

May 2017

The Bridge No. 17

Newsletter of
Ponte Sant'Angelo
Methodist Church Rome



Minister's letter

In the Bible notes I use, the book for Easter week has been the Song of Songs or the Song of Solomon. It's one of those books of the Old Testament I sometimes fail to place because we read from it so rarely. Its imagery is just a bit too strong for faint-minded readers! And yet, even though it is a fairly exuberant love poem, it was a favourite of the Puritan scholars of the 17th century.

I can see why it was chosen for the week after Easter. Much of the imagery is about tending gardens and caring for the other. Easter celebrates our discovery that death doesn't have the last word, that love triumphs over evil, that we are drawn to this God who wants us to be in a relationship with him and to experience his love, to feast on the good things he provides and to tend his garden and make it flourish. The garden is the Church and each of us who are part of it, whom God wants in fellowship with him and each other. And sometimes these relationships need a bit of tender loving care!

The danger is that our Easter experience fades, just as the flowers perish and the contents of our wonderful display are dismantled and put in the organic waste bin. Yet we are encouraged to continue to feast on the word of God which endures for ever. One way is to read the Bible. Another way is to pray regularly. Another is to come to communion regularly, where we are fed with bread and wine. All these things are means of grace and works of piety in the writings and hymns of the Wesleys.

This month I encourage you to join in the prayer and bible reading we are planning from Ascension Day to Pentecost (see later article) and to enjoy the feast of music which we will have Sunday by Sunday in our special services, culminating on Aldersgate Sunday (28th May) when we commemorate the conversion of John and Charles Wesley on 21st and 24th May in 1738, at the birth of the Methodist movement.

You can come and celebrate the newly formed ecumenical garden at San Gregorio on the 20th and see the difference that hard work makes to what was a bit of waste ground and a dumping place for rubbish for decades.

May your relationships with God and each other flourish and may we all take care to tend the gardens of our lives so that they flourish and bloom!

Continue to enjoy the Easter season ,

Pastor Tim

Intern Report

April has been another busy month – particularly with Easter celebrations! I loved being a part of all that we did in PSA (and particularly enjoyed the Maundy Thursday Communion Service), and also enjoyed celebrating with other churches during the week.

Something that was particularly moving and memorable for me was that on Maundy Thursday, just as I was finishing teaching in the Refugee Centre, I was invited to come and join the

Rector and some of the staff from St Paul's in washing the feet of refugees. It was a beautiful experience and provided some wonderful opportunities to explain why Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. We then decided to move out onto Via Nazionale, and offer to wash the feet of those passing by. Unsurprisingly, only a few decided to take us up on the offer, but many stopped to ask questions and engage in discussion with us. It was definitely hugely out of my comfort zone, but was also a truly wonderful experience.

The rest of the month has been similar to others – I must admit that it feels nice to have some sort of a routine and to feel settled in what I am doing! However, one piece of exciting news is that I now know what I am doing next year. While I am obviously very sad to be leaving you in August, I am happy to announce that I have been offered a place at the University of St Andrews to do a Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies. This University was my top choice and so I am very pleased to have accepted the offer! If any of you ever find yourselves in St Andrews – please do come and visit me!

Lucy

Stories of Migrants aided by Consulta (submitted by Jenny Smith)

The story of Ahmed (not his real name)

Ahmed is a boy only 20 years old, from Guinea Conakry. He arrived in Rome in 2014 together with some travelling companions who then headed off for other cities or were swallowed up in the urban environment. He spent the first

months in Rome in a “casa familia” and then managed to put aside enough money to find a room to rent on his own, moving to a suburban area of the city. He likes where he is and doesn't complain, he has found everything that he needs and quickly got used to the new way of life in our country: food, colours, smells and different habits. His life in Africa wasn't easy and he was forced to come away to earn his living, setting off on his own for Italy. Several years have passed since he last saw his family and he hope to see them again soon.

He came to the sportello at Via Firenze after a unsuccessful experience in one of the many reception centres in the city. His adolescent glance was dark and full of mistrust, with little confidence in those around him and a great hatred stored up inside. Everything seemed wrong to him and he couldn't find help anywhere except for that little which the African community like him recently arrived in Rome was able to give him.

Like many other boys of his age who have faced difficult circumstances, building a relationship of reciprocal trust with us was a long road for Ahmed, sometimes not easy. The day when he came for the first time to the Sportello he could hardly contain the frustration of not managing, even when he tried hard, to resolve the economic problems which tormented him and find a job which would last longer than a month or two. Shut up in himself he was convinced that now too he would only be wasting time. But the way forward with us was different: he trusted us and slowly he created a relationship based mainly on trying to rebuild some of the trust towards the world that had been taken from him or that he had lost. With our support he began a challenge which has borne fruit; he has learned good Italian practising and following determinedly our

course, always with the hope of find a job soon which would enable him to be self-sufficient as he dreamed, and thus to be able also to send money home. When with his one-day or one-day a week jobs he could managed till the end of the month, this boy with the firm glance and wide shoulders no longer feels beaten and always looks for a new solution. Thanks to the regional and community projects which we have proposed and sponsored, as he is still young, he is now waiting for confirmation of a job as assistant-cook through the Lazio Regional project “Garanzia Giovani”; he has applied for a paid “stage” as dishwasher, he is being considered for a paid traineeship in the catering field with a private company at Cinecittà, and meantime is keeping himself going as a painter.

Notwithstanding his difficult manner he has always been very polite and even now that he is working, when he has a little free time passes by to greet the staff at the SportelloLavoro. Aware of his rights and his capabilities, thanks to our support, he is living more calmly and manages to make plans for the medium term with much greater hope and patience than before, facing the difficulties with a new spirit and enthusiasm.

Ahmed is sure that one day he will get there, he no longer has doubts about that.

The story of Diaby

This is the story of a boy and of his journey. It is the tale of a journey followed by so many others like him, which started on a well-trodden local path and finished on the sand shores of our country, thousands of kilometres from the house where he was born. He misses a lot the place where he grew up, and talks of it with longing. He comes from a big city, the main town of

the region in the inland area of Togo, there where the coast faces on to the Gulf of Guinea.

Leaving his country on an old poorly built boat, he passed by Benin, Niger and finally after a seemingly endless journey, landed in Libya where he was arrested by the police and spent six months in prison accused of illegal immigration. He doesn't talk willingly about how he was treated there, says he can't remember. Luckily, in the end, he found someone ready to help him escape to come to our country, and he reached Syracuse. He remembers the Sicilian city as being fantastic, but perhaps it was the emotion of having made it to get here. After eleven days he moved to Rome.

He speaks slowly, weighing his words, he's careful not to make a mistake, even an accent. He has adapted quickly, in Africa he no longer has anyone and when he left, over 2 years ago, he was alone.

He had his 24th birthday recently and lives at Castelnuovo di Porto, a town built on a rock near the Via Flaminia. On alternate days every week Diaby comes to Rome, taking any means of transport possible: bus, train, metro and then another bus to attend the Italian language classes at the school at Ponte S Angelo in the centrostorico. Over a period of time he has become more open with the young people at the Sportello Lavoro; the first day he came to find us he had great difficulty in overcoming his shyness and explaining his story and the problems he had encountered. To see him now reading his books, casually beside us, one would never think that a little while ago he could scarcely communicate. Part of our work at Via Firenze is encouraging applicants to get going and work at

a planned objective, overcoming initial uncertainties for cultural and communication difficulties.

Diaby knows that he must achieve small things day by day, and not sit back on successes obtained so far. Even now his life is not easy. He can't always manage to eat enough and often has to go without; leaving the reception centre where he lives very early in the morning to get to lessons on time, he can't stay for breakfast at the centre, or lunch. Moreover he is diabetic and has difficulty with street food which gives him health problems which don't help. For this reason he buys almost only rice. He needs constant medicine for his illness and for this we provide assistance, economically, and clarifying some doubts on dosage of medication.

For the migrant community he is a striking example of how, with dedication and perseverance, if one can find someone ready to listen and point in the right direction, sooner or later one can obtain tangible results. The day when he collects his study certificate and can master Italian almost as well as his mother tongue, Diaby will be able to consider completed the first part of his journey, which started when he left Africa.

SUNDAY SERVICES AT PSA

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| 7 th May | Visit of the Dutch School singing. Pastor Tim leading service |
| 14 th May | Easter Offering Service on World Church Sunday |
| 21 st May | Pastor Tim with Baptisms and confirmations |

- 28th May Pastor Tim leading an Aldersgate Sunday Wesley Hymn festival with Pot Luck Lunch to follow
- 4th June Pentecost Praise and Communion led by Pastor Tim

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS:

We were sorry to learn of the death of two of the family members of our congregation – Mario Suratos, whose mother has died (he is presently in the Philippines), and Nayomi De Mel, whose uncle died on Easter eve. We remember them in our prayers.

CHURCH COUNCIL (23rd April 2017)

The church council met after the service on the 23rd of April.

The council were grateful for **Mr Neil Kiely**, who has covered the cost of purchasing and bringing the **new organ** to us which is much appreciated. His generosity is acknowledged as a significant addition to helping us enhance the worship of the church.

Plans for **dinner on the 29th of June** on the terrace were discussed and plans for an appropriate menu were under way. Tickets are now available from Alessia and Federico.

The two special initiatives, **the week of prayer** and **Bible month** were discussed, and it was noted that materials are expected to arrive shortly from the UK for the week of prayer, and Pastor Tim is planning notes on the book of James and a special Bible Study on James on **11th of June after church**. The **4th of June, Pentecost**, would mark the end of the week

of prayer for others to know the Lord and would be a good occasion on which to **invite friends to church**.

There was also an **appeal for church members to bring jars of instant coffee and tea** for Sunday social hour, which has appeared in the notices.

The next council meeting will be on the **4th of June**.

AGM – Please note that the Annual General Meeting will be held on the 18th of June after the morning service. It would be good if as many members as possible could attend.

Pastoral Group Initiative

At our last Church Council meeting we discussed the pastoral life of our church.

On a Sunday we are welcoming and many of us find it easy to engage with newcomers, visitors and tourists both before and after the service over coffee and tea in the schoolroom.

Many of us lead busy lives during the week and have our regular routines and then of course there is the proportion of the congregation who work full or part time or study.

Would you be able to donate some of your time to visit a church member, who struggles to get out easily, and chat over a cup of tea?

Perhaps you would be willing to do some shopping for someone who does not have a car?

Maybe you could assist a newcomer to Rome and to our church by offering some advice? When you arrive in a new place it is rarely easy and coming to Rome without speaking Italian can be very difficult and sometimes a few 'pointers in the right direction' can be invaluable. Often questions and answers can

be conducted by e-mail or telephone. As a stranger it is always comforting to know that there is someone you can call on should the need arise.

As a diverse group of Christians from different backgrounds, nationalities and ages we could be the most incredible resource!

We would like to establish a network of members who would be willing to visit or help members of the church when necessary and as the need arises.

The Church Council feels that this already goes on in an informal way and so it would also be great to know what people do to help others. If we were made aware of a particular need, or if you regularly assist with for example shopping for a member who struggles to get out, then we would hope to be able to fill in should you be away or unable to perform the task as you normally do.

If a member is ill or in hospital it would be wonderful if we could call on someone from the pastoral network to make a visit on behalf of the church and report back.

Pastor Tim already tries to get contact details for newcomers and then follows up by e-mail, but it would be terrific if someone from the congregation could also make contact by telephone or e-mail and offer help and/or advice. Whilst we might not know the answer to everything we may well know 'a man who can!'

I hesitate to use the name Pastoral Committee because to me this makes me think of meetings and discussion. We actually just need to be pro active and communication by telephone, text and/or e mail or a quick chat on a Sunday morning should usually be sufficient.

I am very willing to coordinate such an initiative so let's start the ball rolling.

For now, please contact me if you are interested in being part of such a network. You can speak to me before or after the service on a Sunday or drop me an e-mail or a text, contact details below.

In addition please let me know if you already help or visit a church member on a regular basis and then I can report back to the Church Council.

If we could aim to be able to advertise each week in the notices that we have a Pastoral Group and if you are new or are an existing member with a particular need and that you can make contact with us for assistance, I think that would be a worthwhile and useful service to offer.

This initiative is bound to evolve as it develops so for now it will be a 'work in progress'.

I look forward to hearing from you, as we need a collaborative approach to produce a team effort!

Lindsay Twomlow

Call, text or what's App; +393291877027

E Mail; twomlows@btinternet.com

BIBLE STUDY

There are various opportunities to engage in Bible Study at PSA.

If you are free on Wednesday mornings, do come and join us at 10.30 once every two weeks for coffee, fellowship and study. If you are not free in the mornings and would like to form part of an evening class twice a month, please speak to Sandra.

Alessia and Federico run a home group in Via del Casaleto 63 (buzz Montelli Milani). They will meet on May 6th and 20th. For

more information speak to Alessia and Federico or call them on 3381675680.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement, which invites Christians around the world to pray between Ascension Day (25th May) and Pentecost Sunday (4th June) for more people to come to know Jesus Christ. What started out as an invitation from the Archbishop of Canterbury and York in 2016 to the Church of England has grown into an international and ecumenical call to prayer. Methodists everywhere are encouraged to join in this wave of bible study and prayer.

The hope is that:

- people will commit to pray with God's world-wide family - as a church, individually or as a family;
- churches will hold prayer events, such as 24-7 prayer, prayer stations and prayer walks, across the UK and in other parts of the world;
- people will be empowered through prayer by the Holy Spirit, finding new confidence to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

We are collaborating with All Saints in making sure there is prayer in our two churches to which all are invited each day in this period.

For those at home, resources will be shared to enable you to join in at a time to suit you and to encourage others to do so.

The schedule for daily prayers in our churches is listed below:

26 th	08.30 PSA	Prayers
27 th	08.30 All Saints	Prayers

28 th	Morning Services as usual at All Saints and PSA	
29 th	08.30 PSA	Prayers
30 th	08.30 PSA	Prayers
31 st	08.30 All Saints	Prayers
1 st	08.30 PSA	Prayers
2 nd	08.30 All Saints	Prayers
3 rd	08.30 All Saints	Prayers
4 th	Morning Services as usual at All Saints and PSA	

An afternoon together on Pentecost Eve

As you know, in our community there are three Bible study groups. This year, for the first time, we thought it would be nice to have a common meeting of the groups, which will be opened also to all members of the congregation. Which place could be pleasant and spiritual? Which place to choose for this meeting? We suggest a perfect place: in front of our home, in Monteverde area, there is a convent and behind it a cosy chapel, surrounded by a lovely garden looking on the Valle deiCasali Park. We are sure that this evocative place will convey to all of us a feeling of communion with God, with one another and with nature.

If you are interested in experiencing a time together to sing, pray and study the Word of God - join us!

We will have an afternoon of worship and reflection led by Pastor Tim.

Please save the date: Saturday 3rd June (Pentecost Eve) at 4.30 pm in Via del Casaletto, 128, Suore Oblate di Gesù, “eremo”.

The convent is easily reachable by public transportation (tram 8, buses 791, H, 31, 44, 870). The nearest stop is “Casaletto-Circonvallazione Gianicolense” at the terminus of tram 8. After getting off the tram/bus take Via del Casaletto and walk straight on for 100 metres and you will get to the convent.

If you come by car, you can park inside the convent yard. The “eremo” is behind the convent: please follow the sign in the yard.

All are welcome to join!

Please speak to us for more details, call or text 3381675680.

Alessia and Federico

Ecumenical Garden Dedication and Blessing:

After four and a half years, the Ecumenical Garden will be ready to be more widely enjoyed and used by those who have worked so hard to restore this special monastery garden at S. Gregorio al Celio! On **Saturday May 20th from 4-7pm** there will be a blessing and dedication ceremony, tours of the entire monastery site and prosecco and other refreshments afterwards. This will be a time for celebrating the culmination of a project that has involved many ecumenical friends. All are welcome to join! Please speak to Pastor Tim for more details.

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

Totals for January, February, March and April

Jan	P 485,25	E 2306,50	BB 100,00	TTL 2890,95
Feb	P 586,33	E 1606,00	BB 120,00	TTL 2312,33
Mar	P 304,97	E 1191,00	BB 132,00	TTL 1617,97
Apr	P 543,22	E 1814,00	BB 209,72	TTL 2566,94

Totals for specific projects

Rice Bowl	1570,00 Euros
Easter Offering	262,20 Euros

