

**June 2017**

**The Bridge No. 18**

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



## Minister's letter

As I write, the temperature is rising in the apartment. An early summer has arrived and the city is hot and crowded. The season of meetings is coming to an end. One more Church Council and our annual General Church Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> June and the end of the school, college and university year. Another year is coming to a close.

Does time fly quicker as you grow older? It seems so. I can't believe that we are now half way through our time here in Rome! And that this June I will have been 30 years in Methodist ministry. The last weekend of June will see another round of ordinations at the time of the British Methodist Conference in Birmingham.

As we enter the fallow period of the Christian year, from Trinity Sunday till we start to prepare again for the run in to Advent, the temptation is to stall in our church life and our own spiritual lives, like a car that has given its all but has now run out of petrol and waits for someone to come and fill it up and recharge its batteries.

The annual General Church Meeting is a time to look back but not just to do so in a self-congratulatory way (though there are things to give thanks for and people to thank for their tireless service to the church and community). It's a time also to look and say, "**what more does God require of us?** in our giving of time and talents, in our serving one another and the world. So on 18<sup>th</sup> I will be producing a sheet that you can take away and let us have back over the summer. It will ask of you that question. It will ask also what we could do to open up our church more next year to a wider group of people.

The danger is of course that you make excuses not to come on the 18<sup>th</sup> (though some may be away). I`d like you to make it a priority and come prepared to make a contribution to the questions and answers as we take account of our church life this past year.

We all have our favourite hymns. My thoughts inevitably turn to John and Charles Wesley, whose conversions we have just commemorated again. The two brothers had those heart-warming experiences in 1738 but then didn`t quite know what God had in store for them. Through God`s Spirit and the prompting of others they started their great evangelistic movement the following year. They weren`t prepared to rest on their laurels. Charles penned this verse in a longer hymn which starts “Give me the faith which can remove...” (see Singing the Faith No. 661).

My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord,  
Into thy blessed hands receive;  
And let me live to preach thy word,  
And let me to thy glory live;  
My every sacred moment spend  
In publishing the sinners` friend.

May we discern what God wants us to do with the remainder of our time here and make every moment precious as a gift of God.

**Pastor Tim**

## **Intern Report**

May has been another busy and quick month – it seems the time is flying by in these last few months!

The more I write these updates, the less I feel I have to say! In some ways I suppose this is a good thing, as it means that I have truly settled into a routine here – as difficult as that sometimes is with the many variations in work that comes with PSA and MEOR!

I've been very fortunate this month, both with having my brother coming to visit and with being able to fly home for a wedding! It's been wonderful – though this has made the moments of work even busier! We are in full swing preparing for next month's courses and visitors – it's shaping up to be a good month ahead of us!

The Young Adults group still continues to meet – although is very small in numbers at the moment as a group of girls from Arkansas have moved back to the States. However, where 2 or more are gathered!! We are currently studying 1 Peter, although we are slowing down as we approach Summer now. I am hopeful that the new intern for next year (whoever that may be) will take this group and develop and grow it even further! It's been a wonderful opportunity to start it, and although the timing hasn't suited everyone, I do believe that those who have been able to join in have thoroughly enjoyed it.

**Lucy**

## **Shine Like Stars**

This was the theme of last month's Easter Offering service (taken from Philippians 2 v15) when we celebrated being part of the World Church and dedicated the money collected for the work of the World Mission Fund of the British Methodist Church. A magnificent sum was raised, totalling 1,000 euros, which will help the work of its partner churches including here in Italy.

As in our previous EO services produced by Methodist Women in Britain, several of our congregation from different countries of the world took part. Bible passages were read by Sonneke and Sanie, and the world church stories were read by Simmone (Brazil), TK (Ghana) and Twinkle (Pakistan). It was suggested that the stories be printed in full in The Bridge so people can read them for themselves. Mary sang two songs from Ghana following the story from her home country. Each story was accompanied by photos, thanks to our digital projector, which again was operated by Luke.

For the prayers of intercession we were invited to write on a paper star the name of someone who has shone like a star for us, or a situation needing the light of Christ, or a pledge to shine that light for a person or situation in need today. With the help of Lucy and the Sunday School these were attached to the display representing stars shining in a dark sky.

The 3 stories are printed below. To see the accompanying slides please go to [www.mwib.org.uk](http://www.mwib.org.uk) and click on Easter Offering. The President of MWiB has posted a report on our service in her blog for 30<sup>th</sup> May. To see it and a photo, click on President's Blog on the Website!

**Angela Macquiban**

## **Story 1 - They call me a saint**

“They call me a saint,” says Revd Maria do Carmo Moreira Lima, NMA for the Methodist Church in Brazil. She adds, “Although I try and demystify this notion, I look to lead them in the best way, as if they were my own children.” Maria’s ‘children’ are young people held at three young offenders’ institutes in Belford Roxo, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, and Bangu, a neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro City. In a country where the age of criminal responsibility for some crimes was lowered from 18 to 16 in 2015, the work Maria does with these young people is essential for showing them the love and hope of Jesus Christ. The environment within these institutes often does not foster rehabilitation and restoration, so part of Maria’s work has been to be an advocate for young offenders and seek an improvement to their living conditions. Since last year Maria has helped improve the diet offered to young offenders, fostered better relations between them and their officers and encouraged the building of a family reception centre where young offenders’ mothers and families who come to visit can be received. Violent and often fatal gang warfare that takes place outside of young offenders’ institutes frequently continues inside when rival gangs are forced to live together. “A major challenge is to develop pastoral work with different gangs at the same institution,” says Maria. “Employees are afraid that detainees will act with violence, but they have shown me great respect and they have had exemplary behaviour in all activities.” God is using Maria as a shining light in a violent, dark environment to bring peace, reconciliation and hope.

## **Story 2 - Hope for Teens**

Hope for Teens is a programme managed by Methodist Church Ghana Hope for Teens started in 2012 to help girls who had dropped out of school due to lack of funds or teenage pregnancy. This vocational training and support from their peers offer hope, new skills and knowledge to improve their standard of living and

their life expectations. Dr Bunmi Olayisade, World Church Relationships Partnership Coordinator for Africa tells us, “As at March 2016 during my visit to Accra, there were 18 female students in catering, sewing, bead/hat making and hairdressing classes under the National Vocational Training Institute Certificate courses. “Joanna Akyeampong is the Programme Coordinator with a passion to help these vulnerable girls. She teaches them etiquette and good discipline in addition to their skills. She is an active member of the Methodist Church and works with other trainers. She hopes a few of the promising students will eventually become trainers so as to inspire other participants. “I had the privilege of speaking with the girls and their instructors and they were very inspiring and grateful for the opportunity. The quality of their displayed work was very good and a few of them mentioned pursuing their career at the Police Catering department which was good news. One of the girls wanted to start her own tailoring business if her relatives could buy her a sewing machine. “I believe this programme will go a long way in alleviating poverty, empowering young ladies, discouraging exploitation of vulnerable girls and promoting the church’s positive influence as it shares the love of Christ in word and action in its society.”

### **Story 3 - Inter faith dialogue in Pakistan**

A story from Steve Pearce, World Church Relationships Partnership Coordinator for Asia and the Pacific. Pakistan is not an easy place to be a Christian. There are 192 million people living in Pakistan, 97% of whom are Muslims. It’s a difficult place for many Muslims too. Shia Muslims are outnumbered five to one by Sunni Muslims, while the Ahmadi Muslims form only two per cent of the population – and the law says they are not Muslims at all. Poverty is also a problem, with 60% of the population living on less than \$2 a day. Most women are illiterate (around 55%) and girls continue to get less access to school education than boys.

Islam and Christianity are both religions of peace, yet conflict in Pakistan is frequent. Often it seems that religion is a cause of dissent rather than harmony, even though the Holy Koran teaches: “Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion” (109:6). Similarly in the Bible we read Micah’s vision of peace, when “... all people will walk every one in the name of his god...” (Micah 4:5 KJV). Understanding each other and talking together is a matter of life and death in this situation. Jennifer Jag Jivan shines like a star in what sometimes feels like a dark place. She is passionate about dialogue and through her work at the Christian Study Centre in Rawalpindi she helps Muslims and Christians to understand each other a little better and find ways of enjoying each other’s presence in Pakistan, rather than resenting it. Every single small encounter in this work can change many lives. Sometimes it feels even more powerful than that, as this encounter shows: At a recent three-day training workshop on peace-building, two individuals from one of the big Islamic organisations attended. One of them approached Jennifer to request her to give inter faith and peace-building training to others in his denomination. Some of those religious leaders each have responsibility for as many as 200 madrassahs (Islamic religious schools), and hundreds or thousands of followers. A request not without danger. But if you shine like a star, good things will happen.

### **Rice Bowl Project 2017**

It was decided by the members of Churches Together in Rome(CTiR), representing the Non-Italian speaking Churches in Rome to support both proposals , which were submitted for approval. This was quite exceptional, as usually one project is being selected. Furthermore one of the projects “Assistance to Internally Displaced persons in Ain Dara Camp( close to Aleppo, Syria) was already supported by CTiR two years ago. PSA raised



this year € 2000 for both projects which means that either project will receive € 1000. This is a rather high amount, as the Rice Bowl project collection coincided this year with our World Mission collection of the Methodist Churches worldwide. Hereunder I will give a short description of the second project “Assistance to the Bright Star Relief and Development Association(BRSDA) in Addis Ababa(AA), Ethiopia of the Swedish Lutheran Church.

The BSRDA organization is running different projects to rescue street children, commercial sex workers, and their families, who are living in very precarious conditions and enable them to increase their participation in society and prepare them to become active members of the society.

The organization uses both volunteers from Addis Ababa and abroad as well as employees in order to achieve its organizational goals. It operates exclusively in the poorer neighbourhoods of Addis Ababa, where it assisted in 2016 more than 4000 children and women through various projects, such as the Capacity Building Project directed to destitute women and children living on the streets of Addis Ababa. Secondly there is a School Feeding project with the objective to feed children at school. Thirdly the Sponsorship project which provides a number of street children with the necessary means to continue their education and lastly the Prevention program for children at risk. The prevention program is a broad intervention. It includes provision of free quality education, all the required school materials, food service, counselling, and medical services, and health education to children who have come from the poorest family. About 800 children are participating in this last one.

One of the main supporters of BSRDA is the Swedish Lutheran Church. The number of beneficiaries is limited to these 4000+, as the resources are limited, but there are many more street children in other barriers of AA, who would require assistance.

In the next edition of the Bridge I will tell you more about the project in Syria and about the total amount of funds raised by the cooperating Churches for these two Rice Bowl projects, as this information will only be available by mid-June.

## **Marius de Gaay Fortman**

### **Baptism of Trevor Pook on 21<sup>st</sup> May**

My name is Trevor Pook. I come from a small city called Singapore. I came to Rome to pursue further studies.

My faith in Christ has always been an on-off affair. In the past, I have attended many churches in numerous places. I have encountered Christians who have reaffirmed my faith and also those who cast my doubts in Christ. I have lived with an all-Christian environment before. I have even read the Bible religiously at one point to be closer to God. There are also instances of Christians whose lives have been transformed through Christ. They become good followers of Christ. That definitely strengthens my Christian belief further.

So why did I choose to be baptised and confirm my faith in Christ? The tipping point came about when I fell sick two years ago. It was a dark period of my life. My life hasn't been so empty till then with all the medications and hospital visits. It made me realise that life is short and fragile. Whenever I am going through my struggles in life, there seems to be a higher power that is in control. God has not forsaken me all this while.

I can still remember a sister who mentioned about faith and belief. She said along the lines that the acceptance of Christ is a simple act of belief. Believe in Jesus and you shall be saved. God

has given me a second chance to live. And I don't want to miss the boat to salvation. To be in Christ. So I took a leap of faith to be baptised.

Coming to PSA is a simple decision of familiarity. It is the only English-speaking Methodist Church and I am comfortable with the Methodist services. It has been a good experience so far. I hope to grow my faith in the Church in the years to come.

Baptism also signifies the beginning of a new start in Christ. Quoting from 2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." I am looking forward to growing and living a Christian life and to share this faith through my journey in Christ. Even as I struggle with rough times in my life, I know that I am not alone as God is with me.

### **June Worship services**

Taking the Letter of James as our core readings we shall explore in more depth the following passages and what the early church community has to teach us about what it is to be church today:

June 4 <sup>th</sup>	James 1:17 – 27	Be engaged with the world
June 11 <sup>th</sup>	James 2:5 – 26	Be open to difference
June 18 <sup>th</sup>	James 3:13 – 4:8	Be humble
June 25 <sup>th</sup>	James 5: 7 – 20	Be patient/uncomplaining

### **CHURCH FAMILY NEWS:**

We have had a number of significant additions to our membership. On 21<sup>st</sup> May, Zeema Battiglia by baptism, her mother Amanda Mancho received into membership, and Trevor

Pook by baptism and confirmation. On 4<sup>th</sup> June by confirmation Mark Anand.

Congratulations to Dinah Guillamon whose daughter passed the Philippine State Board for Lawyers recently.

We are sorry to learn that Elena Garro has had a fall and is recuperating at home presently.

### **Upcoming Event:**

On Saturday 17th June, come and meet author Philip Richter talk about his new book **Spirituality in Photography**.

The event will be hosted by Claudiana Bookshop, in the hall of the Piazza Cavour Church on the corner with Via Dionigi. The book will be on sale at 10 euros. Please come at 1030 for an 1100am start.

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

#### **Totals for January, February, March and April**

<b>Jan</b>	P 485,25	E 2306,50	BB 100,00	<b>TTL 2890,95</b>
<b>Feb</b>	P 586,33	E 1606,00	BB 120,00	<b>TTL 2312,33</b>
<b>Mar</b>	P 304,97	E 1191,00	BB 132,00	<b>TTL 1617,97</b>
<b>Apr</b>	P 543,22	E 1814,00	BB 209,72	<b>TTL 2566,94</b>
<b>May</b>	P 815,66	E 1527,00	BB 80,00	<b>TTL 2422,66</b>