

December 2018

The Bridge No. 33

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



Let your light shine.

Minister`s Letter

Is this time of the year you most dread? Or the one you look forward to most of all? The dark evenings and nights and the wintry sun without the warmth of summer make for a difficult time of the year, especially for those who are feeling low. While some look forward to Christmas and the holiday period, others, particularly those on their own or without loved ones, may well not be looking forward to all the glitter and false jollity of a season often far removed from the simple scenes of the nativity made popular by Francis of Assisi (see article later).

Religious groups use lights to point to the hope of their tradition. The Hindus have been celebrating Divali recently. Angela represented us at an event at Santa Sopra Minerva (see later). The Swedes will be celebrating the feast of Santa Lucia on 13th December as girls in white parade with their lights.

We at PSA will have our Advent wreath with five candles, one for the four Sundays before Christmas and one central white candle representing Jesus Christ who is the Light of the World. Soon the Christmas lights will be up in the streets of Rome giving some cheer on these winter evenings.

So let us prepare once more to welcome the coming Light, the birth of the one in whom comes the light to dispel the darkness for those who walk in it. Our Advent Hope is Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. Charles Wesley wrote many hymns besides Hark the herald angels sing (his most famous) on the nativity themes. He explores the mystery of the immortal God who is manifest in mortal form, becoming one of us, coming into the darkness of a world of sin and death, reclaiming us for his own. In him we see the face of a loving and merciful God who muddies himself in the mire of humanity.

Behold him high above all height,
Him, God of God, and Light of Light
In a mean earthly shrine;
Jehovah`s glory dwelt with men,
The person in our flesh is seen,
The character divine!

Prayer of Paul Chilcote (author of *Come thou long-expected Jesus*):
Great God of Light, arouse us from our sleep, shine your light upon us,
and fill us with hope, so that
your glorious light may shine through our lives and in our world as it
did in Christ, Amen



Pastor Tim

ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT NEW MINISTER

Following confirmation that the present minister of PSA, the Rev Dr Tim Macquiban, will return home to the UK at the end of his five year service in Rome in the summer of 2019, the Director of Global Relationships of the British Methodist Church, Rev Dr Stephen Skuce, has announced that the following will be stationed as a mission partner to the congregation in Rome.

The Rev Dr Daniel J. Pratt Morris-Chapman :

Daniel has been a British Methodist presbyter since 2010, having trained at Wesley College Bristol, where he obtained his MA in Theology, followed later by a Ph.D on Scepticism, Truth and Religious Belief in the thought of John Henry Newman. He gave the Conference Lecture to the Methodist Sacramental Group in 2010 on the subject of Wesleyan Theology.

He has served in both the UK (Sheffield and Stokesley Circuit) and in Africa where he served as mission partner teaching in a Theological College in Kumba, Cameroon.

He is married to Grace, whose father was Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Ghana; he visited PSA with his wife in Holy Week 2017 to preach at our Maundy Thursday service.

They have three children: Kwame, John and Anna aged 7, 4 and 2 respectively. They attend schools in Milan where Daniel and Grace`s appointments as mission partners are presently based. Daniel currently serves as minister at nearby Novara while Grace serves as an intercultural lay worker in Milan.

INTERN NEWS

Way back in late October, I flew to the UK for a residential as part of my internship. It provided an important opportunity to connect with the other interns, as although living in Rome is a wonderful experience, it can sometimes feel far away or disconnected from the other participants.

One session that stood out to me during the residential was led by Rev. Rob Jones, and entitled 'God at work', which was about how we can live out our faith in the workplace. Rob shared his experience of working as a chaplain, and we reflected on the idea that chaplains are 'guests not hosts', who go out to where people are, to listen and to accompany them, and offer a visible Christian presence. Rob

encouraged us to think of our work, wherever we are, as a type of chaplaincy, which was an interesting perspective that I had not encountered before.

Back in Rome, over the last few weeks, I have started volunteering with JNRC (Joel Nafuma Refugee Centre) at St Paul's Within the Walls. One project I have joined is the new 'Safe Space' initiative, organised in partnership with MEDU and the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR. The project is for women and mothers with babies, who have nowhere else to go and need a calm and safe space. It provides hygiene products, items for babies as well as the opportunity to see doctors and psychologists. Last week, I attended training for volunteers run by UNHCR, where UNHCR staff explained the context and background to the project, what the role of UNHCR is, and how, as volunteers, we can support the women who come to the Safe Space. From the training, it was clear how vital it is that this space exists and that its resources are available to the women.

I have also had an opportunity to attend two interesting talks in the last month. The first was at the Lay Centre, led by journalist, Filipe Domingues, and called 'Selflessness In The Age Of Selfies' which looked at the impact of technology on our lives. I learnt a new term, 'networked individualism', which relates to a societal shift from a group based society, to one based on 'connected' individuals, and how this network has found expression in the technological world. Filipe explained how even the simplest things in our lives are now related to technology and what happens in these networks is real and that we can no longer say that there is a distinction between virtual life and 'real' life. The event finished with a reflection on how we can show the values of prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, faith, charity, and hope in our digital lives.

The second talk was part of the Centro Pro Unione's new project, MAD for Ecumenism, MAD standing for Mutual Accountability Desk. The project was launched with a session by Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit

(General Secretary of the World Council of Churches) on the theme, 'What does it mean for Christians to be mutually accountable?' Rev. Olav explained that mutual accountability is about how we seek truth together, and that a mark of Christian life is listening, learning, and a willingness to be changed. As I am learning more about ecumenism, and how as Christians we communicate and collaborate, I felt inspired by Rev. Olav's outlook that, even as various denominations, we are on a pilgrimage together, and that our faith and spiritual life can be 'ignited by encounter' with Christians different to ourselves.

Rachel

SEMINAR WITH BISHOP MARY ANN SWENSON by Marius de Gaay Fortman

A Seminar was held on Saturday 10 November at MEOR during the visit of Bishop Mary Ann Swenson MacDonald, the Vice Moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to Rome, 8 to 13 November 2018. About 20 participants from Churches Together in Rome (CTiR) and from our own church listened to the Bishop, who spoke on the current initiatives of the World Council of Churches, while the participants briefed her on what churches in Rome are currently involved with. The historical roots of the World Council of Churches are found in student and lay movements of the 19th century. Leaders representing more than 100 churches voted in 1937-38 to found a World Council of Churches (analogue to the League of Nations), but its inauguration was delayed following the outbreak of the Second World War. After the war, WCC came into being in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, where the First Assembly was held in the 'Nieuwe Kerk' in 1948 and 147 member churches were present. Predominately Protestant and Western in its earliest years, the WCC's profile and identity evolved during the 1960s with the influx of many Orthodox churches from the East and newly autonomous churches from formerly colonial regions in the South. The Second Vatican Council greatly improved relations between the WCC and Roman Catholics. The WCC brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110

countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 500 million Christians. While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific. There are now 350 member churches. Over the past seventy years, out of the 10 secretary generals at the WCC, three of them came from a Methodist church.

For its member churches, the WCC is a unique space: one in which they can reflect, speak, act, worship and work together, challenge and support each other, share and debate with each other. As members of this fellowship, WCC member churches:

- Are called to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship;
- Promote their common witness in work for mission and evangelism;
- Engage in Christian service by serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, seeking justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation; and foster renewal in unity, worship, mission and service.

“Our “Bishop Mary Ann Swenson is from the United Methodist Church from the USA. In the next issue of the Bridge we will further elaborate on the activities of the WCC and specifically on Mary Ann’s involvement in these activities. More information on the WCC is on their website www.oikoumene.org/en.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS:

CONGRATULATIONS: Congratulations to Sanie on the birth of her grandson Kyson. Sanie is with the family in Charlotte, North Carolina.

MOVES: We are sorry to hear that Leslie and Neil Kiely are leaving Rome to return to the States. We wish them well and are thankful for their time with us, particularly the gift of the organ which so enriches our worship.

SAVERIO CIACCIO VISITED HIS SON PETER (MINISTER AT THE CHURCH IN PALERMO) RECENTLY AND HAS BROUGHT BACK A PICTURE OF THE NEW SCULPTURE OF LUTHER THERE



A picture of our new terracotta sculpture of Martin Luther at the Waldensian Church of Palermo, by the artist Mariano Brusca.

**CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS
WELCOME MANIFESTO**

A welcome Manifesto was approved on 8th August 2018 by the Council of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI). The Church Council considered this recently and agreed to put this poster up, showing our solidarity with those who want to make our churches places of welcome to all.

This means that we:

- Welcome those who knock at our door in search of help, protection and care
- Affirm that all people are made in God's image therefore no one should be discriminated against on the basis of colour, religion or gender identity.
- Are called to defend the lives, rights and dignity of migrants, asylum seekers, Roma, ethnic minorities and all those who are persecuted and marginalised

- We value and support those who save the lives of migrants and victims of human trafficking and those who guarantee humanitarian rescue both in the Mediterranean and in the Alpine passes

And so, we:

- Reject as false the assertion that welcoming migrants is at odds with meeting the needs of Italians
- Are committed to guaranteeing humanitarian corridors
- Believe in the need to integrate
- Oppose the Italian and European policy of closing borders
- Ask all to adopt language which respect the dignity of migrants
- Denounce and criticise the political campaigns against immigrants
- Appeal to our sister churches in Europe because they too welcome a share of the world's asylum seekers and urge their governments to promote a policy of sharing migratory flows in a framework of solidarity and shared responsibility.

ALL WE CAN

Thank you to all who contributed to our harvest appeal supporting the work of All We Can. Pastor Tim has sent £400 which will help in providing solar panels for a whole village in Malawi to generate power for irrigation of crops.



FRANCIS AND CHRISTMAS

Francis of Assisi had a special devotion to the Child Jesus. We owe the origins of our nativity scenes, especially popular in churches and sacred spaces in Italy at this time of year, to the saint creating a live nativity scene on Christmas Eve 1223. He was perhaps inspired by this idea

after visiting Bethlehem on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land—the humble stable in a cave there. Francis recreated the scene of Christ’s birth in a service he held inside of a cave in Greccio, Italy, inviting both his fellow friars and the townspeople to join in the celebration. He is reported later as saying: “I want to do something that will recall the memory of that Child who was born in Bethlehem, to see with bodily eyes the inconveniences of his infancy, how he lay in the manger, and how the ox and ass stood by.”

So he set up an empty manger (the feeding trough of farm animals which served as Jesus’ crib) inside a cave, and even included a live ox and donkey beside the manger trying to imagine what happened that first Christmas night. The tradition caught on in Italy and many such nativity scenes were reproduced often taking on aspects of the local context and always proclaiming the humility and simplicity of the mystery of the incarnation. Every year a nativity scene from different parts of Italy is set up in St. Peter’s Square Rome as thousands gather to reflect on the story of Christmas.



RECENT EVENTS ATTENDED:

Ecumenical

Pastor Tim attended part of the mini-conference held by the International Ecumenical Fellowship in Assisi at the beginning of the month. Fitting in to its theme "Laudato Si", St. Francis and St. Clare and our Care for the Earth, he gave a talk on a Methodist view of Pope Francis' Encyclical relating this to the recent report of the Methodist Roman Catholic International Commission on The Call to Holiness. He shared some of the practical outworking of our being care-takers as Christians working together locally in the ecumenical garden and in the plastic-free environment we were creating at PSA. As a result, one of the 54 participants was inspired to write a poem in an Early English style called a kenning:

CREATION KENNING

Sand sifter	Tree feller
Mountain lifter	Animal killer
Nature designer	War maker
Human refiner	Love forsaker
Light bringer	Pollution former
Love singer	Global warmer
God the Creator	Man the destroyer

First aider
Fair Trader
Shared prayer
Just player
Peace Sharer
Warm carer

MAN, GOD'S CO-WORKER!

FESTA DELLA RIFORMA

Jenny Smith writes about the Festa Della Riforma in October:

On 27 October 2018 the Consulta of the Italian Evangelical Churches in Rome had planned a gathering at the Piazza Martin Lutero to celebrate 501 years since Martin Luther pinned his 95 theses against "indulgences" on the door of the church in Wittenburg, Germany on 31 October 1517. However, in view of the weather it was decided to hold the event at the Italian Methodist Church in Via Firenze. It was a good occasion for the numerous small communities to gather and share a service together - and everyone joined in wholeheartedly.

I arrived a little late, but was instantly entranced listening to the Korean choir (which also meets at Via Firenze) singing some wellknown hymns - it was uplifting. Pastor Herbert Anders of the Centocelle Baptist Church led the service and preached the sermon on "Refugees in Christ - from Deuteronomy 10 v.18 "God loves the foreigner". Pastor Anders said "We are all foreigners on this Earth, let us give ourselves to the Lord. Often the Lord takes us to different places, foreigners among foreigners, and we may have difficulty living together, but the Love of God is infinite and unites us all, because He welcomes every individual person. Let us take refuge then in Christ."

A collection was made at the end for the Work Integration Project run by the Consulta; the two operators, Sara and Dalila interview applicants at Via Firenze on Wednesday mornings, and provide advice on work possibilities, training and retraining schemes, as well as other good general advice; they are very pro-active and doing an excellent job. Marius Fortman from PSA helps there as a volunteer on Wednesdays. There was an agape after the service with drinks and refreshments in the Church Hall.

INTERFAITH

Celebrating Diwali in Rome

The Hindu festival of Diwali, the Festival of Lights, was held on 5th November in the Senate building in Piazza della Minerva. Tim had met

a representative of the Unione Induista Italiana at the Half-Marathon for Peace a few weeks earlier and we duly received an invitation to the Diwali celebration. As Tim was in Geneva that day I went alone and looked forward to an interesting day.

On arrival at the meeting room I was surprised to be shown to a seat near the front and sat down to study the pack of information we were given as we registered. To my consternation I spotted my name in the programme as a panel member in the Non-violence and Religion session! Not knowing what might be expected of me I sought out one of the organisers, easily identifiable in her orange robes. She reassured me it would be fine to bring greetings from our church at PSA and add something about what we are doing to promote peace and non-violence.

I quickly made some notes before the day began (for once I was glad it started late!). Various greetings and speeches were made by the Founder of the Hindu Union of Italy, the Indian ambassador, the deputy minister for Foreign Affairs and the European Parliament 's minister for Culture, among others. It was good to see several of them were women.

The second session included speakers from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, a leading Buddhist, a Rabbi, the VP of the Islamic community in Italy, two other people involved with interreligious dialogue in Rome and me. Fortunately there were some presentations in English so I was relieved not to be the lone English voice. When my time came I brought greetings from PSA and briefly said something about our involvement in Italian Methodism and as part of the federation with the Waldensian Church. I highlighted the international nature of our congregation and the fact we appreciate having an Indian family among our members!

As it was the week leading up to Remembrance Sunday I spoke about our service to mark the centenary of the end of the 1st World War and

worship leader. He is a retired and highly decorated U.S. Air Force officer. In the Air Force, he commanded the 23rd Information Operations Squadron in Texas, he led NATO operations in Afghanistan, and, he was an assistant to the Under Secretary of Defence for Intelligence at the Pentagon.



After retirement, he advised Headquarters Army on electronic warfare. Recently, he coordinated and led spiritual development, and served on the Congregational Council at Mount Vernon Place UMC, in Washington, D.C. He served as a pastor at Rising Hope UMC in Virginia, which focuses on ministries for homeless and low-income people. In May 2018 he received his third Masters degree, in Divinity with honours from Wesley Theological Seminary. Currently, Kevin is pursuing a Diploma in theology and ministry from University of Cambridge, and serving in a pastoral placement at Wesley Methodist Church, Cambridge, UK. Besides studying the Bible and theology, he enjoys traveling the world and skiing.

BIBLE STUDY HOME GROUP

The Bible Study home group continues on 15th December. We meet on Saturdays at 5.30 pm and are studying the Book of Acts.

Details: Mobile 338/1675680 - Via del Casaletto 63 - Buzz Montelli – Milani (Monteverde area)

DATES FOR THE DIARY

December 16th – Christmas Carol Service at All Saints at 6:00pm

December 23rd – Christmas Concert with the New Chamber Singers at St Paul's Within the Walls at 6:30pm.



FORTHCOMING SERVICES

December 2 nd	Pastor Tim – Advent Sunday Communion. Guest preacher Reverend Dr Casely Essamuah, General Secretary of the Global Christian Forum.
December 9 th	Pastor Tim followed by Church Council
December 16 th	All Age Worship for Christmas followed by Pot Luck lunch
December 23 rd	Christmas Carol Service
December 24 th	Bilingual Carol Service with XX Settembre Methodist Church here at PSA at 4:00pm with mince pies
December 25 th	Christmas Day communion service at 10:30am
December 30 th	Kevin Highfield
January 6 th	Annual Covenant Service with communion on Epiphany

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

Totals

Nov Total: P 420.28 E1,257 BB 190.00 TTL 1867.28



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