

February 2017

The Bridge No. 14

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



Minister's letter

Dear Friends,

As I write this we have marked at Ponte Sant`Angelo the day in which the Roman Catholic Church has remembered the needs of refugees and migrants in the world (15th January). It was a day when over 100 more migrants lost their lives 30 miles out of Libya sailing towards Lampedusa and the possibility of a new life in Europe. They add to the number of over 5,000 others who last year lost their lives, in the costliest year so far in the terrible story of suffering.

Soon after the publication of this edition of *The Bridge*, the Community of Sant`Egidio will celebrate the 49th anniversary of their foundation. They are partners with Mediterranean Hope and the FCIEI and Tavola Valdese in one aspect of its work, in setting up humanitarian corridors to enable safe and approved passage of refugees into Italy. This scheme already operates from Morocco and the Lebanon. Now it is to be extended to Ethiopia with the agreement of governments to allow 500 refugees to settle in Italy, with help from Mediterranean Hope and the Community of Sant`Egidio in the resettlement programme. As well as the work done in Lampedusa, in Sicily at Scicli and elsewhere, and in mainland Italy in our towns and cities, these are all evidence of a positive Christian response to human need which exemplifies the Matthew 25 text "I was naked and you clothed me". Jesus reached out to the poor and marginalised and offered a radical hospitality which offended the religious people of his day and still embarrasses us who try to follow his example.

Articles which follow tell some of the ways in which we seek to meet this need. Lucy will tell of some of her work at St. Paul`s Refugee Centre. We report on the courses that the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome is offering this year, one of which is to be led by the Revd. Inderjit Bhogal, himself a refugee to Britain after the expulsion

of Asians from Uganda, and the first non-White President of the Methodist Conference. His work on Radical Hospitality will form the basis of a course which will help us relate to the variety of work here in Rome. And to those who ask, what is that Cross which lies on the table of our Church, there is a copy of the citation reminding us of the significance of our Lampedusa Cross.

As we finish another Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, sharing in worship together and learning from each others` different traditions, we find that our unity is best expressed in our shared mission, to demonstrate God`s love together in an ecumenism of social action. That we can do practically by supporting the Rice Bowl project of Churches Together in Rome. To help the two projects chosen, a continuation of support for the refugee camp outside **Aleppo, Syria**, and to help street children in **Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**. We ask if you have an as to how we can raise 1,000 euros from this community to support these between now and Easter. Can you commit yourself to fast once a week and put aside the proceeds to give to our appeal? In doing so we, who are nurtured by the Word of God and the presence of Christ, will be able to demonstrate our response to the challenge of Jesus: "I was hungry and you fed me".

May we prepare to enter Lent in a spirit of following his way of radical hospitality and generous giving for the sake of the Kingdom.

Pastor Tim

The Lampedusa Cross

Lampedusa crosses are made by Francesco Tuccio, an Italian carpenter, from the wreckage of boats washed up on the shores of the Italian island of Lampedusa, located in the Mediterranean Sea close to the shores of Africa. This is the place many refugees fleeing their countries have tried to reach, often in flimsy and overcrowded boats, many drowning on the way. The island is also the first port to which many of those rescued from the sea are brought. The Cross is a

visible reminder of the terrible suffering of these people, in life and in death. One of the crosses has been given to Pope Francis, who bore it in the Good Friday procession of 2016. Another graces the altar in the chapel of the Anglican Centre in Rome. Lampedusa crosses were also presented to each of the Catholic and Anglican bishop pairs participating in the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) Summit held in Canterbury and Rome in October 2016, as a sign of the plight of refugees all over the world, and of the call to the church to respond with the death defying compassion of Christ.

This cross is a gift from the Anglican Centre in Rome to the Methodist Centre at Ponte Sant'Angelo to recognize the strong bonds of affection between the Anglican Centre and the ministry of the Methodist Centre. The cross signifies our mutual desire to continue to grow in a deeper communion and partnership in mission together.



Intern Report

I can't quite believe that I've been here for 5 months already! Time has gone quickly, but I think that is a good sign! These past couple of months have been busy for me in different senses – December was full of various Christmas activities, but it was nice to be back at home in Scotland for a couple of weeks to rest and celebrate with family! January has been busy getting back into the swing of things, and of course the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has meant it has also been a busy couple of weeks, but I'm enjoying being back in the city!

The Young Adults group took a break over the holidays, and there have been a few changes in timings due to people not being able to come often, but I am hopeful that the new schedule will prove better for us all. We will now meet on **every second Tuesday at 6.30pm for one hour**, for a bible study and to share some tea and coffee. We are still working our way through Ephesians.

I am also thrilled to be able to tell you that I have started teaching English to refugees at St Paul's Refugee Centre. I teach twice a week and so far I am really enjoying it. I teach very basic literacy and conversation to students who don't have any English at all, and then the idea is that after some lessons with myself and the other literacy teachers, these students will be able to move on to the bigger English class. It has been a joy to work at the centre and to get to know some of the refugees, as well as other volunteers working there.

As always, if you'd like to know more about what I do, or have any ideas of things we can be doing at PSA or in MEOR, then feel free to chat to me or email!

Lucy

Fighting Hunger in Zimbabwe: From Impossible Choices to a Full Future

By Eddie Rowe, World Food Programme Zimbabwe Representative and Country Director

I joined the World Food Programme Zimbabwe in late 2015. As Country Director of the largest organization fighting hunger worldwide, I had some big shoes to fill: across rural Zimbabwe dry weather in 2015/2016, triggered by one of the worst El Nino's in recent history, destroyed harvests and dried wells. The drought has decimated millions of livelihoods dependent on rain-fed agriculture, eroding incomes and the capacity of Zimbabweans to feed themselves. Now, food insecurity is further tightening its grip as Southern Africa enters the peak of hunger season, the period before the next harvest in March/April when food stocks become increasingly depleted.

We have all heard the food insecurity statistics before, but sometimes it is hard for us to comprehend them. Hunger in Zimbabwe is real and the difficult decisions facing Zimbabwe's hungry people, which force many to sacrifice tomorrow for today by, for instance, switching from nutritious food to cheaper staples that can bring permanent damage, especially for children under the age of two, leaving them vulnerable to disease and forever robbing them of their mental and physical potential.

My years of experience at the World Food Programme have taught me that hunger is a complicated enemy. It has many faces. And when a problem is complicated, the solution is never easy. Hunger needs multifaceted solutions to eradicate it, and to keep its scourge at bay. My staff and I understand that while treating hunger's immediate symptoms during a drought through the provision of unconditional assistance is lifesaving, ethical and necessary, it is not enough. When

dealing with hunger we need to think long-term, beyond this drought or flood and the next, and invest in people's well-being for years to come.

That's why at WFP we also treat the root causes of hunger, such as chronic poverty and vulnerability, and help communities **build their resilience** to better absorb the shocks and stressors that will surely hit in the future, without having to make difficult decisions. If a household is resilient, a shock doesn't need to escalate into a food or nutrition crisis, and in order to cope, people won't need take their kids out of school, reduce their food intake or sell their most valued assets that would compromise the future of their children, and that of their country as a whole.

With the support of its partners and generous donors, the World Food Programme in Zimbabwe is helping people move out of a dynamic where impossible decisions are the norm to build future where every girl, boy, woman and man has enough food and nutrition to live a full and meaningful life. No one deserves any less than this.

As 4.1 million people join the ranks of the food insecure in Zimbabwe, WFP is providing much needed assistance under its El Nino Response activities. Here are some of our areas of work:

- **Addressing immediate needs:** through its Lean Season Assistance Programme, WFP provides unconditional emergency assistance, in the form of both cash and food, to help cover the emergency needs of the most vulnerable people in the most drought-affected districts. Where possible, cash is provided as this gives people more choice, while also supporting local markets.
- **Emergency School Feeding:** As part of its Lean Season Assistance, WFP is also implementing The Emergency School

Feeding Programme (ESFP) which provides a daily hot meal of fortified corn soya blend to 76,612 children in Binga, Mbire and Zvishavane districts.

- **Productive Assets Creation (PAC):** Building resilience before, during and after disasters is a pre-requisite for WFP to achieve its bold goal of achieving food security and adequate nutrition for all people by 2030, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. From April to November, in exchange for food, WFP and partners are helping vulnerable people rehabilitate and create community assets. These assets include weir dams, dip tanks, nutritious gardens, fish ponds and orchards, among others. Through PAC, WFP is therefore implementing a two-fold approach to help people meet immediate food needs while also building their resilience to future shocks over time, so that food and nutrition security is no longer an elusive goal.
- **Health and Nutrition:** Through clinics, WFP is providing Moderate Acute Malnutrition Treatment to children under five in 22 districts with GAM rates above 5%. We are also working to prevent stunting.
- **Refugees:** Together with UNHCR, WFP is providing assistance and livelihood opportunities to refugees from the Great Lakes (Burundi, DRC and Rwanda), Eritrea and Mozambique residing in Tongogara Camp.
- **Drought-tolerant seeds:** Through a partnership with FAO and the Government, WFP is supporting 5,389 smallholder farmers in Mudzi and Rushinga districts through the production and marketing of drought tolerant small grains, in order to strengthen their resilience. In December, 93 percent of the planned 646 hectares were planted.

Our new Country Strategic Plan will come into force in April 2016. It is part of a broader organizational transformation that seeks to increase our impact and transparency. One of the key focus areas in Zimbabwe will be to help build the necessary social and economic

systems (social protection, functional markets) and capacitating national institutions to help cut the roots of hunger.



Posekai (pictured), a woman who participated in our PAC programme helping build an irrigation scheme in drought-ravaged Malikango, told me: ‘When I look at my grandchildren now, I am able to sleep peacefully in knowing I can feed them and send them to school.’ There is no greater gift we can give parents and grandparents than that of resting in the assurance that their children are well fed, taken care of, and able to meet their full potential. The future begins with food, and we are here in Zimbabwe to help build it.

The task at hand is a bold and ambitious one and we cannot do it alone. Prayer is God’s weakness and man’s strength. We ask that you keep us in yours.

Your kind contributions will also help carry our work further, to the most remote places, leaving no one behind. We hope to be able to count on your support.



Eddie Rowe, WFP Zimbabwe Country Director and Ambassadors of Finland and Australia to Zimbabwe talk with beneficiaries at a WFP LSA distribution site in Chingami, November 2016.

Giornata Mondiale di Preghiera - World Day of Prayer Friday 3 March 2017

The Italian Federation of Evangelical Churches will hold the annual service at the Italian Methodist Church on the corner of Via Firenze/Via XX Settembre at 18.00 hrs on Friday, 3 March 2017.

The service this year has been prepared by the women of the Philippines, and the Filipino community at Via Firenze will therefore be taking an active role. The text this year is based on Matthew 20 vv 1-16. The collection at the service will be donated to a Scuola materna project in the Mabolo area of Cebu city in the Philippines. Whilst we do understand that many of the Ponte Sant'Angelo Filipinos will be working on the Friday afternoon, we hope that some of you will be able to come along, as well of course as other members of PSA community. For further information, please speak to Angela Macquiban or Jenny Smith.

Jenny Smith

SERVICES AT PSA FOR 2017

5th February – Pastor Eric Noffke (Facolta Valdese) leading a communion service

12th February – Pastor Tim with service of thanksgiving for Sofia followed by Church Council

19th February – Pastor Tim with members of the Methodist Theological Schools in Europe conference present. Revd Sam McBratney to preach. Lunch to follow.

26th February – Pastor Tim

5th March – Pastor Tim leading Holy Communion

12th March – Pastor Tim followed by Pot Luck Lunch

THE CALL TO HOLINESS

For the Sundays in February, we are taking as the theme ‘**The Call to Holiness**’. This was the title of the report presented by the Ecumenical Relationships committee of the World Methodist Council, as a result of the 5 years work of the Methodist Roman Catholic International Commission. A full copy of the report can be found on the World Methodist Council Website under Resources/Ecumenical Dialogue.

The themes to be followed will be Enabling Grace (5th), Justifying Grace (12th), Sanctifying Grace (19th), Mary as a model for Holiness (26th).

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS:

We were pleased to be able to celebrate birthdays of some of our young people –Luke Twomlow, Chiara Livorati, and Sofia Suratos. Nadia celebrates hers very soon. We shall have a service of thanksgiving for Sofia on the 12th of February. Other older people have had birthdays recently, but don’t necessarily want it publicised!

We were sorry to learn that Emmy Traggono has not been well recently. We send our greetings to her and to all others who have been unwell in the recent cold weather.

CHURCH COUNCIL (15.01.17)

The council met on the 15th of January, along with three observers from the Methodist Circuit. In matters arising, Pastor Tim apologized for his inability to return from London in time for the All-Age Service on the 18th, and the Council expressed appreciation for the way Angela, Lucy and the intern Sam, with us for a few weeks from the United States, had taken the service. The Christmas Eve service with friends from Via XX Settembre went well and 150 euros were collected for the Italian Bible Society.

In the Pastoral and Mission discussion, Sandra Mi appealed for more volunteers to teach Sunday School (**please talk to her if you would be willing to help**), and Lucy advised that there are four volunteers willing to serve in crèche where parents can leave smaller children during the service (**please do make use of this service**).

Discussing financial and property matters, the Council agreed that it would be a good idea to try and sell 2 of the 3 pianos that PSA own, and to try to purchase a baby grand piano instead, as we have lost the use of the grand piano that used to be in the sanctuary. We also discussed the Ghana Project, as there are currently some difficulties in terms of land available for the container. Pastor Tim is going to approach 2 Bishops known to Mary to see if they can help. It was agreed that by the end of April, a final decision needs to be taken on the opportunity of pursuing this project.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

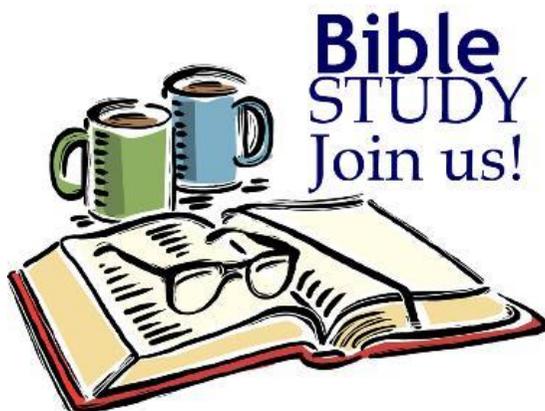
Introduction to Methodism Course

Having been a member of the Methodist Church for almost 40 years, I felt it was about time to take advantage of this opportunity to participate in the course offered by Pastor Tim. We were with 4-6 people coming from different denominations, which created special dynamics in the group, as we all commented on the 12 defining features of Methodism and the four focuses of the Church from our own background. It was no surprise, that the four foci are not so much different in any of the churches we are coming from: Worship and Sacraments, Learning and Caring, Service to the poor and needy, and the Struggle for Peace and Justice are all at the basis of Christianity. What was so stimulating in the course, besides learning a lot more about the basic elements of our church, which were so clearly explained by Pastor Tim, that we also had the opportunity to reflect on what this all meant for our personal life. How could you do something for the poor and needy, if you are working 10 hours a day?

Well it goes too far to elaborate on all that was taught and discussed these eight hours. There is a booklet “Called by Name”, being a member in the Methodist Church, which deals with these issues. It could be ordered through Lucy. We ended the course with a Potluck lunch with Angela present, when we thanked Pastor Tim for the enthusiastic, thoughtful and open way in which he had conducted the course.

Marius de Gaay Fortman

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. The group has finished for 2016, but will meet again in January.

Alessia and Federico run a home group in Via del Casaleto 63 (buzz Montelli Milani). They will meet on February 4th and 18th, March 4th and 18th, April 1st and 22nd, and May 6th and 20th. For more

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

Young Adults Group

The Young Adults Group will now meet at the new time of 6.30pm every second Tuesday to continue their study in Ephesians over some tea and coffee. The change was made in order to accommodate those who have to travel a long way to get to Ponte Sant'Angelo. They will meet next on the 7th of February in MEOR. If you would like more information or are interested in coming, please speak to Lucy or email her on lucy.meorome@gmail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUMMER COURSES

In the summer months, we are hosting 3 courses in the Methodist Ecumenical Office. These are:

Radical Hospitality (25th May – 1st June) for people who would be interested in experiencing engagement with the theme in the context of a church set in a multicultural city with the contemporary challenge of migration and hospitality for the stranger.

Methodism and Ecumenism (5th-12th June) for anyone who has an interest in ecumenical issues, and who wants to think through issues of what it means to be a Methodist in an ecumenical context.

Photography and Spirituality (15th-20th June) for people with an interest in photography and open to exploring how this might link with spiritual values and insights. Those of other faiths or no faith also welcome.

If any members of the congregation would like to join in any of the courses on a non-residential basis, please see Lucy or email her on lucy.meorome@gmail.com

SUMMER CAMP FOR THE VERY YOUNG AT ECUMENE

The Italian Methodist church invites all youngsters from 5 to 13 to join in a summer camp at the Ecumene centre in Velletri, just outside Rome in a magnificent location. The camp will be held from Friday 9 June through to Sunday 11 June and is a great opportunity for our kids to interact and hear God's word in a joyful environment. This camp takes place every year and a great time is always had by all. Details later about cost and arrangements, but PSA is always willing to subsidize in case of need. A knowledge of Italian helps, but there is always a good mix of nationalities. Please let Pastor Tim or Sandra know if you are interested.