

February 2019

The Bridge No. 35

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



Minister`s Letter

Dear friends,

Last month`s issue focussed on ecumenism, with its cover “One in the Bond of Love” setting the theme. That Christians can and do work together and worship together have been demonstrated in our growing collaboration with the Anglican Centre and our participation in the many services and events of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which are reported below.

But as I write this, the political climate of some of the countries we come from is deeply divided, despite the best efforts of our churches to influence society for good. In Britain there is the Brexit or not debate as the date of its leaving the EU gets ever closer. In the USA there has been a standoff between the President and his republican allies and the Democrat opposition, leading to the longest shutdown of US government in history. And in Cameroon, there is still bitter tension between the francophone majority government persecuting and killing its Anglophone citizens.

In all these instances and more a discourse of disrespect punctuated by fake news and falsehoods is pursued by those who do a disservice to the people they are supposed to serve, for the common good. The ability to listen to the other before we decide what to do has been abandoned in favour of demonizing the opposition and pursuing selfishly the policies of a majority interest which ignores or suppresses the wishes of minorities. This is evident here in Italy too as the Salvini Decree takes effect and those who have come to these shores to seek refuge and a better life fear for the future.

Often when families are divided it is the wise and calming words of a mother or female member of the family that can heal the wounds of discord and seek to bring reconciliation. We have just celebrated the 350th anniversary of the birth of the Mother of Methodism, Susanna Wesley (see an article below and report on our service). Early next month we shall share in the World Day of Prayer inaugurated and led by women as well as marking International

Women`s Day. Please join in events as you are able to celebrate the contribution of women to the life of our churches and society.

So how can we assist in the work of reconciliation between peoples and nations? We can pray for the peace of the world and the healing of the nations. We can be models of being listeners and peacemakers in all our doings in work and in our interactions with each other.

I end with an excerpt from Susanna Wesley`s devotional journal which she kept as a record of her own walk with God:

I heartily pray God that you may continue steadfast in the faith, and increase more and more in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ, that holiness, simplicity, and purity may recommend you to the favour of God incarnate.

And that his Spirit may dwell in you, and keep you still, as now, under a sense of God`s blissful presence. Amen

Pastor Tim



Pastor Tim sharing a concelebrated blessing with the Pope at the Basilica of St Paul's in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

INTERN NEWS

The first month of 2019 has gone by incredibly quickly, and I have settled back into life in Rome and working at PSA and MEOR. Throughout the autumn, I enjoyed meeting new people and investing in relationships and it has been wonderful to return and to catch up with these new friends. The New Year offers many new opportunities and a time to think about vision and hopes for the next chapter.

One of these new opportunities to teach English at Joel Nafuma Refugee Centre at St Paul's Within the Walls. Every other week, I have started teaching the intermediate English class. Having previously only taught children, teaching adults presents a new challenge, and it is a wonderful opportunity to get involved with the superb work that JNRC are doing and to learn new skills. We focus on simple grammar and most importantly, developing the students' conversational English, and as I get to know the group more and adapt to their strengths and experiences, I look forward to developing relationships with them, seeing their progression and their confidence grow.

18th – 25th January was the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, its theme being 'Justice and only justice you shall pursue' Deuteronomy 16:18-20. The week started with my first experience of Papal Vespers, and was full of other interesting events and services, one of these the Churches Together in Rome Sunday service at XX Settembre. During the service, we reflected on the theme justice, mercy and unity, and had the opportunity to write commitment cards to these values. This week offered time for reflection on all I am learning about ecumenism and the idea of listening to others and seeking truth together.

Another interesting event in the WPCU was at the Centro Pro Unione, organised jointly with the Lay Centre. The event consisted of a lecture by Dr. Paula Gooder on Walking the Way: accompanying young people on the journey towards Christian Unity, followed by young people's testimonies and an ecumenical service. Focusing on the story of the Road to Emmaus, Dr Gooder explained that how things seem, is not always as they are, and that

often our expectations and hopes for unity can stop us from seeing what God is doing now. As the disciples experience revelation through the breaking of bread, they move from a place of desolation to delight. It is the inner journey, which is just as important the outward journey, that transforms the disciples. Interestingly, Dr Gooder went on to say that we should embrace the grief of division between different denominations, as this grief is the key to joy. In terms of accompanying young people, she said that the task is to acknowledge that young people are needed within the ecumenical movement, to welcome them as they are and to accompany young people as they walk the path differently.

The next few months promise to be full of activity, with upcoming courses at MEOR, residential training at Methodist Church House and visits from friends, and hopefully exploring more of Rome and Italy. **Rachel**



Dr Paula Gooder addressing the ecumenical meeting at Centro Pro Unione

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

For the Churches Together in Rome service at XX Settembre, Pastora Mirella preached on the theme of justice and talked about the way in which Christians in Italy should respond to the needs of migrants and refugees. The following resource was shared for reflection:

The Immigrants' Creed (Jose Luis Casal)

I believe in Almighty God,

who guided the people in exile and in exodus,
the God of Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon,
the God of foreigners and immigrants.

I believe in Jesus Christ, a displaced Galilean,
who was born away from his people and his home,
who fled his country with his parents when his life was in danger.
When he returned to his own country
he suffered under the oppression of Pontius Pilate,
the servant of a foreign power.
Jesus was persecuted, beaten, tortured,
and unjustly condemned to death.
But on the third day Jesus rose from the dead,
not as a scorned foreigner
but to offer us citizenship in God's kingdom.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the eternal immigrant from
God's kingdom among us,
who speaks all languages, lives in all countries,
and reunites all races.
I believe that the Church is the secure home
for foreigners and for all believers.

I believe that the communion of saints begins
when we embrace all God's people in all their diversity.

I believe in forgiveness, which makes us all equal before God,
and in reconciliation, which heals our brokenness.

I believe that in the Resurrection God will unite us
as one people in which all are distinct
and all are alike at the same time.

I believe in life eternal, in which no one will be foreigner
but all will be citizens of the kingdom
where God reigns forever and ever.

Amen.

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.

SUSANNA WESLEY

2019 marks the 350th anniversary of the birth of Susanna Wesley, “the mother of Methodism”. Although most known for her influence on her sons John and Charles, Susanna deserves recognition in her own right as an accomplished writer, teacher and theologian. A selection of her writings will be published this spring, and celebratory events are planned throughout the anniversary year. For more information see www.methodistheritage.org.uk.

The British Methodist Heritage Committee offers churches this prayer, written especially for use on Sunday 20 January 2019, the anniversary date, which we used at the service here at PSA. The prayer has been written by Jenny Carpenter, Vice-Chair of Trustees at Epworth Old Rectory and their representative on the Methodist Heritage Committee.

Living, loving God, Trinity in Unity, We praise and thank you for the life of Susanna Wesley, Mother of Methodism. Inspired by her regime of private prayer and meditation, may we grow in our devotion to you. Following our conscience as she did, may we think for ourselves and dare to act on Kingdom values.

Aware of her programme of teaching her children, girls and boys alike, may we value and nurture all in our care, sensitive to individual needs.

Encouraged by her determination to build up the faith of her family and the parish of Epworth, England, may we lead others to follow Christ more closely.

Discerning the Holy Spirit moving powerfully in the life of the nation as she did, may we be open to new challenges and expect great things from you.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Spirit. Amen.

Pastor Tim offered this introduction to the service on 20th January: The significance of Susanna for Methodism has only been fully realised in the past 50 years. She was a woman of deep spirituality who was one of the first Protestant women to write of her experiences and offer resources who she clearly shared with her family, notable John and Charles Wesley, the founders



of Methodism. She was widely read and saw the importance of having a method in approaching the spiritual life. For this Christian education was foundational, in the family and the household.

She was born into a puritan or evangelical household herself. Susanna was the daughter of Samuel Annesley, the minister of St Giles, Cripplegate, in London who had supported Parliament in the Civil War. He was one of those ejected from his living and he became a dissenting or nonconformist minister. She inherited his

independence of spirit and lively intellectual abilities.

After she married Samuel Wesley who became Anglican Rector of Epworth, she had 19 children, 10 of whom survived to adulthood. She educated them at home herself and was profound influence upon them not least because Samuel the father was often travelling. The three sons all went to Oxford University where she continued to write and guide them in their spiritual journeys. After the death of her husband in 1735, she stayed with members of the family and settled in London as John and Charles established their evangelical work at The Foundery in Moorfield, close to the site of the later Wesley's Chapel. She supported the work of revival as evidence of God's Spirit at work in his people. She died in 1742 and was buried in the Bunhill Fields cemetery reserved for nonconformists, even though she was an Anglican, opposite the plot where her son John built the cathedral of the Methodist movement in 1777.

Only now are her writings and her place in the Methodist movement being fully recognized as central and not a mere appendage to her husband and a footnote in the early history of Methodism.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS: DEPARTURES AND VISITS

We are sorry to say farewell to Anand family, Vijay, Twinkle, Meryl and Mark, who have returned to India. We wish them well and will miss them. We were glad to welcome back Caroline, Bapi and the children visiting from Bolzano.



CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

The Church Council met on Sunday 27th January in MEOR. Among the items discussed were:

- Review of Christmas services and the Service for the WPCU
- Updating the church website
- The date for the bake sale in aid of the Rice Bowl appeal (14th April)
- Upcoming courses at MEOR and implications for PSA
- Recycling and the dishwasher

The dates for the next meetings are: **17th March, 28th April, 16th June and AGM 30th June**

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER SERVICE (Friday 1st March 2019)

As you will know, every year on the first Friday in March there is a World Day of Prayer (it used to be called the Women's World Day of Prayer but has graduated to the World Day of Prayer and men are welcome - though it is still prepared each year by women from a different country!).

The service in Rome this year will take place at 18.00 hrs on Friday 1st March at the Waldensian Church in Via IV Novembre 107. It is a good occasion to meet members of the numerous small churches belonging to the Federation

of Evangelical Churches and share in worship with them and of course some Catholics too (the service is in Italian).

The theme is "Come, all is ready" - the Wedding at Cana (Luke 14 vv.15-24), and the preacher will be Lt.Col. Anne-Florence Tursi of the Salvation Army. As always members of the other churches will cover the prayers and readings, and it is hoped that the Korean Choir will be able to lead the singing.



The service has been prepared this time by the women of Slovenia and there is a poster on the noticeboard. At the top this shows the women of Slovenia in traditional costume; the semicircle in the centre represents the Slovene people with their national dolce - Potica, and grapes from wine-producing areas in the country; the lower part of the poster shows children on the margins of society who have been invited to the festa. The church will be decorated with red carnations, the national flower of Slovenia. The collection will be in aid of

a project of the NGO 'Centre for the Fight Against Human Trafficking' to help reintegration of women who have suffered violence. They receive psychological help and medical care and are also able to follow professional courses in hairdressing, dressmaking, etc., have help in finding jobs and obtaining a long term stay permit. **Jenny**

ADVANCE NOTICE

Please book the 14th April for a bake sale at PSA in aid of the Rice Bowl Appeal.

BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

The Bible Study home group continues at Alessia and Federico's. We meet on Saturdays at 5.30 pm and the next meeting is 2nd February.

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

WEDNESDAY BIBLE CLASS: the bible class continues at PSA at 10:30am on 13th February. See Sandra Mi if you hope to come.

FORTHCOMING SERVICES

February 3 rd	Pastor Tim with communion
February 10 th	Pastor Tim
February 17 th	Pastor Tim
February 24 th	Pastor Tim (with Birthday Basket)

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

Jan Total P 374.30	E 1,448	BB 30.00	TTL 1,852.30
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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.



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