words, 'Jesus, full...!'

As we contrasted the full landscape of the Promised Land with the empty wilderness of temptation, we noted that both fullness and emptiness have their place in the rhythm of life. (Perhaps, despite the Lenten disciplines of penitence and simplicity, we were also recalling the pasta, pizzas, panini, tiramisu & gelati which are a necessary part of being in Italy.) Pont Sant'Angelo Church was full for worship - a refreshing experience for many of us - and the 'Pot-Luck Lunch' which was shared afterwards would have filled an even greater multitude.

We had shared in a very full itinerary, visiting many more sites than are mentioned here, and our hearts, minds and spirits were, I think, full to overflowing with all that we had seen, heard, tasted, experienced and encountered. In many ways it had been an indulgent beginning to the Lenten season, giving us spiritual, emotional and physical nourishment which might well last through the 40 days of Lent.

**Jill Baker**

## **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY - 8<sup>TH</sup> MARCH**

To celebrate International Women's Day on 8th March, Rachel Sheppard, Angela Macquiban and Fiona Kendall attended an event organised by the Australian Embassy to the Holy See and to Italy, on the theme, 'More Powerful Together'. The guest speaker was Geraldine Doogue, an Australian journalist, who spoke on '*It Takes a Village: A Story of Belonging*'.

Geraldine Doogue focused on how institutions, such as schools, local government, churches, judiciary systems, universities and the media, are the 'bedrocks of modern society' and have an important role in tackling inequality. Healthy institutions, she said, help democracy function, but they go further than this. They provide a higher purpose and internal safety checks, and offer the hope of equality. Most people, Geraldine Doogue argued, do not thrive in chaos, and secure institutions provide an anchor, reassuring women and other disadvantaged groups that it is 'safe to try'. It was interesting to reflect on the relevance and position of institutions, like the church, in society generally and also in tackling gender inequality. It felt especially poignant as the Synod of Bishops in October spoke about the idea of young people living in a 'liquid world', where things are unclear, and how the church can play a role in helping them to find 'inner solidity' on the sea, acting like a boat for young people.

Geraldine Doogue concluded that, even when institutions are assaulted and criticised, they are worth defending, and should not be taken for granted. Institutions are always bigger than the self, and a 'village' of institutions can create opportunities and aspirations for women.

## **CHURCH FAMILY NEWS**

Welcome back to Sanie who has been in North Carolina since before Christmas helping her family. We are glad to have her back. Also to Jack and Blythe, here for a couple of months.

We are sorry to say farewell to Rachel Barry who is returning to the UK on 14<sup>th</sup> April. Rachel has been attending PSA for two years and will be greatly missed.

## **CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS**

We discussed the pattern of services over the next few months. Because of special services (5<sup>th</sup> May Dutch school visit and 19<sup>th</sup> May Easter offering service/World Church Sunday) we decided to hold communion services on the following dates: 12<sup>th</sup> May and 9<sup>th</sup> June (Pentecost).

We agreed to spend some money given to the church on improvements to the sanctuary area.

## **ECUMENICAL GARDEN OPEN DAYS AT S. GREGORIO AL CELIO**

The next ecumenical garden open days are on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 6<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April from 10am – 1pm. Come to enjoy or come to work (all tools are provided). All are welcomed. For more information contact Rose Wentz:

Rose@wentztraining.com (327 075 1908)

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

### **THY KINGDOM COME**

Thy Kingdom Come (May 30th - June 9th 2019) is an ecumenical prayer movement led by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. It is a simple invitation to pray between Ascension and Pentecost for friends and family to come to faith. In particular, we encourage you to, perhaps, join with us in praying for 5 particular individuals to make the best decision anyone can ever make in their lives – to become followers of Jesus Christ. Or to pray that in your community, in very specific ways, the love of Christ might be seen and heard so that there will be many whose lives are touched by the grace of God. The annual church retreat at the Eremo in Casaleto will be held on the afternoon of Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

### **BIBLE STUDY HOME GROUP:**

We meet on Saturdays at 5.30 pm and the next meetings are on 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April. **Details:** Mobile 338/1675680 - Via del Casaleto 63 - Buzz Montelli – Milani (Monteverde area)

**WEDNESDAY BIBLE CLASS:** the bible class continues at PSA at 10:30am on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 3<sup>rd</sup> April and 17<sup>th</sup> April. See Sandra Mi if you hope to come.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 14<sup>th</sup> April Bake sale at PSA in aid of the Rice Bowl Appeal.  
19<sup>th</sup> May Pot luck lunch after Easter offering service – food from around the world.

## FORTHCOMING SERVICES

- 7<sup>th</sup> April Marathon Sunday – informal service  
14<sup>th</sup> April Palm Sunday with Confirmation of Camara  
18<sup>th</sup> April Maundy Thursday communion in MEOR. Preacher: Rev. Dr. Judith Rossall (Queens Foundation, Birmingham)  
21<sup>st</sup> April Easter Day communion led by Pastor Tim and Rev. Dr. Judith Rossall

## Weekly Offerings [P =cash; E =Envelopes; BB = Birthday Basket.]

3 <sup>rd</sup> March	P65.97	E375	TTL 440.97
10 <sup>th</sup> March	P217.40	E331	TTL 548.40
17 <sup>th</sup> March	P97.75	E203	TTL 300.75
24 <sup>th</sup> March	P159.91	E495	TTL 654.91

We need to achieve a target of 2000 euros per month to meet our obligations. Please consider joining the envelope scheme and giving regularly so that we don't fall behind.



Follow Ponte Sant`Angelo on Twitter @MethodistRome  
and  
Follow MEOR on Twitter @methodist\_rome



Like Ponte Sant`Angelo Methodist Church in Rome Facebook page