



September 2017

**The Bridge No. 20**

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

## Minister's letter

*Quo vadis?* is a Latin phrase meaning "Where are you going?". Though it appears five times in the Latin version of the Bible, it is probably better known as the title of a film relating to a legend told of St. Peter. According to the apocryphal Acts of Peter, the apostle flees from certain crucifixion in Rome at the hands of the government, and along the road outside the city, the famous Via Appia going south, he meets the risen Jesus. In the Latin translation, Peter asks Jesus, "*Quo vadis?*" He replies, "*Romam eo iterum crucifigi* ("I am going to Rome to be crucified again"). Peter then re-gains the courage to continue his ministry and returns to the city, where he is indeed martyred by being crucified upside-down. The Church of Domine Quo Vadis on the Via Appia just outside the Porta Sebastiano is built where, according to this legend, the meeting between Peter and Jesus took place.

I walked five miles along this road on a hot August morning and when I got to the church I was glad of a rest and the third bottle of water refilled along the way. The earlier part of the morning was so peaceful, with only ants and lizards and wild horses for company for much of the way, until I reached the catacombs with coach loads of tourists spilling out and making quickly for the shade. And then the traffic of the latter part of the ancient way where cars sped past welcomed me back to the busy world. I thought, do I have to get back to the noise and the heat of the city? I'd much rather be in the quiet of the countryside and the shade of the day.

Where are you going? Jesus, in answer to Peter's question to him recorded in John 13:36, "Where are you going, Lord?" (despite being told so often before!) says that his task is to

follow him, even to die for his sake. Peter says he will, but then the cock crows and he fails in the task.

Where are we going? Not perhaps to the physical martyrdom that faced Peter as he turned back and went to Vatican hill to be crucified. But maybe a lot of lesser martyrdoms which come of not taking the easy way out and counting the cost of true discipleship. Of serving Jesus in the difficult things of life, in the places we`d rather not be, with people we`d rather not be with. And yet, that is where Jesus wants us to be.

Where are we going as a church at the beginning of this new connexional year? Maybe we should be facing up to the difficult times ahead, maybe the need to renew our membership and sense of mission and service. If we have no vision, the people perish. So take up the responsibilities that being a disciple of Jesus lays upon you. And go the extra mile (or three!) to the situations which we seek to avoid.

Pastor Tim

### **CHURCH FAMILY NEWS:**

We welcome **ABIGAIL RATCLIFFE** from the UK to replace Lucy Cowpland as our intern for this coming year. We congratulate her on gaining a first class honours degree in Geography at the University of Bangor Wales. See the report in the Methodist Recorder.

We congratulate all who have had birthdays recently, especially **Marcello Marinelli** who had a special family celebration.

We also congratulate the five ordinands who were recently examined and admitted as pastors at the Synod at Torre Pellice, including a Methodist from Sicily (Noemi Falla) and Stefano Giannatempo (who served here as student minister in 2013-14)

### **News from overseas:**

**Giulia Mi** writes: The adventure continues, I am still in Berlin. The buzzing life of an anonymous city that is sometimes too big for me, but it is surely fascinating. Sometimes it takes away too much energy, it is exhausting, distressing, but it gives more than what it takes. I started my masters in clinical psychology and psychotherapy at Potsdam University, a town not far from Berlin and my life changed completely, once more. It was disorientating, frustrating, tough. Berlin is a city built of fleeting people who come for a while and then decide to leave for another exciting and stimulating adventure. I saw myself feeling both lonely and empty, lost and very unhappy, helpless and demotivated. However, I did not decide to escape somewhere or return to my homeland, but I decided to carry on modelling and transforming my life into a more dynamic, active and motivated one. I started a volunteering project in a hospice with people who are ill and about to die, I started learning Spanish, being part of a church community ICF (International Christian Fellowship) run by young people. With them, I began volunteering with the homeless and refugees. However, everything around me still seemed quite static, difficult and lonely. Among all this dissatisfaction and obscurity, one day I woke up feeling decisively better, because I had been

patient, and patience always rewards. God listened to my prayers, he was just giving me the right time to figure out things myself and to understand that I could make myself happy without needing to lean on a “a new foreign family”, but through my own means. Then I reawakened my passion for drama and theatre by taking part in an Italian group of improvisation theatre and then, finally, with due patience I received an invitation to participate in a cooking project with foreign women in prison. It was a delightful experience, very enriching and it made me very happy but also sad, learning about how prisons function and putting myself in the shoes of these people who simply need a little bit more love and hope. I learnt that relapse depends on lack of therapy, and that makes me feel upset, disappointed but also very keen on pursuing this as a career in the future. Although everything in this anonymous and big, buzzing city is not perfect, I think sometimes God just wants to tell us to wait, to be patient. Simply because those who wait are those who have hope, and God provides us with the right means to survive darkness, but we must see where these tools are. How do I read God’s mind? How do I know what God is trying to tell me? Just wait, do not have any pressure, because God not only knows your desires, but also knows your timings, and sometimes we fail to see those too. We are always racing through time, searching for the “fastest” option, urgently craving, especially in a society where everything is instant, immediate, where there is not enough time to think. God is not a smartphone, and he is not Amazon Prime either. We should all try to do what we most love, give ourselves chances to discover new things, and even if sometimes we do end up doing things we do not particularly enjoy, it is probable that these experiences will be useful for us in the future. Be patient and listen, God can hear you. I would

also like to give a description of my experiences in the different fields I have been active in and still am. My experience with the homeless shelter has shocked me and has made me feel helpful, yet hopeless, especially when observing “invisible” individuals made visible once you come close to them. How drugs and alcohol can complicate your way in life and transform your body and your mind. Talking to a man who could be anyone, telling me how he lost his home just due to a flooding makes me think how we need to treasure the moment and be thankful, because it can happen to anyone. I was moved when he told me “My life is not a normal life, but then there are moments like these, which are precious.” As I was rushing around the old people’s home serving breakfast and lunch I felt uneasy as I did not have much time to stop and speak to these people who have been marginalized by society in their old age. Seeing how people develop dementia and become dysfunctional after an ictus makes me sorry and sad, especially when they are sent to these homes where they are made, too, “invisible”. Therefore, I decided to involve the youth of my church group to volunteer in an old people’s home, and as I sat next to a depressed woman who did not want to talk to anyone, I was delighted to see how by the end of our encounter she told me about her life and said to me, “come again, if you should have nothing to do.” The cooking project with women in prison is my favourite and when you walk into this structure, you feel like you are in any other place, but not a place where people are have been locked up because they committed some sort of “crime”. These women are lovely I people, active and happy to learn how to cook. They come from all over the world, and that makes it all the more interesting. Volunteering in the hospital with immobile bodies makes me fear life, yet expect and hope for the best in their

“afterlife”- whatever it will be. As I hold this woman’s hand, she holds it tighter and trembles. Next to her lies a woman who repeats the word “mum” like a broken CD, and again, I feel helpless. However, I know that they can hear the music that is playing on the radio and that me, sitting next to them, makes them and myself feel a little less lonely. These experiences are giving me personal growth and satisfaction.

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Sunday School starts again on 17<sup>th</sup> September with preparation for our Harvest Festival the following Sunday.

## **WORK WITH REFUGEES**

Ann Chaplin has provided us with this interesting account of work with refugees produced by the Universal Bible Alliance – The Bible Society of Italy:

## **A VISIT TO THE ISLAND OF LAMPEDUSA 23-25 MAY 2017**

Valdo Bertalot (Waldensian) Prof. Don Luca Mazzinghi President of the Italian Bible Association and I (Maria La Posta – Bible Society of Italy) met together in Lampedusa to get an idea of the need for Bibles to give to migrants, at their request, from the Parish of San Gerlando and through them to the Immigration Forum responsible for assisting migrants at the moment of their landing in the Port of Lampedusa.

We arrived at 21.00 on 23 May 2017. The following morning Don Carmelo La Magra took us on a tour of the island and explained its rich history. We visited the Sanctuary of the Madonna of Porto Salvo, an important site for the islands

inhabitants. We visited the ports where the migrants land, principally there are two: one military and one commercial which also serves the ferry boat to and from Sicily. Around 11.00 we met Solicitor Paola La Rosa, an important member of the Forum, at her house and were briefed about the landings and the work being done to give the migrants an identity. Then she took us to the cemetery, where the corpses of some migrants repose, telling us how they had arrived there and, how, with much difficulty, she and the Forum had succeeded in identifying them and tracing their backgrounds which enabled them to inform family members where the bodies of their loved ones were buried.

In the afternoon we met Sister Paola and Don Carmelo, who have met with the migrants to respond to their requests for articles of prime necessity which they otherwise could not obtain. She told us that she'd realised their need for prime necessities but above all else they asked for spiritual sustenance. They asked to have a Bible, a Cross, a Rosary, etc., but above all they asked for a Bible. To date, 1,700 Bibles are needed to cover the period from September-December 2017\*. They have, however, an urgent need for trousers and underwear. ADRA (The Adventist Agency for Development and Help) is sending 500 pairs of shoes. S, M and L sizes are needed in clothing and from 37 – 44 (5 – 9 in UK shoe sizes approx.) are needed in shoes, but especially larger sizes. Soap is also needed and above all body cream because the migrants all have dry skin problems.

We are primarily much involved in sending Bibles but are also working to participate in the collection of the other indispensable items. The migrants arrive without anything.



We then met with other members of the Forum, the young people of Mediterranean Hope; Alberto and Ivana showed us the work they are doing in Lampedusa on behalf of the Federation of Italian Evangelical Churches. Apart from gathering information about the landings, which was the original reason for their presence on the island, they realised that irrespective of religious affiliations, it was in the best interests of the migrants to work together as a united workforce. Don Carmelo and Alberto also spoke about the Fund that has been set up which donates 50% to the needs of the residents of Lampedusa. This type of project aims to assist not only the migrants but also helps to prevent the local population from feeling disadvantaged.

About 19.00 we heard that at 21.30 that evening there was to be a landing of 140 migrants who were part of an original attempt of about 500, of which 250 had finished up in the sea and 34 had died/drowned. Don Carmelo and the young people of Mediterranean Hope invited us to join them at the fishermen's port, which we did. Together with the volunteers we helped to distribute hot tea, thermal covering and a smiling welcome in English and French, which was probably spoken by the migrants. Whilst accompanying them to the coach taking them to the hospitality centre outside the port boundaries, we were able to exchange a few words and to enquire from which countries they originated. We found that they came from countries in central Africa. The majority were very young; some women were pregnant and there were some men. These people were "destroyed" and had a strange fixed gaze. Some were just in underpants/shorts. All were barefooted and several were wounded or suffering pain. The coastguard boat

that had picked them up from the sea, had not loaded the cadavers/bodies which were dealt with separately and sent to other locations in Sicily. We then learned of the arrival of another landing from an Italian coastguard boat, so waited around for this to arrive.

This second group consisted mainly of French speaking young men. They were less traumatized than the first group we had met, but were also virtually nude, barefooted and hungry. For technical reasons our group of volunteers was not allowed to give them snacks or any other type of food. In this group there was a baby with its mother, but the father had been picked up by another boat. Unfortunately, in these types of situations, families get separated, although our (Italian) military are very careful to try to prevent this from happening: they were dressed and also had footwear. There was also an entire family with 3 children. This group also appeared to be on a wooden life-saving boat whereas the previous two groups had been on very fragile rubber dinghies.

Given the brevity of our visit, we were unable to visit the hospitality centre that the migrants are taken to when they first arrive. The following morning we returned to Rome and Florence.

Signed: Mara La Posta

Free translation from the Italian by Ann Chaplin, July 2017.

# **GHANA PROJECT**

## **Introduction**

In June 2017, Methodist Development and Relief Services (MDRS) was contacted by Pastor Tim Macquiban of Ponte Sant'Angelo Methodist Church in Rome, Italy, and asked to investigate the current situation and needs of the training centre for disabled persons started by Daniel Amu. The church's interest in Mr. Amu's organization came from a Ghanaian church member, Mrs. Mary Owusu, who was put in touch with MDRS, the development NGO of the Methodist Church Ghana, by the Sunyani Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Kofi Asare Bediako, who is Mrs. Owusu's cousin. Mary Kay Jackson and Emmanuel Hagan, MDRS project coordinator and project implementer respectively, met with Daniel Amu and his Disability Network secretary at the MDRS offices on June, 21, 2017 to learn more about **Damtech Electronics** and to hear their vision for their programme. This visit was followed by Emmanuel Hagan's visit to their current project work site in Kasoa the following week. The information gathered at these two meetings forms the basis of this report.

## **Background**

Damtech Electronics is a small business and training enterprise that was started by Daniel Amu in 2009. Mr. Amu is a trained electronics repair person, who also has skills in leatherworking,

basket and furniture weaving, and is a talented musician and songwriter as well.

As Mr. Amu suffered from polio as a child, his legs are withered and he must use a wheelchair for mobility. Because of his own situation, he is strongly committed to improving the lives of other disabled people, and uses his own business as a training centre for disabled people around him through an apprenticeship model. Damtech was initially located in Dome, in the northern suburbs of Accra, Ghana, where they had been allowed to use a container on the premises of the Ga East Municipal subdistrict offices. Mr. Amu had developed a thriving business there, and several other disabled persons has been trained in electronics repairs and other marketable skills. In 2016, however, the Municipal Assembly expanded the clinic on their property and Damtech lost their place of business.

### **Current Situation**

In 2017, Mr. Amu has relocated his business to Kasoa, a peri-urban bedroom community located about 28 km from downtown Accra, and near his current home. He has been able to locate commercial property where he can rent space for a container, and he has the opportunity to purchase an existing container on the site. He has developed a new network of about 20 disabled persons, and is in the process of restarting his business and training school. It is likely to take some time for Mr. Amu to redevelop his business as it is too far from his previous location to draw previous clients.

The container Mr. Amu plans to use for his workshop and school shares the plot of land with two other containers belonging to someone else, but there is still space around Damtech's container for future expansion. The current facility is small and unable to accommodate more than one wheelchair at a time.

## **Membership and Training**

Damtech runs a regular curriculum programme in electronics repairs and other livelihood skills for the members of Mr. Amu's local disability network. The current membership stands at 20 disabled persons. The training follows an apprenticeship model, where the skills are passed down from master to apprentice. When a person is well-trained, they are encouraged to start their own business, though that has proven challenging for many in the past due to the start-up costs of acquiring tools and workshop space. Eventually, Mr. Amu would like to be in a position to provide "graduation" gifts of tools to those completing his programme.

## **Current Needs**

Because of the interruption of his business, the expense of acquiring space and setting up a new workshop, and the need to develop a new client base, there are a number of financial needs that Mr. Amu has expressed. The space where the workshop is located must be rented. While Damtech is currently paying a daily rent, it will be cheaper and more cost

effective if they can pay for one or more years of rent in advance (five years would be typical for a business in Ghana). This will give them certainty regarding their location and allow them to invest in needed improvements to the property. They also need to purchase the container which is being used for their workshop and expand it to better accommodate wheelchairs. Finally, there is no handicapped accessible toilet facility nearby for Damtech's employees to use.

These costs in Ghana cedis are itemized below, along with the current Euro equivalent (1.00 EUR = ~5.00 GHS, July 2017):

Land rent ¢ 532.00 per year or ¢2,660.00 for 5 years\*

Purchase of office container ¢4,000.00

Toilet facilities ¢4,410.00

Architectural Fee ¢2,000.00 (for workspace expansion)

Expansion costs to be determined\*\*

TOTAL, GHS ¢10,942.00 up to ¢13,070.00 TOTAL, EUR

€2,200.00 to €2,650.00

\*It is likely that the 5-year rent cost can be negotiated down if 5 years is paid at one time up front.

\*\*Expansion costs will be determined once an architect has been able to work with Damtech to determine the space requirements and desired features.

## **Future Plans**

While the needs presented in this report will stabilize Damtech and allow the organization to re-establish itself in the new location, they do have additional dreams for the future:

- Means to provide tools or start-up loans to assist graduates in establishing their own businesses once the skills are mastered.
- Introduction of training in other vocational skills, such as cloth designing, shoe making, and hair dressing to help expand the business and provide more opportunity for others to develop their talents and interests.
- A handicap-accessible vehicle to transport members to and from the work site as access to commercial/public transport is an ongoing challenge.
- Organization of regular evangelism and discipleship programmes to reach out to the public and to disciple those in the training programme.

***If there any further gifts towards the project, please see Pastor Tim or Marcello Marinelli. The Church has sent an initial grant of 2.000 euros.***

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

Marking the end of Reformation Year 500 there are a number of events which are listed in detail on the poster at the back of the church.

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September at 20.30: Concert at Piazza Cavour

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September at 16.00: Reformation walkabout

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October at 18.00: lecture at the Faculty

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October at 19.30: A meal with Luther at Via Firenze

***Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October starting at 10.00: A Day of Celebrating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation at the Waldensian Church, Piazza Cavour.***

Pastor Tim is returning to the UK that weekend to give a lecture in Cambridge and to attend a special service in Westminster Abbey on 31<sup>st</sup> October. There will be a guest preacher at PSA on the Sunday.

## **SUNDAY SERVICES**

September 3<sup>rd</sup> Pastor Tim with Holy Communion

September 10<sup>th</sup> Revd. Valdo Bertalot

September 17<sup>th</sup> Informal service and prayers at 1030 (because of disruption expected because of the Via Pacis half marathon)

400pm Church Council meeting

500pm Church Tea in Schoolroom

600pm Pastor Tim leads the service

September 24<sup>th</sup> Harvest Festival All Age Worship to include the Birthday Basket