NAPLES

Naples today is the third largest city in Italy, but if you go back 200 years it was the third most significant city in the whole of Europe and the centre of the Spanish empire in the Mediterranean. The phrase “see Naples and die” was coined to express that once you have experienced the delightful sights here, you need do nothing more. Today you can still see the splendour of those days, including palaces built in the style of Versailles, although now some of it is covered in a veneer of decay and chaos. As has been said, Naples is like a beautiful woman, with dirty feet.

Sitting on the Gulf of Naples, whose beauty has drawn poets, artists and statesmen since Virgil and the Emperor Tiberius, this wonderful city still boasts many attractions for the tourist and resident alike. Yes, it can look faded and dirty, but it is also energetic, beautiful and vibrant. There are world-class Greek and Roman sites (including the famous Pompeii and Herculaneum ruins), the San Carlo Theatre famous for both opera and dance, many stunning palaces, buildings and sculptures (including the magnificent Veiled Christ), the Amalfi coast, the islands of Capri, Ischia and Procida, fabulous beaches and cafes literally everywhere.

The next-door town, Pozzuoli, was home to Sophia Loren and has the 3rd largest (and best preserved) amphitheatre in the whole of Italy, with the Gladiator School made famous by Spartacus just a few miles north at Caserta. Within 2.5 hours you can be across in Puglia, up in Rome or, in the winter, skiing at the resort of Roccaraso. Plus Naples has the best coffee, pizza and Mozzarella in Italy (and some would say it’s the best in the world)!

Almost all Italians are passionate about football, and Naples is no exception, with several trophies won by the team, including Maradona, in the 1980s. Their stadium is within shouting distance of the church and you will know when they score a goal!

The climate is equally attractive, with pleasant Mediterranean winters and beautiful warm spring and autumn seasons. When the humidity of midsummer arrives, most locals head to the beach or the hills to escape, leaving Naples quiet to be explored by those who have the energy.
CHRIST CHURCH – A DISTINGUISHED HISTORY

After many years of Anglican worship in private homes and in the British Legation, in 1860 Garibaldi, who had just defeated the Spanish Bourbon king, granted a piece of land to the British community on which to build a church. This Neo-gothic and very distinctly British church with a capacity of 350, was consecrated in 1865.

Christ Church served the local English-speaking community until World War II when it was closed for a period. When the Allied Forces took Naples, it was re-opened as a military chapel, and the side chapel contains plaques and a Roll of Honour in memory of the many young men who gave their lives in the Salerno landings. Since reverting to a civilian church it has continued through good times and bad. The establishment of the NATO base saw an upturn in the church’s fortunes and it has enjoyed a close relationship with the military community, particularly the British and American, ever since.

OUR CHAPLAINCY

As one of very few English-speaking churches in the vicinity of Naples we serve a huge variety of English speakers drawn from a transient population of ex-pats, military, students and travellers who could have been here for 40 years or be spending just a few days in the city.

The biggest English speaking community comes from the NATO base and US naval headquarters. The former has around 120 UK military personnel plus families (totalling almost 350), the latter over 5,000 people plus families, half of whom live on the base about 45 minutes’ drive to the north of Naples, with the rest living across the city.

Alongside this there is a large African community as well as Sri Lankans, northern Europeans and others, including some students studying under the Erasmus programme. We would particularly like to extend our ministry to more of the African and student communities.
OUR VISION

We believe that church is where we experience God’s love and learn to love him and each other. We want to express that love with generosity to each other and the community around us. As probably the only choice for those who want to worship in English in central Naples, we want to be accessible to as wide a range of people as possible. We have a variety of service styles so that everyone can enjoy a warm welcome, something for which our church is well-known. Christ Church has become a special place where both young and old, conservatives and liberals, and people of different nationalities join to worship the LORD. We take that honour very seriously, and want to expand it to even more people in the Naples area.

Our beliefs and values are those of an evangelical church with much of our worship in a contemporary style, balanced with a more traditional organ-led service once a month. We are grounded in a belief in the Bible as our primary authority, a desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and a mission to bring the Kingdom of God to the communities to which God calls us.

THE CONGREGATION

With an average weekly attendance of about 40 adults and 10 children (aged 0-13) we vary greatly in age, nationality, denomination and background. We have Anglicans, Roman Catholics and many from other denominations or non-denominational churches. For many English is their second or even third language. For special services, such as Easter, Christmas Candlelit Carols and Remembrance, we routinely have 70, 100 and 250 people respectively.

With so many of our congregation in Naples for only a few years we work hard at finding people to serve in all the different roles in the church and are often only one “person deep”! However, one of the most obvious ways we’ve seen God’s providence in action is in giving us the right person at the right time to meet our needs. We are making a considerable effort to build teams, and would like to expand our ministry to include a prayer ministry, to start a new choir and to further develop our worship group.

We have refreshments after every service and often half of the congregation will eat together at a local (delicious!) restaurant after the service. Periodically, we arrange potluck lunches in the church courtyard or hall, or fundraising meals after church, which draws in more of the community. Although we are small, we enjoy fellowship with each other, and consider this an important part of our character.

The church today has an open evangelical character, having moved over the last few years from a more traditional liberal-catholic stance, although both traditions are valued within our congregation.
WORSHIP

With our desire to be accessible to all, we vary our worship including both traditional and contemporary, liturgical and informal. Our Sunday morning service pattern is usually:

- 1st Sunday - informal, contemporary all age with a simple Holy Communion;
- 2nd and 4th Sunday - Holy Communion with contemporary and traditional music, a worship band and a reduced liturgy;
- 3rd Sunday - a traditional Common Worship Communion service with hymns, led by the organ.

Good, Bible-based teaching is extremely important to us and we are keen to see every member of the body growing in the fruit of the Spirit and exercising the gifts of the Spirit.

ALPHA AND NEW WINE

We have run many Alpha courses over the last five years and are keen to continue with this outreach. Now that the Alpha Film Series videos are available in Italian we have run English and Italian language courses together. We have also hosted a regional Alpha Italia training conference.

We have had a great relationship with New Wine International ([https://www.new-wine.org/networks/international](https://www.new-wine.org/networks/international)), several members of the church have been to conferences in Umbria and we have run two weekends at the church. We have also had a weekend with Local Houses of Prayer ([http://www.ffald-y-brenin.org/l-hops](http://www.ffald-y-brenin.org/l-hops)). These have been well-received and have been a popular way to seek to deepen our Christian faith.
MINISTRIES AND GROUPS

Our ministries vary as people come and go but we have prioritised Children’s Church on Sundays (and a summer holiday club), worship group and mid-week home-groups. In the last two years we have run Lent groups using Rick Warren’s ‘Purpose Driven Life’ and ‘40 Days of Prayer’ courses, which have strengthened our home-groups and we look to further building on this success.

We would love to grow and sustain regular Bible studies, and create a Prayer Ministry in the church. Our choir, which has been large and active in the past, was recently disbanded as it was no longer sustainable. We would like to start a new choir with new members and leadership in the near future.

Naples’ position as a busy city in Southern Italy means there are many possible ministries with people who are homeless, who are prostitutes and who have arrived in southern Italy as refugees. Currently we work with the Salvation Army to provide food and clothes to the poor and homeless of the city, but we are keen that, as our congregation grows, we seek to develop this work with people in need, through supporting and co-operating with other organisations in this area.

THE BRITISH MILITARY

The British military community is based at the NATO site in Lago Patria, approximately 25 minutes drive North West of the city. The Christ Church Chaplain has historically been employed as the “Officiating Chaplain to the Military” (OCM), working about one and a half days a week with the British military community. This ministry includes welfare and pastoral care, taking assembly in the British Forces primary school every week, running Alpha courses, leading a weekly prayer meeting as well as being a school governor. Previously it has also been in the OCM role that the chaplain has organised a ‘Go Fish’ children’s summer holiday club with the help of a team from the UK and Christ Church community. There are military-focussed services held to commemorate Remembrance Sunday and the Battle of Britain. The OCM is paid directly by the UK Ministry of Defence in addition to the salary that Christ Church offers. This role has ensured a strong and fruitful link to the large English speaking military community at the NATO base and we would strongly encourage the new incumbent to apply for the post.
FINANCES

In 2013 we formed an 'Associazione' which legally recognises Christ Church Naples in Italian law and that year our finances moved from precarious to breaking even, however more work needs to be undertaken in this area. In 2014 we had a €10k deficit, in 2018 we almost broke even, despite the cost of a new sound system, repairs to the windows and €2k on the lights. However, we are very reliant on a few generous donors who are only here for a few years, so income will always vary. Overall our financial outlook is beginning to improve, but would still consider this as resourceful and reserved in all regards.

The post is currently offered as part-time (4 days a week), with contributions to Italian National Security (which covers healthcare and pension contributions to the Italian system). The aspiration is to increase this to 4.5 days a week once finances allow, which would allow for the 1 - 1.5 days a week as the Military OCM (circa €8.5k per annum) and a day of rest, per week.

BARI

We also value our links to a small but enthusiastic mainly British long-term resident congregation in Bari (3 hours’ bus-trip to the east coast of Italy) which meets for Communion and a meal in someone’s home when the chaplain visits. This is usually every 4-6 weeks.

BUILDINGS

Apart from the roof, the church building is in generally good condition. We have just started fund-raising for €100k to replace the roof over the Apse, having relatively recently succeeded in renewing the side aisles’ roofs.

Other buildings include the hall and kitchen, the chaplain’s flat and another flat currently in long term use by a long standing parishioner. In the future there may be opportunities to use this for interns, which could greatly enhance the church’s ability to grow. The hall and kitchen are a very useful resource, but are in need of some renovation. The church and buildings are in regular use during the week, by a number of groups. They are also hired out occasionally for concerts and weddings.

Building work is also needed to make the church compliant with various regulations (eg fire exits, disabled access and toilet). The church council is in the process of registering the flats, hall and kitchen, to meet local authority regulations.

CHIESA EVANGELICA NEAPOLIS

Our buildings are also used regularly by this Italian language evangelical church which was started by Rev Mark and Jane Oden, using our buildings. Mark and Jane have been sent by Crosslinks (https://www.crosslinks.org/people-and-places/europe/mark-and-jane-oden/). Their main service is on Sunday evenings and they run Bible studies and a youth group during the week. This is a wonderful opportunity to ‘partner in the Gospel’.
CHAPLAIN’S ACCOMMODATION

The Chaplain’s accommodation is situated in the courtyard behind the church and consists of a first-floor flat above the Church Hall (access via an external stairway). There are two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and bathroom, and a balcony. The flat has central heating and air-conditioning; utility bills are met by chaplaincy funds.

The accommodation is relatively small, in typical central Neapolitan style. There are a number of local Italian state schools, including one next to the church. There are also private International English-speaking schools in both Bagnoli and near the NATO Base at Lago Patria, (ages 4-18) and a variety of Montessori Nurseries.

The flat is centrally situated, but secluded and remarkably quiet in bustling urban surroundings, just 2-300 yards from a large public park and the Mediterranean/Tyrrhenian sea. There are 2 supermarkets just a couple of streets away and it is a safe, popular area of the town with many cafes, restaurants and small shops. A car will be gifted to the new Chaplain, but ongoing costs other than travel expenses would not be met by the chaplaincy; parking is in the church grounds.

The chaplain has an office in the church, equipped with a computer and printer. There is a basic portable heating and air conditioning unit, but it would benefit from a more permanent arrangement, which we are willing to explore with the successful candidate.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

There are many challenges for both the church and the chaplain, some of which have already been mentioned above. For the chaplain this can feel like a very isolated position, with the nearest Anglican churches in Rome to the North and Palermo to the south. There is however the opportunity to get to know US Naval and other international chaplains and to enjoy some fellowship with them. As part of the Diocese of Europe in the Anglican Church, the chaplain will be supported by an area dean, based in Florence, and the Archdeacon of Italy and Malta, and attendance annually at both the chapter and the Synod.

The Neapolitan culture is unique and can be frustrating at times, although it is vibrant and the people are engaging. It is important to get to grips with Italian (and perhaps also the subtly different dialect spoken in Naples). The driving in Naples can be difficult – Neapolitans do not believe in following the rules, so there are very few cars that don’t wear the scars of a ‘Neapolitan kiss’ or 2!!

Corruption locally is endemic although this has not particularly affected the church.

The size of the church and the transient, widely spread congregation mean that there is less than normal support for the chaplain in the administration and running of the church.

There are also many opportunities. The number of families working for or with the military coming to the church has been growing slowly but, with a huge number living in Naples, there is great potential for growth. As the church has changed to a more evangelical culture it has been better placed to attract more active Christians and as more come to the church, their skills and spiritual maturity will continue to help enormously.
There are large groups of English-speaking people that we seek to develop our ministry to, including University and college students as well as the refugee community. We look forward to working with the new Chaplain who will lead us in taking the initiative in these exciting new potential relationships in this beautiful Neapolitan community we seek to serve.

For the future we have a vision under God to see the church grow to where the core ministries (worship/music, prayer ministry, Children’s Church, home groups, Alpha, administration) have enough people to be more sustainable and consistent, and building on the very friendly atmosphere that is a real strength of Christ Church currently.

We already try to act responsibly with respect to the environment, including reducing our use of plastics, recycling our rubbish and reducing our energy consumption. In the future there might be more opportunity to develop further ecological initiatives.

We offer the joy and the challenge of being a priest living in this fascinating and beautiful part of Italy where St Paul himself walked and the early church grew, to experience a new culture, learn a new language and to take part with us in a fulfilling and exciting ministry as our new Chaplain.