

March 2019

The Bridge No. 36

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



Journeyings

Minister`s Letter

When I chanced on the latest magazine called Connexion containing stories from around the British Methodist Church, I was fascinated to see not only that we were mentioned (in the article by Ruth Gee on ecumenism) but also that our guest preacher on 10th March, its former Vice President (Jill Baker), who is bringing a group of 20 women from Methodist Women in Britain on pilgrimage to Rome, had written on the subject which gave this edition its theme, of JOURNEYING. For the online version of this go to www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/the-connexion-magazine

Rome of course is a place of pilgrimage, to the sites associated with Peter and Paul and all the early Christian martyrs. And many people journey here to those and other sites. Whether they are transformed in the process depends on the attitude of mind they come with. Are they merely tourists out to get a selfie of themselves and the most photographed site in the world (yes, our Ponte Sant`Angelo and Castel behind!) or are they coming with some deeper sense of longing for insights and growth?

The whole Bible story is a series of journeys. Of a leader of a people chosen by God, Father Abraham, setting off he knew not where. Of that people delivered from the slavery they experienced in Egypt and on the move, with God at their side, through the bad times and the good, from the desert to the promised land. Of that same people taken off into exile in Babylon, far from their homeland, their temple destroyed, their security shattered, but their faith in God maintained. For he was a faithful God, faithful to his promises of old, of the purpose he had for this people to be a light to the nations.

And in Jesus, the itinerant preacher/teacher/miracle worker, the promises of God to the prophets were fulfilled. He was a man on the move, journeying around the Lake of Galilee, backwards and forwards to Jerusalem, with nowhere to lay his head except the hospitality offered by family and friends. And this Lent, we are invited to journey

with him as he sets his face again towards Jerusalem, where prophets died and hopes of earthly glory were shattered. We are invited to tread with him the way of the cross, to go to the “green hill far away, outside a city wall, where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all”.

So, are we prepared this Lent to make a commitment to journeying? Maybe to read a book or a gospel in stages as we tread a spiritual path of reflection leading up to Holy Week. Maybe to take a walk, to think and pray along the way. I hope to complete a circumvallation of the walls of the city of Rome and stop off at some of the station churches associated with those who followed the way of the cross and died for their faith.

Follow the path on which our Captain trod,
Our King Victorious, Christ the Son of God.

Have a very blessed Lent!

Pastor Tim

INTERN NEWS

The month has been very ecumenical and I have had the opportunity to meet with various religious groups in Rome.

I attended Divine Liturgy at Basilica di Santa Sofia, a Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Rome, which was my first experience of the Byzantine Rite. I was given a tour of the church, and the community building next door, learning a little about the church’s history. The basilica was built by Cardinal Josyf Slipyj, the Major Archbishop of Lviv, between 1967 and 1968. Slipyj had spent 18 years in various Soviet concentration camps, and was released in 1963, following pressure from both Pope John XXIII and US President John F. Kennedy, and Slipyj was able participate in the Second Vatican Council. Basilica di Santa Sofia is modelled after the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev and covered in mosaics, depicting various biblical scenes and saints. It was a privilege to meet with the Ukrainian community in Rome, and I hope to

visit again (next time staying for dinner and trying some Ukrainian food!)



The interior of
Basilica di Santa
Sofia in Rome.

Another opportunity for Ecumenism is the meeting with women who belong to the community, Apostles of the Interior Life. The community, founded in 1990 by Fr. Salvatore Scorza, have houses in Rome, Kansas and Texas, and a large part of their apostolate is giving spiritual guidance and direction on a one-to-one basis. This is a fantastic opportunity to meet with people of a different tradition. There is so much to learn from these women who have dedicated their lives to God, and in March, I am going on a retreat organised by the community.

I have also attended Taizé prayer at Santa Maria in Campitelli. The service reminded me of the beauty, and simplicity of Taizé prayer, and how, through the use of many languages during worship, people from different backgrounds can be united, and made to feel welcome. The next prayer service at Santa Maria in Campitelli is at 7:30pm on 10th March. Attending the Taizé prayer were members of Living Stones (Pietre Vive), an international communion of Christian youth communities which aims to announce Jesus Christ – that is, the Beauty of the Church – through the beauty of sacred and religious heritage. The community seek to evangelise through art and offer free tours of various churches within Rome (details and times can be found at <http://www.pietre-vive.org/roma-2>). **Rachel**



Some of the group attending Taizé Prayer at Santa Maria in Campitelli.

TALK ON THE “SALVINI LAW” AT ST PAUL’S WITHIN THE WALLS

St Paul’s held a presentation on the implications of the new Decree on Immigration and Security by two lawyers, Filippo Narbone and Davide Lodi, from NL & Partners, who work in Immigration law and Citizenship.

Filippo and Davide explained that the Decree cancels humanitarian protection for people arriving in Italy and the main result of this is that those who might otherwise have obtained this will have no documentation and will not be able to live or work here legally.

Humanitarian Protection is one of three types of protection for persons seeking asylum (the other two being the 1951 Refugee Convention and subsidiary protection). Humanitarian protection is for people who are not eligible for refugee status but, due to some other type of vulnerability, cannot be sent home. It allowed them to stay in Italy for 2 years.

Although existing humanitarian permits can be converted into a working permit, there is a prerequisite of work, accommodation and a valid passport. It will no longer be possible to renew existing permits or seek new ones on this basis.

Aside from cancelling Humanitarian Protection, the Decree also assigns additional funds for deportation, and has expedited procedures geared at early deportation. The SPRAR (The Protection System for asylum seekers and refugees) will now only be available for those granted refugee status. This will significantly limit accommodation available to asylum seekers.

There are some calls to challenge whether the Decree is constitutional. But there are still many unknown things concerning the implications of cancelling of Humanitarian Protection.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Congratulations to those who have had birthdays in February, particularly Elena Garro, who was visited by various members of PSA, and Mary Hull, who celebrated a significant birthday at the end of the month.

We were sorry to say farewell to Lolita Hermosura, who has returned to the Philippines. She has served PSA faithfully over many years in cheerfully supplying our refreshments after morning worship.

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.

As our contribution towards the Rice | Bowl appeal, there will be a bake sale at PSA after the service on 14th April, so that you can enjoy your cakes at the end of Lent.

RESOURCES FOR US TO USE

The latest **Connexional magazine** of the Methodist Church in Britain, has taken the theme of journeying. Rachel has summarised some of the articles in this. A copy is attached to the notice board at the back of church.

- Jill Baker, past Vice-President of the Methodist Conference in 2017/18 and a former President of Methodist Women in Britain, offers her definition of pilgrimage in asking the question, 'Is all journeying pilgrimage?' (Article found below in the Bridge).
- The Youth President of the Methodist Church 2018/19, Jasmine Yeboah, reflect on the duality of her experience of walking with Christ: 'You may ask, "where is God leading the Church?" My answer is simple: walk with love, and you will see'.
- In an article called 'Journeying together in prayer and evangelism', Ed Mackenzie, Discipleship Development Officer, reflects on how the Thy Kingdom Come can help the Church

grow in its commitment to prayer and evangelism. Thy Kingdom Come (this year 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.

- The Revd Ruth Gee, the Methodist Church's Connexional Ecumenical Officer, reflect on the many paths to Church unity, emphasising that 'travelling together is not an option but a gospel imperative, fundamental for mission. We are called to be one in all our wonderful and challenging diversity'.

METHODIST WOMEN IN BRITAIN PILGRIMAGE

Is all journeying pilgrimage?

Jill Baker, Past Vice-President of the Methodist Conference in 2017/2018 and a former President of Methodist Women in Britain, offers her definition of pilgrimage.

The question posed by the title is a difficult one to answer. Whatever pilgrimage is (and it has been many things to me, including a lifeline) it is not an exact science. My definition of pilgrimage develops constantly, but generally includes the five features explored below.

Intentionality

The decision to go deeper with God, whether by making a physical journey or through an inner quest, can come about in many ways. I like to use the word 'restless' here; not as Augustine used it, but positively: a God-given restlessness which compels us to move out of whatever rut we find ourselves in and discover a God who is bigger and wilder than we may have realised. A faith journey needs intentionality; it is a daily, hourly, step-by-step choice to keep going. Sometimes that's relatively easy, sometimes it's hugely demanding.

So pilgrimage is, generally, more than wandering... but it can start out as wandering. Journeys undertaken with no meaningful purpose can become pilgrimages, perhaps through an exciting discovery on a path

which seemed routine – a bit like Moses’ discovery of the burning bush.

Leaving things behind

How do you pack for a journey? How do we prioritise what baggage we take with us into the next lap of life? How does the Church, at local or national level, discern what to keep from the past and what to throw out of the backpack because it is making our journey painful or slow?

Departure can feel like a challenge, but it can also be a liberation. Only when we travel without something for a while can we be freed from its unconscious tyranny; whether a hairdryer or a heresy, too many clothes or too many rituals.

Liminality

Coming from the Latin word for a threshold, the word liminality expresses the idea of ‘living in between’, a hallmark of pilgrimage. The pilgrim leaves what is known to travel towards a destination which will be welcoming and safe, but the journey itself is a time of transition where anything might happen.

“For we have here no lasting city, but we are looking for the city which is to come” says the writer to the Hebrews (13:14, NRSV), and that sums it up for me. The American To reproduce this article from the connexion in your church magazine or newsletter, please include the details shown at the end of this copy. You’ll find this article’s accompanying photograph in this link to the Methodist Church’s flickr album for the connexion. theological ethicist Richard Niebuhr says something similar, defining pilgrims as “persons in motion, passing through territories not their own ... seeking another shore, a shore that will complete us...” Crossing the Pilgrim Path to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne (photo below) is a liminal experience where the physical ambiguity of a walk which is neither on land nor on sea reinforces the sense of crossing between worlds – it can feel vulnerable.



Sacred centre

It is perhaps this liminality, this vulnerability, which makes the pilgrim open to some sort of encounter with the divine, perhaps the single most defining feature of Christian pilgrimage. That is not to suggest that a pilgrimage is a kind of bear-hunt to track God down – far from it. Post-Reformation Protestant opposition to pilgrimage was made partly on the grounds that God is everywhere and it is not necessary to travel to find God. Very true. Yet many pilgrim sites are well-known as ‘thin places’ – the prayers and devotions of countless pilgrims leave their mark. Such an encounter may not occur where or when or how the pilgrim expects – God is mystery.

RS Thomas in his poem Pilgrimage expresses this so well: “... He is such a fast God, always before us and leaving as we arrive.”

Transformation

As Christians, it is our hope that we are constantly being transformed – again, pilgrimage is not a prerequisite for change. But there is something about a journey, something about putting one foot in front of the other for days (or hours, or even minutes) which feeds renewal. A combination of intentionality, living lightly, undergoing transition, encountering God... these factors lead naturally to development, to new perspectives, to altered priorities, to quickened resolve. Come Holy Spirit, wild goose of God, lead us to the next stage of the journey.

Jill Baker from the connexion, the free magazine of the Methodist Church, www.methodist.org.uk
To receive a free copy, visit www.bit.ly/the-connexion



St Paul's tomb at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls.



The Protestant Cemetery in Rome

METHODIST COUNCIL - BREXIT AND BEYOND

A paper produced by JPIT (Joint Public Issues Team) as an opportunity to discuss and consider the challenges of Brexit to our church and to our country. Now as we face the greatest peacetime changes to our economy and political identity, as a fallible group of people called together into the Church and inspired by God's grace, we look to our responsibilities at this time.

The paper advocates that the Church can prepare and respond in the following ways:

a) Through the local church – all are welcome

- There are clearly communities that have felt abandoned, by the Church as well as other institutions. Churches are (or can be) places where everyone is welcomed and heard, and everyone is esteemed because they are children of God, they are welcomed unconditionally and accepted just as they are by God's grace.
- There are practical implications for churches. Most commentators (even those in favour of a hard Brexit) agree that, at least in the short term, things will be tough. The Church will need to respond to cuts to welfare expenditure and local authority funding, and the likely event of volatile food prices, leading to more families being in desperate need.

b) Truth-telling – speaking up and speaking out

- Churches, and Christians working in communities, are already present in offering support for people who are hungry, homeless, trapped in debt, lonely. The need for such services will not diminish and is likely to increase.
- Our role as the Methodist Church will be to stand in the gap, but also to speak out prophetically about the injustices we see in society. As a member of the EU, Britain benefitted from being part of a block which spoke, spent and acted powerfully on issues such as climate change and human rights. The Church may increasingly need to speak out about these concerns. All Christians are called to political participation and we have a responsibility not to dismiss politics as a way of organising our country, but to re-engage. Crucially we can model rational, well-informed conversations.

c) Internationalism – looking beyond our borders

- We need, with humility, to show that we are not turning our back on the rest of the world. Relationships, which we have perhaps taken lightly, now become opportunities for serious and meaningful engagement.

- The border in the island of Ireland has been frequently in the news and Churches there continue to work hard to encourage communities to engage with each other, trying to foster peace and reconciliation rather than let division and potential conflict increase.

Finally, the paper asks, 'How can the Methodist Church help reanimate a vision for the UK?'

- Can we speak of our vision of a society that welcomes the stranger, where those who are the poorest are at the centre, which values each generation, which shares a single planet fairly, which works for global peace, and where there is greater democratic participation?
- Locally and nationally can we embed these hopes in our work and mission, working for a world where God's justice reigns? Internationally, what does it mean to have a vision of a country that does not turn its back on the world, but works for peace and justice?
- Can local churches and circuits, embodying Christ in community, be places where all people will be heard, accepted and find hope, together having conversations about difficult things, respectfully, honestly and holding each other in love?

THE JOY IN ENOUGH CONFESSION

This Lent, Green Christian is encouraging the church in Britain to take a moment to consider our role in the destruction of the environment, our complicity in consumerism, and in an economy that serves profit over people. Instead, we are invited to embrace the sufficiency and the joy of enough.

The following confession is a call to repent, and to seek contentment, justice and a life in balance with the natural world. It is a call to

freedom from the endless want-creation of consumerism, and to find joy in enough:

Our climate is changing, and we are changing it. We confess our carbon footprints, our failure to consider the consequences of our actions, our slowness to react. We are sorry for all the times we knew the right thing to do, but chose convenience.

Your earth is exploited, and we are complicit in its exploitation. Species are lost, soil erodes, fish stocks decline, resources dwindle. We confess that many of us have taken too much, and not considered the needs of future generations.

We have become consumers. We have turned a blind eye to greed. We confess our hunger for more, and our failure to appreciate what we already have. We live in a time of unparalleled luxury, and we are sorry that we have not been more grateful.

The poor are left behind, even in this age of plenty. Human rights are pushed aside for profit. Wealth accumulates for the rich while the poorest still do not have what they need. We confess our apathy to injustice, and our haste in judging others.

This is not who you made us to be. We have not been good caretakers of your garden Earth. We have not loved our neighbours. Forgive us, creator God.

Forgive us. Renew us. Inspire us. And in your strength, God, we declare:

- *Enough climate change: help us to take responsibility. Give us the wisdom to live appropriately, the urgency to act, and the courage to make changes. Give us the voice to call for change from our leaders, and the perseverance to keep asking.*
- *Enough consumerism: give us what we need, God our provider. Then help us to find satisfaction and contentment. Help us to be grateful and generous.*

- *Enough inequality: nobody should be left behind. You care for the poor, and we want to follow your example. Make your church a living example of equity and inclusion, and a powerful advocate for justice and sharing.*

We thank you for your kindness and your mercy. We look to your promise of restoration, and we move forward. Give us the strength to speak and to act – not out of guilt or duty, for we are forgiven and we are loved. Instead, we speak and act out of joy:

- *joy in the living hope of knowing you*
- *joy in serving each other*
- *joy in the beauty and diversity of creation, your gift to us*
- *joy in your provision and your care – joy in enough*

Copies of the All We Can Lent booklet are available to collect from the back of church.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

ALL SAINTS

Please mark in your diaries the service for the **installation of Fr Robert Warren**, the new Chaplain at All Saints on Saturday 9th March at 16:00.

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

BIBLE STUDY HOME GROUP:

We meet on Saturdays at 5.30 pm and the next meeting is on 9th March. **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 6th and 20th March. See Sandra Mi if you hope to come.

FORTHCOMING SERVICES

March 3 rd	Pastor Tim with communion
March 10 th	Pastor Tim with preacher Jill Baker
March 17 th	Pastor Tim followed by Church Council
March 24 th	Pastor Tim
March 31 st	Fiona Kendall leading worship with Pastor Tim presiding at communion (the following Sunday 7 th April is the Rome marathon).
April 7 th	An informal preaching service for those who are able to get to us!

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

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

For February figures, see weekly notices. 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