

July/August 2018

The Bridge No. 28

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



MINISTER`S LETTER

Looking back, as we increasingly do as we get older, I realise how important anniversaries have been as milestones in our own personal stories or in the stories of the communities to which we belong. Just to reflect in our nearly four years here in Rome, there have been so many anniversaries we have marked:

- 25 years since we stayed the summer at PSA, our 40th wedding anniversary and significant birthdays marking new thresholds
- 60 years since the formation of the English-speaking congregation here at PSA, 100 years since the death of the founder of Wesleyan Methodist missions in Italy by Henry James Piggott
- 50 years since the ending of the Second Vatican Council and the inauguration of new ecumenical relations between Catholic and Protestant churches, the formation of the Anglican Centre and the beginning of over 50 years of Methodist-Catholic International Dialogue.
- 200 years of Lutheranism and Anglicanism here in Rome , marked by the visits of Pope Francis to the Lutheran Church and All Saints, as well as the Waldensian Church in Turin

In 2014 we began a series of commemorations of the centenary of the First World War with all its painful memories. We shall end the remembrances on Armistice Day 11th November when we are planning a special event of words and at All Saints in the evening. In these times of trouble we continue to pray for peace on the Korean Peninsula. The President of the World Methodist Council, Dr J C Park, invited the WMC to hold its next meeting there this month from 10th to 17th. I shall be attending as Chair of its Ecumenical Relationships Committee, reporting on the ways Christians are

committed to seek that unity which Christ himself commanded *Ut Unum Sint*. Unless we can reconcile our ancient divisions and disagreements, how will the world believe, let alone act on the desire for peace and reconciliation.

Gandhi, the great Indian exponent of a non-violent approach to change, wrote these words about those who believe in peace:

Your beliefs become your thoughts, Your thoughts become your words,
Your words become your actions, Your actions become your habits,
Your habits become your values, Your values become your destiny.

THE FUTURE DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU DO TODAY.

So, in looking back and remembering important events in the past, let us not forget the challenge of making real for today and for the future God`s call to share his love and work for peace and justice in his world.

Pastor Tim

***Peter and Susan Howdle
visiting President Mirella
Manocchio, with Henry
Piggott and John Wesley
looking on***



INTERN NEWS

May and June have both been busy months with MEOR hosting two courses, a Photography and Spirituality Course and an Ecumenical Course. An enjoyable event at the end of May was on Saturday 26th May. Bible study groups were invited to reflect together at `The eremo`. It was a lovely afternoon where I shared what the Young Adults group have been doing and we all heard about what the different Bible study groups have been studying too. It was a wonderful time spent together praying, singing and reflecting.

On 29th May myself, Tim and Angela attended the Launch of the Australia Catalogue at the Vatican Museums. The catalogue contains Australia's indigenous culture and history. The launch was significant, being held on Reconciliation Week recognising Australia's Indigenous culture. The ceremony was followed by a didgeridoo performance. It was a great event learning about and showcasing the indigenous peoples` rich and diverse cultures.

At the very beginning of June I flew to England for an intern residential. The theme of the residential was `ethics`. We looked at the different approaches to ethics and schools of thought. A session that I thought was very interesting (probably because I am a geographer) was ethics and food. David Pinko, from the Food Ethics Council spoke to us about food ethics and we discussed where we wanted to be in the future eg Fair Trade, animal welfare, healthy eating and the protection of the natural environment. Guest speaker Elizabeth Clark then linked this to bible passages around creation, justice, land and food. A very interesting topic discussed and debated during a session on the residential was euthanasia – what happens to us when we are faced with this kind of decision? It

has been widely publicised in the media and through films such as Million Dollar Baby and a Short Stay in Switzerland. It was a very interesting debate as legalising euthanasia divides many. Just recently on 29th May Portugal`s parliament rejected proposals to make euthanasia legal in the country. It is now in detailed debate in society with patient requested euthanasia legal in Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Canada and Colombia for example. The subject of human suffering surrounds us every day.

Whilst being in England I also had the chance to see Anna, Lindsay`s daughter who is doing a PhD in London. It was lovely to have a catch up and here all about the work that she is doing and about her time in Mexico.

Abigail

ELIJAH AND ELISHA SERMON FOR EREMO (26th May)

2 Kings 2:13 *“He picked up the mantle that had fallen from Elijah”*

Here we are at the end of the octave of prayer for “Thy Kingdom come, having celebrated Pentecost and looking forward to Trinity Sunday tomorrow. We have noted various saints and witness down the ages this week

- Cyril and Methodius the apostles to the Slavs centuries ago and patron saints of Europe, commemorated in the church here in Rome of San Clemente
- John and Charles Wesley, the same day on Thursday, remembering their conversions at Aldersgate this week in 1738, giving birth to the Methodist movement

- Yesterday, The Venerable Bede, the great church historian of the early centuries of Christian history in Britain
- And today St. Philip Neri, with a costly mission to the poor of Rome in the heart of the city with his oratory at Chiesa Nuova

And so we read this ancient story of the old and the young prophet. According to the OT story, Elijah did not die a physical death but was taken straight up into Heaven. The young Elisha sees Elijah depart, and then symbolically picks up the cloak of his departing guide and mentor.

He does so in part as a tribute to him, but also as a token of his determination

to carry on where the other had left off – and of course the story has given us an addition to our language - “to take on someone’s mantle” means precisely to continue with the work they started.

Towards the end of another church year, it is worth reflecting on Elisha’s position. In the morning he was just a disciple, a learner and a pupil accompanying old Elijah to the muddy banks of the swirling Jordan, watching on as the old man works yet one more miracle and parts the Jordan like Joshua of old.

But now at the end of the day we find Elisha suddenly alone. He is no longer the disciple; his guide and mentor is gone, and suddenly now he must head back to the swirling muddy waters of Jordan knowing that this time it is he, Elisha, “the new-fledged disciple, suddenly come of age” who must do the miracle with Elijah’s mantle in his hand.

And so today we might well look back where we have come from, on our particular Christian pilgrimages, and give thanks for our mentors and guides and teachers – be they of many years gone by at school or college or university or through the years in the various churches we have attended. .

And then might we look forward to the new challenges, responsibilities and opportunities opening up in the future – as we too stand by our Jordan with the mantle of our forebears gripped tight in our hand.

Mozart's Coronation Mass was written for the coronation of Francis II as Holy Roman Emperor in 1792, when the music was first played. At such an event, a newly crowned King or Queen is vested in all the fine regalia of office – and I wonder what sort of robes they placed on the Holy Roman Emperor Francis II as Mozart's music played? I guess it would have included a mantle, a robe richly woven with threads of silk and gold – such is the mantle of Kingship. So too for our British Queen when 65 years ago she was crowned in Westminster Abbey this coming week. Some of you may have seen the scene on Netflix in *The Crown*.

And maybe sometimes we too may take up such a mantle as this – and maybe those who go off to study at College or University aspire precisely to such worldly wisdom and greatness. But sometimes the mantle we are given is very different and very surprising.

Father Damien worked with the lepers of the American island of Hawaii for 25 years before contracting leprosy himself. In the spring of 1889 Damien was on his death bed, dying of leprosy. One of his followers asked for his coat - that he might have the mantle of Fr Damien. Damien replied - you don't want my coat - it is full of

leprosy - Yes said the follower I do - for I commit myself to follow your work , even if it takes me to my grave before Easter.

This is the mantle we are sometimes given. As the Methodist covenant service says, we are called to many different tasks. Some of them we might think we have worked out in advance. In our anticipated career projection. In all the money we hope to make. In the relationships we hope will come to fruition. But if we are called to pick up the mantle of suffering , you will be taking up the mantle of the King of Kings whose work will always take us ultimately to the 'cross, the grave, the skies!' as Charles Wesley reminds us in his great Easter hymn.

And it is the mantle of God's servant which we should seek – not the robes of earthly glory. As we approach the 21st anniversary of her death this summer, think of Princess Diana – and those scenes of her visiting hospices and hugging AIDS patients, someone who (for all her tortured complexity) could perhaps remind us of Fr Damien in her care for the marginalized and the lost.

Here was someone who had taken up the mantle – indeed the Versace gown – of royalty – but who could choose in those moments to take up rather the garments of compassion. We can all remember watching TV around the time of Diana's funeral and seeing the scenes of people late into the night milling around by the gates of her family home, bringing flowers, lighting candles in the cold night air. And as one candle reached the end of its life with a spluttering flame - someone came with a new candle and lit it from the expiring one.

- As one life ends - we are called to pick up the mantle which falls.

- As one candle dies -we are called to light our own candle from it.

You may remember Elton John at Diana's Funeral - you may have seen him last weekend at the latest British royal wedding (I guess he cuts as unlikely a figure as did Mozart in his day as a court musician) – Elton John singing “Candle in the Wind” - and perhaps we feel like that – a candle in the wind - frail and flawed and tentative in the midst of the gusts of the world and the uncertainties of the global financial markets with their effect on our own economic wellbeing. But God is with us as we step out in faith with him.

This is what it means to be part of God's people, across the ages. We may not always feel worthy or capable to be a part of such an apostolic succession, the line of the faithful witnesses down the ages, of belonging to a group of believers which has a long and proud tradition in which many women and men have made significant contributions to the life of church and society, but it is our destiny.

Never forget - Young Elisha was given a mantle – but much much more – “He saw a great vision of the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof – and realised that he was compassed about by a fiery and celestial cloud of witnesses”. And he received double the power of the spirit -without which he could have done nothing.

Our candle may flicker; but the wind is not just the chill north wind of the world's ills - It is the wind of the Spirit fanning the flame. We need to pray for the double blessing at this time of Pentecost as we have remembered the ascent of Jesus and the descent of the Spirit.

So today as each of us in our own way looks to what the future may hold,

- let us continue to give honour to the saints and witnesses who have gone before us – and recognise that their work will only continue if we take it forward.
- let us pick up a candle and light it, and trust God to fan the flames with the wind his Spirit
- let us pick up their mantle of the prophets, and stride on to Jordan with Elijah's mantle in our hands.

So may we do God's will in this world and – when finally God vouchsafes us that final passage over Jordan to the land above - may we in our turn leave God's mantle on the shore that in the power of the Spirit it may be taken up by others - some yet unborn- that God's great work may yet go on.

Pastor Tim

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

We were sorry to hear of the sudden illness of Steve, Lindsay's husband. At the time of publication, he has had brain surgery and is out of intensive care. He is making a slow but steady recovery. Lindsay thanks all at PSA for their support and prayers at this difficult time.

We have been sorry to say goodbye to a number of people who have left Rome, including two of our young adults, Allison Beaty and Claire Powell. We miss having Roland Vergano with us too.

1918-2018 Remembrance 100:100 days of prayer and peacemaking

The Methodist Church has been involved with many other partners under the umbrella of ecumenical organization HOPE, in developing a programme of activities and resources collectively called 'Remembrance 100' - website www.remembrance100.co.uk

Together we are encouraging 100 days of prayer and peacemaking activity, from 4 August (the anniversary of the start of the war in 1914) to 11 November (Armistice Day).



SCHOOL OF ITALIAN AT PSA FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

As you know, the Consulta in Rome of the Federation of Italian Evangelical Churches runs several projects under the 8xmille tax option scheme and annual contributions from member churches. The biggest of these is the "Progetto Lavoro" work integration project. The two part time social workers give advice on documentation, professional courses, how to present job applications, and general guidance - and the desk is open in the large room on the ground floor at Via Firenze 38 on Wednesday mornings from 9.30. They naturally recommend migrants and refugees recently arrived in Italy to learn some Italian for a start! The school at Ponte Sant'Angelo which has been running for many years is staffed by a number of retired Italian teachers with great experience and interest; it provides not only a start in integration, but also an opportunity for migrants to meet others in a similar situation and make friends. From October to May classes are held on Mon/Tues/Wed afternoons from 3-5pm in two or three grades, and there is also a summer class which this year will run from 18 June to 11 July, same days and time. PSA provides the accommodation in our community rooms free of charge as our contribution to the project, and this is most gratefully acknowledged.

I went along to the end of session gathering on 16 May, where some 25 volunteer teachers and Consulta supporters each gave a brief resume of their role and experience. (Marius Fortman from Ponte Sant' Angelo helps with the reception group at Via Firenze on

Wednesday mornings and was also present). Annapaola Comba, the lead teacher, said that they have registered some 110 students over the year, though general daily attendance is in the region of 30/35 students, as some come and go and all are living in difficult circumstances. I was much impressed by the positivity and enthusiasm of everyone present at the gathering, and their satisfaction with the warm response they receive from the students. There are several younger teachers now also - Ilaria Valenzi will be leading the summer course, and it has been possible this year to help, on an individual basis, one or two vulnerable cases and two students who will be taking State exams in June. **Jenny**

FINDING GOD THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS

Every day, it is estimated, about 1.8 billion digital photos are uploaded onto social media sites like Facebook and Instagram. Many millions more are taken on phones and cameras and never shared. What does this super-abundance of images tell us about our world and ourselves, and can we ever catch a glimpse of God in them?

This is one of the challenges that I was encouraged to ponder during my recent visit to Rome, as part of the Photography and Spirituality Study Tour. This small group, which happened to be composed largely of Methodist ministers, was ably led by Rev'd Dr Philip Richter. Philip is a keen and very talented amateur photographer (and also a Methodist minister), who has reflected extensively on the subject of the spirituality of photography, most recently in his 2017 book *Spirituality in Photography: Taking pictures with deeper vision*. He proved to be an excellent and able guide to the Eternal City and an inspiring speaker.

We spent five days in the city, staying at the Pont Sant' Angelo, and were delighted to join in morning worship at the Methodist Church. Each morning and evening, along with our prayers, Philip led a short session about a topic related to photography and spirituality. For

example, how we frame our photos and our lives – what do we exclude and include? – and how our images might be used to tell the story of our faith. We would then venture forth into the hustle and bustle of Rome with our cameras, trying to capture something of its infinite splendour and variety.

We visited some of the less hectic parts of the city and I greatly enjoyed discovering some new corners of Rome. Ostia Antica and the Botanical Gardens were among my favourite places, along with the Protestant Cemetery. We were the last tourists in St Peter's Square one night and even managed to be up at 6:00 am the following day to be the first in the Basilica. We were rewarded with some fantastic shots. A great bonus for some of our number was the conclusion of the Giro d'Italia, which coincided with our visit, but I decided to seek the peace of the Via Appia instead!

All of us gained an enormous amount from the tour. We undoubtedly became better photographers, I think, but more importantly we became more reflective ones too, I hope. We all went away encouraged to consider how we could use our cameras to experience God more deeply, and to share the story of our faith with others. I do hope that I shall be able to return to take more photos in Rome soon! **Rev'd Geoffrey Farrar**



(Geoffrey is currently minister of three Methodist churches in west London, in the Putney area. He was student minister at Wesley Methodist Church Cambridge when Pastor Tim was there.)

'Bamboo Plantation', Orto Botanico - © Philip Richter

NEWS FROM JIM PAPANDREA (a regular visitor with his American group to worship with us at PSA).

At the 161st Commencement of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, it was announced that I have been promoted to full professor. My new official title is Professor of Church History and Historical Theology. I'm grateful for all the students, colleagues, and administrators over the years, who have supported me and provided inspiration and encouragement. I am truly in a new phase of my career, and excited to see what it will bring.

Last month, I was honoured by the Springtime of Faith Foundation, an ecumenical organization that encourages and facilitates relationships and dialogue across church & denominational boundaries. On April 28th, at the foundation's annual Unity conference in Nashville, I was named 2018 Springtime Ambassador, for my work in ecumenism, especially in my teaching and leading tours of Rome. In my acceptance speech, I said, "My life's journey has been a crooked path, but we can't regret the journey - it makes us who we are. And one by-product of my journey is that it has made me bi-lingual, able to speak both Catholic and Protestant. And some of the greatest joys of my career have been those times when I've been asked to be a translator between the two, participating in the building of bridges." At the foundation's annual Rome conference last November, I was honoured to give one of the keynote speeches, presenting the early Church fathers as a foundation for ecumenical dialogue today.



DATES FOR THE DIARY

8th July as part of the morning service we shall be holding the **General Church meeting** at which we shall receive reports from the Minister, Church Secretary and Treasurer and elect members of the Church Council for the next year. Please make a special effort to come to this service and to stay on for our Pot Luck Lunch.



FORTHCOMING SUNDAY SERVICES

- 1st July** **Pastor Tim and Communion, followed by short Church Council**
- 8th July** **Pastor Tim to include General Church meeting**
- 15th July** **Edoardo Fanfini (from All Saints)**
- 22nd July** **Pastor Tim**
- 29th July** **Pastor Tim to include the birthday basket**
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- 5th August** **Pastor Tim to include Communion and farewell to Abigail Ratcliffe**
- 12th August** **Revd Tom Stuckey**
- 19th August** **Revd Tom Stuckey**
- 26th August** **To be arranged**
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- 2nd Sept** **Pastor Tim with Communion: Gillian Kingston, Vice President of the World Methodist Council to preach**

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

06 May	P 104, 07	E 408, 00		TTL. 512, 07
13 May	P 116, 11	E 195, 00		TTL. 311, 11
20 May	P 104, 25	E 203, 00		TTL. 307, 00
27 May	P 104, 64	E 310, 00	BB 157, 20	TTL. 571, 84
TTL.	P 429, 07	E 1,116		TTL. 1702, 27

03 June	P 132, 72	E 730, 00		TTL. 862, 75
10 June	P 142, 82	E 279, 00		TTL. 421,82
17 June	P 73, 54	E 253, 00		TTL. 326, 54

Take my silver and my gold,

Not a mite would I withhold;

Take my intellect, and use

Every power as thou shalt choose.

(Frances Ridley Havergal)

