

July/August 2017

The Bridge No. 19

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



Minister's letter

I had to go to the ophthalmologist recently . I thought he was going to tell me that I needed an operation on my eyes to correct cataracts which are developing. But instead he said I needed a new pair of glasses to correct the vision.

”A picture tells a thousand stories”, Philip Richter reminds us in a radio interview on Vatican Radio recently (see article later in this edition) about the **Photography and Spirituality** course we have run. How true that is as with art – the intention of the person creating the image and picture is not always known. It is a work of creativity for that particular moment which takes on other layers of meaning as other people come with their own eyes. The Holy Spirit which speaks and acts in us can enable us to have fresh insights and new meanings as we look out on the world which a different lens.

So too the Bible. We have been studying the **Letter of James** in June. Hopefully there have been new opportunities to think afresh about what this writer said to the early Church nearly 2,000 years ago. How to be a Christian in difficult circumstances speaks to many in similar circumstances today. It`s as well to be reminded as we have of the need to “be doers of the Word and not hearers only”.

And part of this is to discern the gifts that God has given us and then to use them to his praise and glory. The group who visited us were helped to improve their photography by exploring the spiritual

aspects of this gift. The paper ***Responsibilities in the Church*** which the recent annual General Church Meeting accepted encourages every member of PSA to consider what we can do to help the church with the gifts God has given us. You are encouraged to fill in the response form and let us have it back so that we can start to build up a team of people who together can make this place a place of welcome, worship, and witness.

As we go into the summer season, I pray that for you it will be a time of re-creation and discovering what gifts you have and using them to the full.

Every blessing ,

Pastor Tim



Intern Report

I can hardly believe that this is the last report I'll be writing – the year has gone so much faster than I had expected! The next couple of months will be much the same as usual – I'll be working for the Church, Ecumenical Office and Refugee Centre up until the end of July, and then I'll be staying Rome for a few more weeks to make sure that I get to see everything that I haven't yet seen, and spend some time with the people I've met here.

I would really like to take this opportunity to say thank you so much to everyone for welcoming me and making this year as wonderful as it has been! As a congregation, I'm not sure I've ever come across a friendlier and more open group of people. I remember being very nervous my first Sunday here, but never once have I been made to feel as though I was alone or didn't belong. You were all such a huge part in me settling in here and making this big, overwhelming city my home.

I have learnt a great deal being here, and have grown in ways I was not expecting. A common question from good friends back home, has been to ask how my faith has deepened since being here. It has been interesting, but when answering them I find myself using the word widened rather than deepened. I think my understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ, and what it means to be 'The Church' has widened, and thus my understanding of who God is has become so much bigger. I think this is part and parcel of being part of such an ecumenical and diverse community.

Thank you so much for your kindness and support this year, and if you ever find yourself in Scotland then please do come and visit – I would love to see you there!

Lucy

P.S I won't be using my work email once I leave in August, but if you ever want to get in touch then my personal email address is lucycowpland@hotmail.com

Introducing Abigail

Hello my name is Abigail Ratcliffe and I will be your One Intern for this year! I am 21 years old and have just graduated from Bangor University, North Wales, with a first class honours degree in BA Geography. I have loved my three years at university, even though at times it has been difficult and challenging, it has helped me to develop as a person, growing in confidence, and I have made many lifelong friends. As well, going to university in Wales has given me the chance to explore more of the North Wales coast and last month I walked up Snowdon. Throughout my course I have studied many current issues and topics such as the migrant crisis, homelessness and Fairtrade for example. This has fuelled a huge part of my desire to come and work for your church, having the opportunity to help the vulnerable and work with refugees, as well as gaining much valued experience and knowledge. Learning about the issues going on within the world has given me a passion to do something meaningful and volunteering last summer at the National Trust Centre at Studland, Dorset, has given me a greater drive.

I have grown up in the town of Cheadle in Staffordshire, with my brother and sister. My brother Joseph is studying Marine Engineering at Fleetwood Nautical College, but is currently on board ship in the North Sea. My sister Isobel is an Early Years Practitioner at a Nursery. From a young age I have attended Cheadle with Alton and Kingsley Holt Methodist Church (in Staffordshire in the UK). From being involved in the church community from a young age, through Sunday School and growing up in a Christian family I have always had an understanding and awareness of God's presence. As I have grown older I have become more and more involved with the church, helping to run the children's club that is operated at the church and since October 2011 I have been a Sunday School leader. I

have really enjoyed being a Sunday School leader, teaching children about Jesus and helping them to have a greater understanding of the bible, as I feel it is very rewarding. These experiences have helped me to develop my relationship with God, having a greater understanding about God's love for us.

I have never been to Rome before but I am really excited about working in a different country, especially being able to do it in a church context. I cannot wait to explore the city's history, culture, art and architecture and to maybe learn some Italian. I am looking forward to meeting new people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures and developing and growing my faith with you all. I am really excited to meet you all soon in Rome!

Gathering “Thy Kingdom Come” at the *eremo*

Last 3rd June some members of our congregation and some Catholic brothers and sisters met at the “eremo”, a small and lovely chapel in a convent in Monteverde area.

We had a really wonderful time in the Lord! He blessed us for the beautiful place, for the sunny (but not too hot) weather and, most of all, for the edifying reflection and teaching.

After a short time of fellowship and refreshments, we started the meeting outdoor. It was made up of three parts, alternated by hymns and prayers: in the first part we shared what the Bible study groups in our congregation have done this year; in the second part Pastor Tim developed the theme of our prayer “thy kingdom come” and the participants broke into three groups to reflect on the topic; finally, in the third part we had a spiritual time when we gathered inside the “eremo” to pray together.

What did we learn? We learnt what Jesus said about the Kingdom of Heaven which is a “treasure hidden in a field”; “a net cast wide” and which is also like “a mustard seed”. Pastor Tim drew our attention on

the concept that the **kingdom of God is already, but not yet** and on the tension between heaven and earth. In addition, he underlined that when we pray “thy kingdom come”, we make **arequest** to God but also a **declaration** by our mouth, and that is very powerful. Jesus’ victory at the Cross is our strength and we are called to be His workers in His kingdom. We left the “eremo” with a question that we are sharing also with you now: “How can we be co-workers with God in bringing in the Kingdom?”. We pray God that He may lead each of us to the answer and obey.

Alessia and Federico



Photography and Spirituality

A course on photography and spirituality attracted seven people, with a range of skills and abilities in photography, to spend five days in Rome sizing up and seeing the city through new lens, thanks to the

patient leadership and expertise of the Rev Dr Philip Richter. His book on the subject has just recently been published by DLT (copies still available at 10 euros) giving practical advice as to how to improve your techniques when looking at the world around and the situations we encounter with new eyes. The group visited the Protestant Cemetery, Ostia Antica and EUR as well as the more familiar tourist destinations. They attended worship at PSA and the Sant'Egidio prayers at Santa Maria in Trastevere, before going to their community restaurant Gli Amici for a meal. Philip was interviewed by Philippa Hitchin for Vatican Radio– hearit on radiovaticana.va/news/2017/06/16/spirituality_in_photography_seeing_life_through_a_new_lens/1319413.

Pastor Tim tried his hand on one of the visits and the photo below is the result of seeing the main square in Trastevere in a new light.



No music or harmony without the players.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

SUNDAY SCHOOL STARTS UP AGAIN IN SEPTEMBER

I believe I speak for both Angela and I when I say that this year has been particularly delightful with the children. While for a couple of years we were challenged with very different age groups – with one teacher having to organize activities to include drawing and colouring and crafts for the younger ones plus more academic activities with the teenagers – this year we suddenly realized that the “little” ones were ready to open their Bibles and read and write and were no longer terribly interested in just colouring! At the end of our Sunday School year in June they participated in a Bible quiz with excellent results. I wondered whether some of our adults would have been so enthusiastic and successful in quickly finding texts as well as understanding the differences between the Old and New Testaments, knowing what Prophecy means, the meaning of the word Gospel, the Epistles and Revelation. On one occasion we were joined by a number of local children and had to quickly change language and cater for a large group and it was thrilling to hear afterwards how much the parents had appreciated this. We are hoping in the autumn to link up again with these folk and offer some more Christian education to their children. Needless to say, we do need help. Even if you don't feel ready to teach, another adult person in the group is always appreciated, just to be there and lend a hand. Let us remember that if we do not prepare our children adequately our churches are going to have a hard time continuing to exist! This mission to the younger ones is essential to the church's survival.

Sandra Mi

CONFIRMATION

Isaiah 43:1 says ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine’, these words from the Bible give me assurance and hope, and also a glimpse of God's plan and what he has in store for me. Before I started the lessons, for Confirmation,

my basic understanding was, I was going to be used more in God's hand and unlock his ideas, which he has for me. As I went to the classes, I started to realize it was not just about me, it was also about the people around me, which I can be more useful and helpful to others. As the manual says, the 4 important things are worship, learning & caring, service and evangelism. Through Confirmation, I was strengthened more by the Holy Spirit and most importantly, I became a member of God's family and the Church. To be honest, before Confirmation, I did not understand the magnitude or the scale of what that meant. It started when my Grandpa was very cross with me when I did not tell him about my confirmation, although I speak to him everyday. So to conclude, I believe after being confirmed that I am able to unlock the qualities, good traits, reverence, words and acts of wisdom, understanding, right judgement, knowledge and courage to become a better child of God, and set a benchmark for others, and above all the best thing is what can be against us, when God is for us.

Thank you., **Mark**

PS If you wish to consider baptism/confirmation and church membership, please see Pastor Tim

CHURCH LIFE AND WORSHIP

Report on Church Council

The Church Council met on the 4th of June in MEOR. In matters arising, Mary gave an update on the **project for disabled workers in Ghana**, advising that at present they are awaiting a new site for the container. Tim and Lucy have subsequently been in touch with someone in Ghana, and it looks as though the project can move forward some more.

Responsibilities in the church were discussed based on a paper prepared by Pastor Tim. Council members agreed that there needs to be more clarity regarding specific tasks and who is responsible for

what, and that nobody should be overburdened. It was also agreed that the Pastor should be freed from tasks which can be carried out by church members. The Council agreed with the list of proposed stewards who, aside from the Treasurer, Secretary and Worship Steward would not all necessarily need to be members of the Church Council. A suggestion was made that someone be appointed Senior Steward, responsible for checking with the other stewards on a weekly basis as to whether they would be at church on Sunday and about any specific concerns. Pastor Tim proposed taking this to the upcoming AGM where he appealed for more people to come forward to assist in the running of the church. Finally, it was agreed that communication is important, and Marcello suggested we use SMS as a preferred means of contact since not everyone reads their emails.

Dates for the diary – Pastor Tim advised that a Run will take place on Sunday morning 17th September. It was agreed that since this run would undoubtedly impede access to PSA, we might try to arrange an evening service on that day.

Report on General Church Meeting

Pastor Tim talked through his report which was accepted. This report is still available if you want a copy, please just ask Lucy. Marcello Marinelli presented the annual accounts for 2016. Following questions, the report was accepted. The Church officers and Church Council members were formally re-elected. 30 members were present. All were given copies of a document **Responsibilities in the Church** and invited to return a response sheet indicating areas of work individuals were prepared to do. This document too, and the forms, are available. Please return to the box at the back of the church.

Sunday Services in July/August (include list of visiting preachers and brief biographical notes)

July 2nd – Pastor Tim and Communion

July 9th – Pastor Tim with Epworth Mission Singers

July 16th – Revd Colin Smith (Pastor Tim away from 10th-17th)

July 23rd – Revd Colin Smith

July 30th – Pastor Tim. Lucy's last official Sunday as intern. Pot Luck Lunch to follow.

August 6th – Pastor Tim and Communion.

August 13th – Revd Tony Franklin-Ross (Pastor Tim away for weekend)

August 20th – Revd Tom Stuckey (Pastor Tim away at annual synod in Torre Pellice)

August 27th – Revd Tom Stuckey

Colin and Tom have been before to cover for Pastor Tim. Colin is Superintendent minister of the Cambridge Circuit. Tom is a past President of the British Methodist Conference. Tony Franklin-Ross is a minister of the Methodist Church of New Zealand at Napier and assists Pastor Tim in the work of the Ecumenical Relationships committee of the World Methodist Council.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS:

We are aware that many people are away during the summer months on holiday or still at work elsewhere. We wish them a happy time and hope that you can keep cool!

We were pleased to welcome to the O'Hearn family and to have Emily, Jack, Max, Sam and Calvin baptised while they were here on their special holiday to Rome with their father, Charlie, who has not been at all well recently. It was a great joy for him that the rest of the family have now been baptised.