

ASSISI OUTLOOK

Newsletter of St. Leonard's Anglican Congregation, Assisi, Italy

October 2022 – No. 61



Santa Maria Degli Angeli Nave

**WE WISH EVERYONE
A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR.**

Editors' Welcome

Our Editor, Mark Gowman, has not been well and in addition, he and his wife Pam, have packed up their house completely in order to allow builders to come in and repair the damage caused by the earthquake some years ago. Currently they are living locally in another house while new seismic protection is installed to make the house safe for the future. We send them our warm wishes and pray that normal life can resume again soon.

St Leonard's is in a state of transition because it became clear at our AGM in the spring that we no longer have enough people resident in Umbria to fill all the Church Officer positions in the Church Council as required under Church of England governance.

After discussions with Bishop David, Brother Benedict and Archdeacon David Waller proposals are being discussed that we should link St Leonard's with another congregation to form a "chaplaincy group". Under this structure we would not be required to have our own church wardens but simply a few individuals who can organise the weekly services and monitor the financial commitments.

Currently we have a small team of three willing to do this and they are working together with Brother Benedict who is resident in the Assisi apartment in October.

The vision is that St Leonard's will remain open all year and that the SSF will continue to provide a rota of priests as in the past. The Assisi apartment will continue to provide a residential base for whoever is serving month by month.

Further details about this new structure will emerge as discussion progresses and we will continue to update you, our wider congregation, as we can.

Please pray that the vision to maintain an Anglican presence in Assisi can build on all that has gone before and that we are able to serve the needs of pilgrims as they return to Assisi. We remain very blessed by the wider family of the Assisi congregation who continue to support from abroad and pray with us through this time of change.

Other changes to report are that Florence and Clive Morton have sold their Retreat Centre north of Assisi and so we will no longer be welcoming visitors from Umbrian Retreats. However we have news in this Issue from NZ about how the jigsaw pieces fell amazingly in place for Rosemary and Brian Carey to purchase an historical property there where they plan to open a Retreat Centre.

This summer David Burgdorf and Irene Dunn discovered that for some residents in Assisi St Leonard's has remained a secret, in spite of our presence there for nearly 20 years. On the basis of this information we are preparing a number of initiatives for publication in the near future.

We are always keen to recommend books we have enjoyed and Florence Morton has reviewed two for this Issue. Thank you for all your messages after Issue No 60. We appreciate hearing back from our readers very much. We hope you enjoy Issue 61.

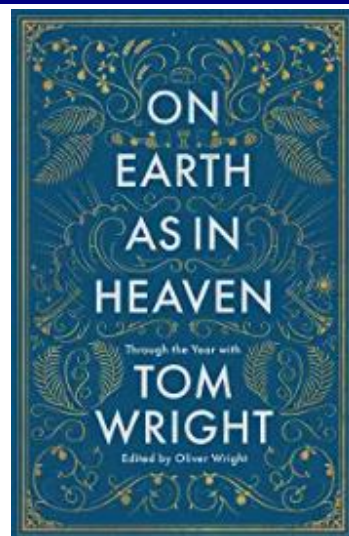
On behalf of the Editorial Team *Beverley Nixon*

Book Review

"On Earth as in Heaven" is a collection of 365 daily meditations selected from some of the best-selling books written by the prolific and influential Tom Wright. The collection has been edited by his son, Oliver Wright. Unusually perhaps, for a 'through the year' book, it starts and concludes with Easter. The material is inspired by or illustrative of seven feast or fasts from the Christian calendar, such as Advent, Christmas and Lent, and seven 'sign-posts' or themes such as Beauty, Spirituality and Truth. Each begins with a passage from the New Testament and is followed by carefully chosen excerpts from some of Tom Wright's best-known works.

It's possible to use this book in at least two ways: many admirers of the author will enjoy "On Earth as in Heaven" as a book of meditations to read over the course of twelve months and those who write sermons and other materials will undoubtedly find it a rich resource to dip into. The overall theme of this book is, of course, taken from The Lord's Prayer and in the Preface the author clearly indicates that the discovery he gradually made (if that's possible!) that Jesus meant what he said when he taught the first disciples to pray that God's kingdom would come "on earth as in heaven" is an absolutely crucial one.

As Rowan Williams writes: "Tom Wright is, as always, brilliant at distilling immense scholarship into vivid, clear and accessible form". We look forward to finding out if you agree with him! *Florence Morton*



Reflections by David Burgdorf

It has been a consistent joy for me to return to Assisi as Chaplain every other summer, except during the Covid lockdown period, since 2013. Part of the attraction for me was not only to advance my Third Order life by learning more about what God is doing with the lives of Sts. Francis and Clare but also to experience a wider expression of Anglicanism than I was used to in the Episcopal Church, USA.

The difference between the time I started in Assisi and now remind me of something I learned in seminary in New York over fifty years ago. The Dean, Sam Wylie, stressed that we students needed to master what he called "the celebration of smallness." There was a post-WWII "religion boom" in the USA that was all about expansion- building bigger and better. By the 1960's, the pendulum had swung. Expansion was mostly over and contraction had begun. Sam's advice was "Stop treating empty churches as if they're full." He looked forward to models of church life that were not corporate but religious, as in SSF or Taize, or even Pauline churches of the New Testament era where smaller groups gathered to celebrate the risen Christ and reflect on what difference that made in ordinary life. One of his (and my) favorite lines from the Rule of Taize was, "And so, renouncing henceforth to look back, and joyful with infinite thankfulness, let us precede the dawn, chanting and praising Christ the Lord."

This is perhaps a good phrase for us who have loved St. Leonard's to keep in mind: "renouncing henceforth to look back." Most of the people I knew here in 2013 have moved away; they constitute what I call the "loyal alumni" and are no longer available to be boots on the ground to move forward the mission of St. Leonard's in this place. What is that? To celebrate Anglican Christianity in Assisi. As we begin to emerge from the tunnel that was the Covid shutdown, it is becoming clear that the Diocese in Europe wants an Anglican Eucharist celebrated on Sundays. It is equally clear that SSF wants a presence in the hometown of the founder, whether that be via friars or Third Order members living here. The small "core congregation" is buoyed by those affirmations and is starting to feel empowered and what I call "tasky" to move forward, however the structure supporting them evolves.

I remember my old Dean's funeral in the USA, far north on the shore of Lake Superior, where he had become Bishop of Northern Michigan. He had been careful about picking hymns that reflected the energy and tone of his celebration of smallness and welcoming new life. The words of one



David Burgdorf

hymn could well express the hopes not only of St. Leonard's core congregation but of the "loyal alumni:" "Let all thy days, till life shall end, what'er he send, be filled with praise." *David Burgdorf*

A Day Out with Wendy Murray

While we were on holiday in Boston during the summer, Clive and I visited a friend we made at St Leonard's in Assisi several years ago: Wendy Murray. Originally from Ohio in America's mid west, Wendy now lives in Beverly, just north of Boston. She has fond memories of several friends from St Leonard's including Brother Tom, Gordon and Christine Trigg, Kay and Csaba Borzsonyi and Beverley Nixon.

We followed Wendy's advice to take a train from North Station to meet her at a small town called Monserrat where her son Ben has a farm. (Ben took the photo!) After meeting Ben and his wife Christina, we had a delicious lunch at a local restaurant that specialises in seafood. After lunch Wendy took us on a drive around the beautiful North Shore.

We also exchanged gifts: Wendy gave us a copy of "Clare of Assisi, Gentle Warrior" and we gave her some Baci chocolates we found in an Italian shop in Boston! Wendy researches meticulously and writes really well about her Franciscan subjects so we're looking forward to reading this, her latest book.



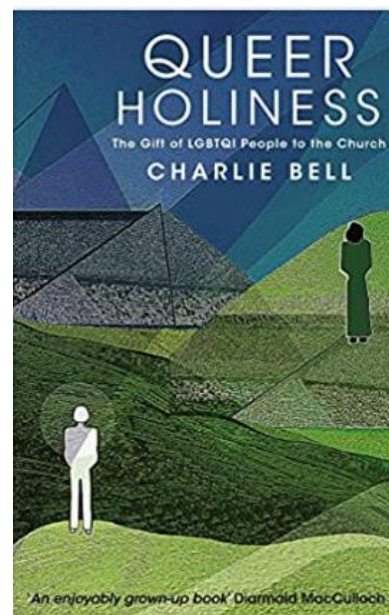
Florence and Clive Morton, Wendy Murray

Perhaps you remember meeting Wendy during her time in Assisi when she was researching and writing her earlier book about Francis of Assisi... Clive and I were delighted to discover she's alive and well and living in such a lovely part of north east America. *Florence Morton*

Queer Holiness

The author of this fascinating book, Rev Dr Charlie Bell, is an ordained priest in the Church of England (currently serving in the Diocese of Southwark) and a psychiatrist (with South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation and King's College, London). He has a lot of energy and if you google him, you'll learn more about his very busy life.

In an article in the Church Times (19th August 2022) he explains that he wrote 'Queer Holiness' to celebrate the gifts that LGBTQI people give to the Church. Whatever views readers hold about LGBTQI issues, I think this book is well worth reading. Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch describes it as "an enjoyably grown-up book" and Paul Bayes, a former Bishop of Liverpool, notes that his "anger is real and measured and true, placed in a context of divine love and human holiness, like the anger of the biblical Jesus himself".



Florence Morton

Special Visitors

I was humbled by the opportunity to share with the San Leonardo congregation about the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition for a few moments after the service on September 25. As I said, the Anabaptist movement began in 1525. We will be celebrating our 500th anniversary in 2025. The

Anabaptist movement began in different places during the same time when people in various parts of Switzerland, Austria and Holland began to read the Bible through the lens of Jesus and to take the teachings of Jesus seriously for the life and witness of all Christians.

Over the next several years of persecution, these groups joined together in a common confession of faith centred on the Gospel of peace. "Anabaptist" literally means "re-baptized." The decision to be re-baptized, to call all people to live in the example of Christ, attempting to recover the witness of the early church, and to challenge the church's practices of selling indulgences, of course, led to martyrdom at the hands of state church officials.

Mennonites received their name from an early leader named Menno Simons, though the label "Mennist" was applied to the members of the movement by their persecutors. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is understood by Anabaptists to outline the normative ethics for Christians, particularly where peace, justice, reconciliation are concerned.

Most Mennonites, though not all, have refused to participate in military programs or conscription. We believe that God's mission in the world is to bring about the reconciliation of all things through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, our high calling is to align our lives with God's work and bear witness to this reconciliation of all creation. This includes our ecumenical longing for the day when the church will also be reconciled into one so that joy may be complete, as Jesus prayed before his crucifixion.

Today, Mennonite communities can be found around the world with approximately 1.5 million members. There are five Mennonite Congregations with a combined membership of 250 in the Bari and Sicily regions of Italy.

I hope we will be able to be in touch with the San Leonard's congregation again one day. I wish you every blessing as you discern the Spirit's leading for the future of your beautiful community.

Shalom,

Dr. David Boshart, President, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

News from our Readers

Simone Bandini: Thank you for sharing your magazine, very much appreciated.

I am Simone Bandini, the editor of the English/Italian free press magazine "Valley Life" and we are about to launch a new issue in Perugia+Valle Umbra. Our paper magazine speaks about culture, art, lifestyle, food and wine and is freely delivered to English Speaking Citizens, Hotels and Agriturismo, professionals, shops and public bodies.

You can have a look online at www.valleylife.it. I think that we may perhaps collaborate somehow... Let's think about it!

Janice Thorne: Many thanks and blessings

Cathie Alexander: A true gem. Just as 'Outlook' goes out all over the world, the interesting and varied articles and lovely photos show how the faithful in St. Leonard's take God's loving Light out into all the world. A joy to read, a call to reach out to others, and an excellent vehicle to keep us in touch, as we read the heart-warming news of friends. I especially loved the photo of Benedict pouring the Communion wine. Congratulations 'Outlook' Team.

Christopher John SSF: Thanks for the latest Outlook. With prayers and best wishes for your celebration of Palm Sunday as you once again can gather in person in St Leonards. It's been a long time!

Maggie Guillebaud: Thank you so much for Outlook and all the news. When I see how St Leonard's has grown from the very early days I can only think of that tiny mustard seed and how indeed it is now a tree with branches and roots encircling the earth. Who could have known?

How wonderful to know you will soon be able to worship together again! We are still using masks in Salisbury Cathedral when we move about, but can take them off when we sit down, and when we sing. But at least we are together. Being apart, even with Zoom, was dreadful.

Grahame and Ann Whittlesea: Many thanks, we are glad St Leonards will be open on the 10th of April. I have a new job, I'm the chaplain at St John's and St Nicholas Hospitals in Canterbury and Harbledown (a village near Canterbury) since last November. Both Hospitals were founded by Archbishop Lanfranc at the end of the 11th century, and it was at St Nicholas that King Henry II prepared himself to do penance for the death of St Thomas a Becket at the hands of the monks of Canterbury. Please give our best wishes to all at St Leonards for a happy and blessed Easter. Pax et Bonum,

Brother Bruce Paul SSF: Good morning to all who gather for worship and the celebration of the Eucharist at St Leonard's in Assisi. Glad to know that you were back face to face on Palm Sunday this year. Thank you for the latest edition of Assisi Outlook that is always so full of interesting news, and people and events and their memories. I recall with gratitude the hospitality of the parish and people of St Leonard's in 2013. Blessings and peace on you all.

Paul and Rosanne Arnott: Thank you very much for the latest edition of Assisi Outlook which is excellent. What wonderful news that face to face services will soon resume with chaplains. We're looking forward to catching up with Csaba and Kaye sometime. You all remain very much in our hearts and prayers. Every blessing in Christ.

The Rev. Peter F. Casparian: What an amazing Newsletter! Certainly one of the best that I have ever seen. And greetings from a beautiful day in Taormina where we woke up to the sun and a clear sky for the first time in a week. I will have been locum here for all of March and then we will head north and back to St. James, Florence, where you might remember I was the rector for 9 years... now almost 20 years ago. Then it's back to Texas for Holy Week.

Raphael and Family

I'm sure many people will remember Raphael, a migrant who endured great hardships to get to Italy. He has come a long way in settling here in Italy. Recently Mark and I went to see him in Foligno, he is doing very well and last week passed his driving test in Italian! But best of all we met his lovely wife Sonia and his twin daughters Daniela and Emanuela born on the 3rd October. I'm sure all who remember him send him and his new family love and prayers as they go forward.



Reflections on Ravenna

When Jim, the travel agent who always sets up my trips to Assisi, said to me, "You've got to go to Ravenna," I said, "Why?" and he answered, "Just go; you'll see," so I read up on it and I went between Sundays at St. Leonard's. My friend, Deb Seles, recently retired as a priest in our home parish of St. Margaret's, Palm Desert, California, was in the area, so we met at the train station in Florence and travelled together.

Given that Italy is full of "the wrecks of time," I was dazzled to see that churches, tombs and baptistries that constitute Ravenna's eight 5th and 6th UNESCO World Heritage monuments are in great shape. We were guided by a retired classics teacher, Rita Monari, who took pains on a whole day tour not only to describe the intricacies of the mosaics but also to remind us of the

Arian/Orthodox conflict that existed at that time. While the Arians "lost the war" via the Councils of Nicea through Chalcedon (325-451 AD), they certainly made a grand contribution to the world of art.

Most fascinating to me was the process of creating mosaics, starting with three layers of plaster on a wall. In the last layer of wet plaster were placed in a huge pattern thousands of *tesserae*, tiles made of glass, sometimes faced with gold leaf, each about the size of the tip of a little finger. With care, each *tessera* is chiseled into shape and placed in the vast pattern to create Biblical images like those of the Baptism of Christ or Christ the Good Shepherd or Christ the Judge (Pantokrator) which are sparkling to this day.



Seeing all eight sites with their mosaics reminded me of some of Jesus' story about the part and the whole, the branches and the vine, or Paul's image of the parts of the body and the whole. The rampant individualism all around, the focus on "I, me, mine," the loss of true catholicity, and the isolation from the one who holds all things together, "the Cosmic Christ," so says Fr. Richard Rohr, to me this individualism is symbolized by the poor little *tessera*, fairly insignificant in itself, but joined in a great pattern, becomes a wonder. It reminded me of a line from CS Lewis' *The Four Loves*: (about agape love) "We are like grains of sand on the seashore, caught up on the incoming wave of God's love, and we become as nothing in that ascent."

I am so glad to have visited Ravenna. For me the trick was having a good guide, and I would recommend to anyone who might plan a visit, to check with Rita Monari at +39 328 2828170 or info@oriente-occidente.com.

David Burgdorf

You can trust God with the details!

Bryan and Rosemary Carey (right) shared.... the words attributed to St Francis: "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible." took on new meaning for us recently.

Towards the end of 2018 in my impending retirement from full time ministry we visited the rural parish of Mangakuri Beach (Central



Hawkes Bay) to take a service in the paddock Chapel belonging to Mangakuri Station... The old Mangakuri homestead, called Castlehill stood as guardian alongside it. “It would be a great retreat home?” We commented to each other.

During 2019 after our time in Assisi the call for us to establish a hospitality space for pilgrims came clear. Castlehill was on the open market for sale when we returned so we investigated the possibility of purchasing it but discovered it was way out of our price range. The vendor eventually removed the property from the market.

In 2020, during a stay at St Isaac’s, acting as relief kaitiaki, Rosemary had a vivid dream that we were in Castlehill. We decided to check out if it was available to buy praying for wide open doors if it was. This was during the second Covid lockdown. We wrote to the owner and posted it, hoping it would be a welcome change for him to receive a handwritten letter in his rural letterbox.

Arriving back in Hastings the owner invited us to visit him at Castlehill and share our vision over a coffee. We explained to him our desire as TSSF Franciscans to establish a retreat. He shared that he liked living at Mangakuri and could be thinking of selling the homestead and a small amount of adjacent land but retaining the rest to build himself a new home on. The visit and discussion was encouraging and again we prayed. If this was God’s will for us then let it be so. .

Out of the blue 2 months later a call from the owner saying ‘If he was to sell’ we would have first option and this was the price.... Not negotiable! More prayer!

The housing market towards the end of 2021 was buoyant and we discovered the asking price was achievable if we sold our home and rental. We sought discernment from family and prayer partners. The result was a unanimous YES. So we took the plunge and when he said he would sell and offered us first choice, we said we would like to purchase the property.

During Labour Weekend we went for a trip out to Mangakuri Beach, and called by Castlehill. It was during that visit that the Scripture Matthew 13:45-46 was given to us. “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

This is what we did!

With the Castlehill owner heading overseas for 6 months on work commitments, we had plenty of time. Our home sold straight away, so for the next 6 months we took the opportunity to visit family and friends, house sit and “live simply.”

The unconditional date arrived but we still needed half the asking price, as our rental had not sold.

In faith we paid the deposit praying God would honour us.

Friends in Timaru without seeing Castlehill, but aware of our journey, shared Isaiah 58: with us “The LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach the restorer of streets to live in”.

We were encouraged by these words. Settlement date (30 June) approached. Our rental still remained unsold. Three days before the due date, through a friend’s generosity of a bridging loan, we were able to settle the purchase. There was great rejoicing and grateful thanks for our friends’ provision. Rosemary and I picked up the keys and “camped” in Castlehill’s kitchen with the fire going for 2 nights before our furniture and belongings arrived. Our eclectic array of furniture fitted as if designed for the home. Our guests marvel at the peace and serenity of the place. Now 3 months on, our rental has been sold,



We have tidied up the Chapel adjoining the homestead which the Station Trust Board have granted permission for us to be its kaitiaki (Caretakers). Castlehill has been gifted to us to care for and we will walk with God as we determine its future pathway to enable God's will to be done. and we hosted a Community Chapel Service to commemorate Queen Elizabeth and welcome in King Charles.

We are now open for God's business! Offering hospitality for whoever God brings our way.

We can accommodate 2 doubles plus a single, with separate bathrooms, or more, using marae style for overnight stays. There is also a small 2 berth caravan on site plus plenty of camping or motorhome parking.

We can fully cater for up to 12 people for day retreats or conference type events. Koha (love offering) gratefully accepted. Situated 1 hour drive from Hastings/ Havelock North, or 40 minutes from Waipawa/ Waipukurau.

Contact Bryan or Rosemary Carey rbcarey.carey@gmail.com to check availability.



Tally Ho

'Captain' The Rev Tim Daplyn and his 'Stoker' Billy Bones on their Christian Climate Action (CCA) Tandem. They have been out and about recently during Extinction Rebellion gatherings in Bristol and London during the build-up to COP27 to be held in Sharm-el-Sheik, Egypt, in November. Tim says that Billy is a great conversation opener on the street and is in the Christian tradition of Memento Mori - 'Remember you are mortal... Repent and turn to Christ...'

Tim Daplyn



Did you Know St Leonard's is on Facebook?

Keep up to date with all that is happening at St Leonard's and in Assisi

- meet our visiting ministers
- pictures and information on special events and occasions
- articles on St Francis and Santa Chiara
- opportunity to comment on the posts and send messages to the Church through Messenger

All you need to do is from initiate a search from your facebook page of "@assisi anglicans ", when you are directed to our FB page click on the "like" button and then the "follow button".

And you will start receiving posts from us here in Assisi.

You can also share the FB page with your friends, family and Church family. If you don't use Facebook then please don't worry, Outlook will continue to be published for the foreseeable future

Glyn Rowland

Priest in Charge

We were delighted to have David Burgdorf as our Priest in Charge for August and September.. This has been his umpteenth visit and we value his love for us and the understanding he has accumulated over the years.

We currently have Brother Benedict in residence who will be followed by Bishop Celso in November and Rev'd Tim Daplyn in January. We are grateful to have priests returning who are well known both in Assisi and by our congregation.

At present, there are no plans for December, including the Christmas services. Probably the best thing to do, if you plan to be in Assisi during December, is to contact the SSF apartment via email: assisissf@gmail.com to learn more

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