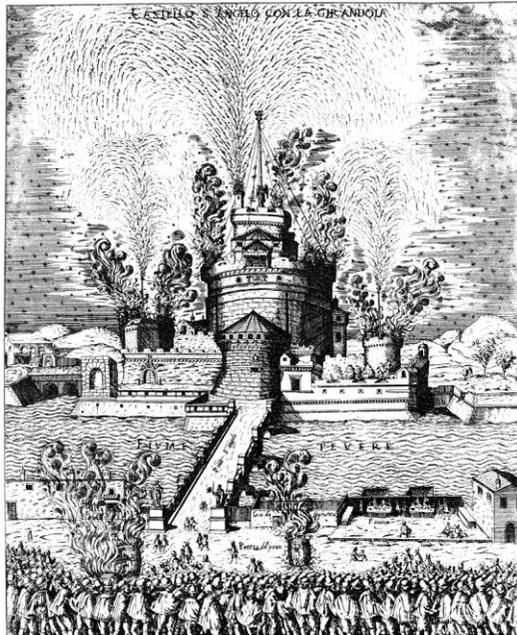


March 2018
The Bridge No. 25

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



Print of the Castel and Ponte Sant` Angelo
with fireworks from the 17th Century.

MINISTER`S LETTER

On 17th February this year bonfires burned in the valleys of North Italy. They commemorated in the valli valdesi the day on which in 1848 the Statuto Albertino was passed by the Kingdom of Sardinia, by King Carlo Alberto of the House of Savoy, granting his subjects various rights including freedom of religion. So to this day Waldensians and others in Italy celebrate this as the festa della liberta. In Rome it was 418 years to the day since Giordano Bruno was executed in Camp dei Fiori near here for heresy, a victim, like others, of the Inquisition.

Today we take for granted that we can pick up the Bible and read it in our own language, but that was not always the case. For centuries in the Western World, the Church kept a tight control of bibles and would not allow them to be published in the common languages of the people. Your only choice to read Scripture—assuming you could get a personal copy—was in Latin, which could be understood only by the clergy and the educated few. But thanks to the work of Englishman William Tyndale (1494–1536), English-speakers around the world today can readily read God’s Word in multiple translations. He died at the hands of church authorities in Antwerp for his contribution in the Reformation of spreading the word of God.

We tend to take our religious freedom and our access to the Bible for granted. And yet these are precious gifts that needs to be protected with gratitude to those who fought to achieve them in the past. We tend also to forget that there are many Christians round the world even today who live in situations where such freedoms are not guaranteed and not always respected and where bibles are still proscribed reading - in the Middle East, in Pakistan and even India, the freedom to practice one`s religion without fear is sometimes severely limited and attacks on Christians are common.

Jesus was opposed to those who sought to restrict his expression of his Father`s will by re-interpreting the scriptures held so dear by his fellow Jews. The Roman authorities were judicially to execute him and his early followers for their faithfulness to the God who called him and them to do a new thing, putting Love above the Law. But rather than being snuffed out, this new religious movement grew, because, as Tertullian in the North African city of Carthage pointed out: “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church”. Angela and I visited the amphitheatre in the ruins of that once great city where Perpetua and other faithful Christians were put to death.

Lent encourages us to follow the way of the Cross. For us it is a lesser martyrdom, of witness not in blood but in faithful discipleship as we seek to Pray, and Fast, and Give sacrificially. May we be ever mindful of those who witness under conditions of terrible persecution. Just go to the church of St. Bartholomew on Tiber Island to see the chapels full of re minders of many martyrs of the late 10th century and more recently.

Wishing you a Holy Lent
Pastor Tim



INTERN NEWS

At the start of February I attended a residential from the 5th – 7th with the other interns at Hothrope Hall, England. It was great to see everyone and a few of the interns are planning on coming to Rome for a few days!! During the few days we had some great discussion about leadership and how to be a good leader, talking about the difference between leadership and management.

It was great to celebrate Shrove Tuesday ecumenically at All Saints Rome, where Revd Dana English preached. After the service we all had lunch together and then of course it finished with an ecumenical pancake toss!



After a joyful Shrove Tuesday, eating pancakes, on Ash Wednesday I attended a service at Caravita, marking the start of Lent, using it as a time to pause and reflect and repentance.

This month I attended the first session of the Lay Centre morning series by the former Abbot Edmund Power `The indispensable gift of hope`. It was a very interesting talk and reflection on the gift of hope that God offers us in order to encourage and strengthen us. Hope enables us to live out our lives, keeping us moving and walking. Importantly, hope can enable people to overcome fears and those things that hold them back. In the evening it was great to go back to the Lay Centre to hear the Most Rev. Paul Tighe consider some Antidotes to a Throw away culture focusing on how to adapt a non-consumeristic lifestyle. This was followed by the opening of the art exhibition `When waste is not wasted` by Riekie (Henrica) van Velzen which explored the impact of how waste transforms us and the world around us. It was great to go to these two events in the evening, especially as the issue of plastics waste has been predominantly in the news and the Church of England urging Christians to give up single-use plastic products for Lent.

Overall I have had another great month here, especially experiencing a snowy Rome! Abigail

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Regarding recycling, the Church Council would like the church to use less plastic, in a bid to cut the environmental damage that single-use plastic can cause. This is because according to data from Plastics Europe, more than 300 million tonnes of plastic is produced globally each year. By 2050 we could have more plastic than fish (by weight) in the sea! Currently, the Church Council is looking at more permanent washable materials, instead of using plastics plates, cups and cutlery for pot luck lunches.



During Lent the Church of England is encouraging Christians to give up single use plastics, the `Lent Plastic Challenge`. If you haven't seen this Lent Challenge yet you can find it on the Church England website.

Living Laudato Si' in Lent 2018

Join a **Gruppod'Acquisto Solidale** – In Rome there are over 100, small and big; here is a list to find those in your area:

- <http://www.gasroma.org/la-rete/gas-aderenti/>
- **GAS Testaccio Meticcio** (<http://www.gastm.org/>), has seasonal fruit and vegetables, cheese, yogurt, eggs, pies, cold cuts, fairtrade products (coffee, tea, chocolate, spices), pasta, nuts, wine, pastry, canned vegetables, jams and marmalade, personal hygiene and cleaning products, make up, and other goodies at regular intervals. All certified organic. You order through the website between Saturday and Monday, and then drop in at Via Zabaglia 24 on Thursdays between 7.30 and 9pm to pick up the produce that's delivered there, and chat with each other.

There are two *Negozi Leggero* ("Bring your own container") shops in Rome: in via Chiabrera, 80 (Metro San Paolo) and in Via Gadames, 26/28 (Metro Libia).

Organised by **Comunità Sant' Egidio** is a big shop. Three of our Church members volunteer to sort items given (Abigail, Angela and Sonneke). It's highly recommended and better than Oxfam! You can bring anything and everything you don't need (apart from books), and buy wonderful vintage and second hand clothes, shoes, bags, scarves, hats etc. here: Citta Eco solidale, Via del Porto Fluviale 2, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 16.30 to 19.30

Zero waste rules- some guidelines for us to consider

- Refuse the things that we do not need.
- Reduce the things that we do need.
- Reuse by swapping every disposable by a reusable alternative and buying second hand, if we need to buy something.
- Recycle

Laudato Si'(the document issued by Pope Francis on the environment) online:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (hint: type "consum" into your browser's search and read those paragraphs)

It would be great to hear what you are personally doing to tackle single use plastics, which we can then share on Facebook and Twitter.

MIGRATION ISSUES: Angelita Tomaselli (our student minister) writes

In the very last years migration had an effective impact not only on the political and social level but also in the European religious scenario. Young people actively involved in the European ecumenical organisations see their call as Christians in the world as a tool focusing on the way how migration influenced churches` theology and how our society help migration social inclusion.

In 2017 the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE) has launched a three year Campaign, #WeAreEurope, to raise the awareness about the migrant crisis in Europe.

The main objective of the Campaign is to redefine the concept of migration and to make society as a place where migrants are welcome and where values of tolerance and inclusion are respected.

The activities are focused on creating constructive ideas and ways to conceive that migration is a natural phenomenon and Europe should not be a hostile place to reside for anybody.

The campaign will last from 2017 to 2019 and it will have a specific thematic focus for each year.

2017: Theology of Migration: a thematic exploring different types of migration, various reasons of migration, terms definition and political aspects. In addition, a special attention had been paid to the Christian responsibility to welcome strangers, European hospitality and perspective of youth organizations, as well as enhancing differences and mutuality in theology and spirituality.

2018: Models of Integration and development of European Identity and Values

During this year we will dedicate our activities to the history of integration in Europe, how Europe has been changed, what models of integration were observed in past and what models we want to have now highlighting the point of view of other countries outside Europe and discussion of assimilation.

2019: Role of Youth Organizations in process of integration

For the last year a special attention will be given to find positive aspects and to incite youth organization in being part of the Campaign and to be part and supporter of the sustainability of its outcomes.

Angelita Tomaselli, EYCE Chairperson

(for further information please talk to Angelita)

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Congratulations to Elena Garro who celebrated a special birthday recently. We continue to think about Carol Nei and Mario Suratos who have not been well recently.



WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY AT PSA

Our Wednesday morning Bible study group has been studying Paul's letter to the Romans since October and I believe I speak for all of us when I say it is somewhat of a challenge. It has become clear to us that Paul was absolutely brilliant as a scholar, a thinker and a writer and sometimes we do struggle to understand the points he is making. In a recent study we took the well-known verse found in Romans 8, 28 which says: **We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him, those whom he has called according to his purpose.** Some of us, including myself, had always taken this verse to mean that we can pretty much count on things going as we would like them to be as long as we love God. Yet taking the verse in its context, and by that I mean not as an isolated verse but looking at it as part of a chapter and seeing what comes before it and what comes after it, we realized that there was much more to it than that. First of all, what does "good" here mean? Does it mean, health, wealth and comfortable living in general? Certainly not the case with Paul, who was persecuted, imprisoned, stoned, shipwrecked and slandered, to name but a few of his trials. Many Christians live in poverty, many lack good health, others live under corrupt leaders and some are even persecuted in our day. We went back into the Old Testament and reflected on the life of Joseph, who was hated by his brothers and sold into slavery. We read Genesis 50, 15-21 and reflected on the outcome of all of that. As most of you will know, Joseph through being sold into slavery and subsequent pain and hardship, eventually became the king's second in charge, the governor

of the whole country and by and by was able to help his brothers who had treated him so badly and save them and many others from famine. Joseph said to his brothers: "You plotted evil against me, but God turned it into good, in order to preserve the lives of many people who are alive today because of what happened. You have nothing to fear. I will take care of you and your children." He reassured them with kind words that touched their hearts. So going back to our All things working for good, this is the Good we should be thinking about. All things may actually be what we perceive as tragedies or disasters, yet God is working through these All things to produce Good, in his own Good time. If you find Romans 8, 28 a beautiful and meaningful verse, read on another ten verses to verses 38 and 39: **For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rules or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither in the world above nor the world below – there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.** Our group members were very encouraged by looking at these verses in depth and in the correct context. If you would like to deepen your understanding of the Bible in a friendly and absolutely non-threatening environment, join us on alternate Wednesdays at 10.30 upstairs with a cup of coffee or tea for study and prayer. There is something about a small group that favours understanding and discussion, as well as sharing thoughts, opinions and prayer requests. We would love to have you join us.

Sandra Mi

CHURCH COUNCIL UPDATE

As well as considering environmental issues reported elsewhere and forthcoming events and services listed below we considered a report on property and finance. The decorated windows in the main doors have been repaired as well the windows in the classrooms. The inside door is

now closing properly, as well as the vestry door. However, work still needs to be done on the toilets.

PASTOR`S SABBATICAL

Pastor Tim will be on sabbatical from Easter Day until the end of June. A full list of those who are going to cover Sunday services will be in next month`s Bridge. Regarding the **successor to Pastor Tim** (who will be with us until summer 2019) a job description is being prepared and interviews should take place in London during the Autumn.

31 DAYS OF PRAYER FOR WOMEN`S EMPOWERMENT

Beginning 1st March the World Council of Churches is encouraging its fellowship and partners to join the Lott Carey `31 Days of Prayer for Women`s Empowerment`. The guide contains 31 days of prayer that support justice and equality for women. The prayers express hope for change and for a better future.

The guide can be found here:

<http://lottcarey.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/2018-WomensEmpowermentPrayerGuide.pdf>

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

A lord`s prayer to make you think

I cannot say `**our**` if I live only for myself and I cannot say `**Father**` if I do not endeavor each day to act like his child.

I cannot say `**who art in heaven**` if I am laying up no treasure there.

I cannot say `**hallowed be thy name**` if I am not striving for holiness and I cannot say `**Thy Kingdom come**` if I am not doing all in my power to hasten that wonderful event.

I cannot say `**thy will be done**` if I am disobedient to his word and I cannot say `**on earth as it is in heaven**` if I`ll not serve him here and now.

I cannot say `**give us this day our daily bread**` if I am dishonest or am seeking things by subterfuge.

I cannot say `**forgive us our debts**` if I harbor a grudge against anyone.

I cannot say **`lead us not into temptation`** if I deliberately place myself in its path.

I cannot say **`thine is the Kingdom`** if I do not give the King the loyalty due to him from a faithful subject.

I cannot attribute to him **`the power and the glory`** if I am seeking honor only for myself.

And I cannot say **`for ever`** if the horizon of my life is bounded completely by time.

(Author unknown)

DATES FOR THE DIARY

- March 16th Rice Bowl quiz night at the British Embassy, Porta Pia
- 29th March – Maundy Thursday service in MEOR
- 22nd April – visit of Dutch students (50)
- 29th May- day out to the Eremo at Casteletto



FORTHCOMING SUNDAY SERVICES

11th March Pastor Tim followed by pot luck lunch

18th March Visiting preacher Revd Sam Murillo from Mexico, Chair of the Young Adults Committee of the World Methodist Council (who will be in Rome for the pre-consultation for the Pope's Synod on the Family). On this occasion the baby of a Mexican family will be baptized.

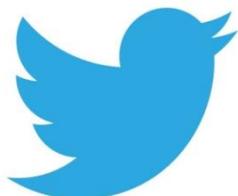
25th March Pastor Tim, All Age worship with palms and birthday basket, followed by short Church Council meeting



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

07 Jan.	P 353, 95	E 498, 00		TTL. 851,95
14 Jan.	P 148, 31	E 353, 00		TTL. 501, 31
21 Jan.	P 102, 43	E 450, 00		TTL. 552, 43
28 Jan.	P 74, 65	E 463, 00	BB 90, 00	TTL. 627, 65
TOTAL	P 679, 34	E 463, 00		TTL. 2,533, 34

4 Feb.	P 140, 11	E 528, 00		TTL. 668, 11
11 Feb.	P 59, 01	E 390, 00		TTL. 449, 01
18 Feb.	P 66, 20	E 334, 00		TTL. 400, 20
25 Feb.	P 107, 36	E 226, 00	BB 213, 00	TTL. 546, 36
TOTAL	P 372, 68	E 1478, 00		TTL. 2, 063, 68



Follow Ponte Sant` Angelo on Twitter @MethodistRome
and
Follow MEOR on Twitter @methodist_rome



Like Ponte Sant` Angelo Methodist Church in Rome
Facebook page