THE WALDENSIAN REVIEW



No. 146 Summer 2025

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From the Editor

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Thank you for your continuing help with letters, suggestions, **donations**, purchases and **prayers**!

Please keep looking at www.waldensian.org.uk for past reviews, updates, **new items** and on *Facebook*: **The Waldensian Church Mission**.
This year we have two important anniversaries: **200 years** since the Waldensian Church Mission was founded and **50 years** since the Integration of the Italian Methodist Church with the Waldensian Church.

Synod 2025 will take place 23–27 August in Torre Pellice as usual.



At Synod 2024 it was great to see the Morris-Chapmans again and we are happy to announce that Grace (pictured here with children, Daniel and 'our' Nicky) has been ordained minister in 2025.

We have a new Chair, **Rachel Morris**, who writes:

I'm Rachel Morris, delighted to introduce myself as the new chair of the committee.

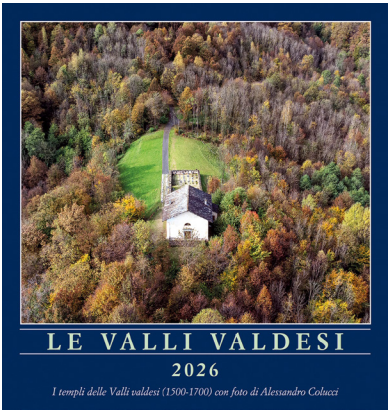
Firstly, thanks are due to our outgoing chair, Ian Nimmo-Smith, who has been in the role for the past 11 years and has now retired from the committee due to ill health. We all want to express our sincere gratitude to Ian for ably overseeing a sometimes challenging period, particularly keeping things going during the Covid pandemic.

My connection with the Waldensians started in 2002, when I went to volunteer for a year as part of an international team at La Noce, a Waldensian social work centre in Palermo, Sicily. Director of the centre at that time was Alessandra Trotta, now Moderator of the Waldensian Church. I took a 'crash course' in Italian language and Waldensian history at the Collegio Valdese in Torre Pellice and very much enjoyed the year working in the nursery school at La Noce – working with young children was the ideal way to learn the language.

Then from 2007 to 2010 I moved to Turin, and worshipped at the Tempio Valdese on Corso Vittorio in the city centre. I sometimes attended the Italian congregation (and particularly enjoyed their great church lunches in the next-door Casa Valdese) and sometimes the English-speaking congregation which met in the same building. I also made lots of visits to the Valleys, including

Cover: Moderator Eugenio Bernardini with Pope Francis and S. Velluto, President of the Concistoro. *(Photo: Pietro Romeo)*

WALDENSIAN CALENDARS 2026



Beautiful pictures of the churches (16th–18th century) of the Waldensian Valleys. Explanations and Bible verses also in English. Available from October. Please order online from **www.waldensian.org.uk** or send a **cheque** for **£**19 (**payable to Waldensian Church Mission**) to Erica Newbury, 85 St Andrew's Road, Cambridge CB4 1DH. Buy two for £34. Even if P&P has again increased, we try to keep the price as low as we can. **FEEL FREE** to add something to support the **Mission**, though!

Collegio Valdese (originally Trinity College) designed by **Beckwith**, erected half with donations gathered by Gilly, needs extensive repairs. A substantial sum is provided by the Superintendency of Cultural Heritage, but more is needed: **DONATIONS PLEASE!!!!**





to the Fiaccolata (torch-lit parade) and bonfire of 16–17 February to mark the anniversary of the granting of civil rights to Waldensians in 1848.

I have served on the committee for the past 13 years. I enjoy maintaining the connection with the Waldensian church in Italy and take satisfaction in helping ensure the charity's funds are well used, particularly in bringing students in training for ministry over to the UK.

In my day job I work for the Department for Education and am based in Sheffield. I serve on the Ecumenical Church Council of my local Methodist–Anglican Local Ecumenical Partnership. My husband Alastair is also on the committee, with particular responsibility for the website. We have two kids, who are aged 8 and 10 and keep us very busy!

If you would like to get in touch please email chair@waldensian.org.uk.

Celebration of 200 years of the Waldensian Church Mission (The London Vaudois Committee)



Despite being 18 January, a good number of Committee members and friends gathered at Downing Place URC in Cambridge to listen to Prof. Rev. Euan Cameron, especially arrived from the US. The other guest from abroad, our old acquaintance Rev. Peter Ciaccio, talked about 50 years of Waldensian–Methodist Integration. Afterwards soup and cakes and friendship. It was a really enjoyable event!

Anniversary Day at Downing Place.

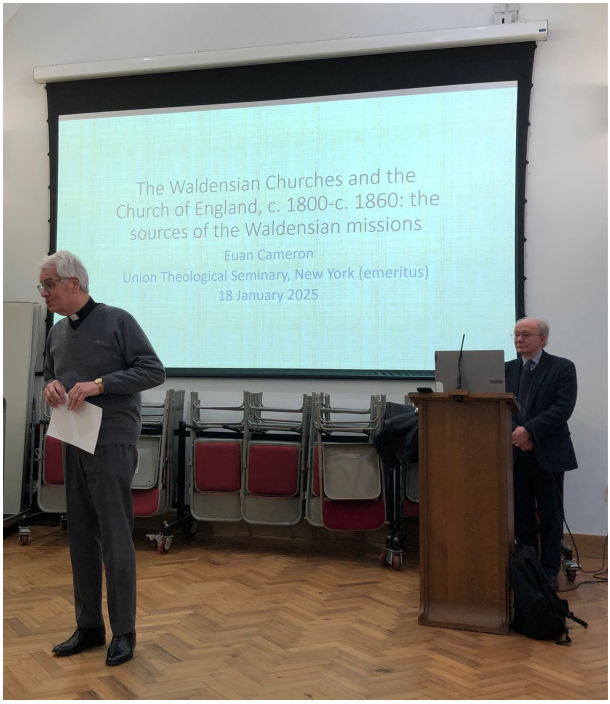
The Waldensian Churches and the Church of England, *c.* 1800–*c.* 1860: The Sources of the Waldensian Missions

The Waldensian Churches became the focus of both interest and support from the Church of England in the early nineteenth century. That interest was built on traditions going back nearly two centuries, and on a historical vision of what Waldensian belief was about. This article attempts to trace the rise of the campaign of support which led to the establishment of the 'Waldensian Committee' exactly two centuries ago.

The Waldensian Church survived into the 1800s by defiance in the face of violent attacks. The treaty which ended the war with Savoy of 1560–61 gave the church limited authority to function in a narrowly defined space. That permission did not save it from the massacres of 1655, or the exile of so many of its people in 1686–89. The Napoleonic Empire gave a brief initial period of civil equality to the Reformed Churches, which was rescinded after Waterloo. At the time of the Anglican missions, the Waldenses were again living under the

humiliating restraints that dated back essentially to 1561.

The Waldensian Churches of *c.* 1800 were following the worship and beliefs of Reformed Protestantism. Yet a historical perception grew that this 'Calvinist' character of their life and belief had developed late. It was believed that the loss of many of their pastors in 1630 during the Italian plague of 1629–31 made it necessary to replace the pastorate with French-speaking trainees from the Genevan academy. The influence of Genevan ministers from the 1550s was not at that time recognised. Around 1800 candidates for the Waldensian pastorate were studying at Lausanne, where Unitarian ideas were making inroads into orthodoxy and worrying conservatives.



Rev. Nigel Uden and Euan Cameron.

England had long supported the Waldensian communities. Following the notorious massacres of 1655, much money was raised by the regime of Oliver Cromwell by public subscription. Some was intended to support an annual grant, which was rescinded by Charles II but revived under Queen Anne. A regular grant to 'enable the Vaudois to maintain their Ministers, Churches, Schools, and Poor' was re-established in 1768 under George III, but ceased in 1797 once Piedmont fell under French control. The loss of that grant impoverished the Church: so, from the end of hostilities in 1815 a campaign was mounted in England to have the grant restored. A series of pamphlets by supporters such as Sims (1815), Lowther (1821) and Acland (1825) brought the needs of the communities to public attention and called, unsuccessfully, for the restoration of the royal grant.

By far the most influential work in arousing interest in England was the *Narrative of an Excursion to the Mountains of Piemont in the year MDCCCXXIII*, first published by Rev. William Stephen Gilly (1789–1855) in 1824. It was a

resounding commercial success, many times reprinted. Gilly, Rector of North Fambridge in Essex, wrote the work essentially as a travelogue, into which historical narratives of different heroic episodes in the Waldensian experience were inserted at various points. The work was – and remains – extremely readable and accessible.

A fund already existed for the support of the Vaudois churches, supported by three trustees. However, on 26 May 1825 a committee was formed to gather together all the interested parties. The Committee met at the home of George Henry Rose (1770–1855), a diplomat and networker, with the Bishop of London in the chair. Several of those who had published in support of the Waldensian church were included; Gilly became the honorary secretary, and I.S. Pons acted as an intermediary with the church in Piedmont. The records of the Committee are now conserved in Cambridge University Library.

Anglican support for the Waldenses was, to some extent, predicated on a mythical understanding of their history. Gilly and others believed that the Waldenses were the ancient, primitive, biblically oriented Christians of northern Italy, who had lasted through the centuries uncorrupted by the doctrines and practices of the papacy. The Reformation was not thought to have breached this tradition, and the introduction of 'Calvinism' after 1630 was seen as a distraction from their ancient calling. From 1827 their most indefatigable patron, Col. J.C. Beckwith (1789–1862), raised funds to endow the communities with better schools, better accommodation for churches and ministers, and to enable Waldensian ministers to be formed in a seminary of their own, rather than in Switzerland.

With their civil emancipation within Piedmont-Savoy in 1848, the Waldenses could evangelise beyond their valleys. This impulse led to the completion of the *tempio* in Turin in 1853 and a wider campaign to grow the Church. Beckwith, ever the Anglican, sought in vain to persuade the Church to establish moderators for life (quasi-bishops) and to adopt a liturgy comparable to that used in England. The Waldenses, politely and gratefully, remained Reformed; but their relationship with the Church of England foreshadowed the ecumenical engagement which remains a fundamental commitment.

Euan Cameron

50 years of Waldensian–Methodist Integration

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the Patto d'Integrazione, the covenant that made Methodists and Waldensians in Italy part of one Ecclesial body, without ceasing to be Methodists or Waldensians. It was a unique and quite clever solution, being the contribution to the Ecumenical process from two small minority Churches. Since 1975 Methodists and Waldensians have one National Synod (namely, European Session of the Synod), one pastoral body, one board, one Theological Faculty. Specific identity is kept in individuals (one is either Methodist or Waldensian) and in local congregations.

There are many studies on the historical process, but I wish to share here how it was technically possible. As we know, when Ecumenical dialogue is mature enough to dare something out of one another's comfort zone, there comes a technicality, meaning an objective reason preventing what Christians actually want.

The key technical word is '*Patto*' (Covenant). What is dearest to Methodists' identity is the Covenant Service, the celebration of the renewal of the Covenant between God and God's people: 'Thou art mine, and I am thine'. What some Methodists ignore is that the concept of covenant is central also in Reformed tradition (and also that John Calvin was more interested in sanctification than in predestination, but that is something for another article).



Rev. Peter Ciaccio.

In 1532 Waldensians joined the Swiss Reformation, formally becoming a Reformed Church; in their long and interesting history they had at least another covenant before 1975, namely the '*Patto di Unione*' in 1689. In 1655 the Waldensians who escaped extermination during the so-called 'Piedmontese Easter' massacre ('Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints', sang John Milton) found refuge in Geneva; 34 years later they reconquered their Valleys (the Glorious Homecoming) and took the solemn oath to keep the union between local Churches. The plural is the key: in 1689 free Churches and free individuals joined together; the same formula was kept for the 'integration' between Waldensians and Methodists. Thus, the official name of the *Chiesa evangelica valdese* – Unione *delle chiese metodiste e valdesi*.

This is how it was technically (and ecclesiologically) possible.

Peter Ciaccio

During Euan's visit we went to **Ely Cathedral** and to the **University Library** to look at the Waldensian manuscripts. It was exciting to see also the document with the minutes of the first meeting of the **Committee in 1825**!



Euan Cameron at Ely.



Euan Cameron and Richard Newbury at the University Library.

Le Maestrine – Un viaggio dalle Valli Valdesi a Riesi

Over the years I have been to many concerts given by the Coretto Valdese – the Youth Choir based in Torre Pellice. Founded 50+ years ago, their director for the last 30+ years, Cristina Pretto has been a real source of inspiration. They have put on many themed performances, from Negro Spirituals, Tenemos Esperanza (South America) as well as traditional songs from the valleys and of course hymns and choruses (not just in Italian).

In April 2024 a small group went to Riesi (Sicily) with their latest concert. Called 'Maestrine – Un viaggio dalle Valli Valdesi a Riesi', the focus this time was on Waldensian history – namely the young women who in the nineteenthth century left the security of family life in the Valleys of northern

Italy to become the teachers of little schools in Sicily. The Waldensian Valleys at that time had unusually high levels of literacy, thanks to the many small 'Beckwith' schools scattered around the villages where the children were taught to read and write so that they could read the Bible for themselves. After 1848 when Waldensians were given civil and political rights, they were no longer persecuted for their faith and could leave the ghetto of their valleys where they had been forced to remain for centuries. In 1860 the Evangelisation committee was founded in order to coordinate the opening of new churches throughout the Italian peninsula (unified as Italy in 1861) and to send pastors, evangelists, followed by teachers for the schools.



The Coretto's production followed one such teacher from Angrogna, 'Jeanne Bonnet', who never actually existed but whose life and experiences were taken from the many letters, reports and photos in the Waldensian Archives in Torre Pellice. With grants from foreign committees such as Waldensian Church Missions, these young ladies, often from farming families with not much money, were able to continue to study and then to follow their vocation to serve their church as teachers.

By using silent sepia video clips and a narrator, the story of 'Jeanne's' decision to serve as a teacher and her experiences were interspersed by songs – a mixture of traditional songs from the valleys, a Waldensian Hymn, an Irish blessing, a Negro Spritual and an Exiles song from Chile, 'Todo Cambia'. Thanks to the two sold-out performances during Synod in August, locals and family could enjoy this spectacular achievement – made particularly significant because one of the Coretto singers from Torre Pellice now works in the Waldensian Nursery School in Riesi – so following in the footsteps of 'Jeanne'. Following much public demand, there have now been other performances of this show, which in my experience is one of their best – and the bar was very high.

Nicky Raddon

Pentecost and Confirmations in Torre Pellice

The church was packed, the service was followed with enthusiasm, also thanks to the participation of the choirs and of the children of the Sunday School; and after hugs and greetings we had a great lunch with more friendship and joy.





As Christian churches, do we know how to proclaim peace? Yes, I suppose, maybe

The superlative William Shakespeare in *Hamlet* wrote: 'Love all, believe few, and harm none'. For many Shakespeare is, to this day, a teacher of life ... and so is he for me. Reading these words, I recognised a profound theological lesson: 'Love everyone' (see for example: Mark 12:31; John 3:16–17), 'believe a few' (Proverbs 3:5. And I would add: 'believe in God's Word and His promises, believe in the teachings of Jesus, and believe in the whispers of the Holy Spirit who guides you through life'), 'and do no evil to anyone' (see for example: Exodus 20:13; Luke 22:50–51; Romans 12:17). As I ironically suggested with the title, in recent years within our congregations there has been a resurgence of talk about 'peace'. Not as an abstract concept, but as a serious theological, ethical and faith problem. What does it mean to proclaim the Gospel? What do we have to say as Churches? Do we have something to say? Yes, we have something to say, and we want to affirm that violence is not the solution and that peace is to be sought without weapons. I know my opinion for some is an 'unpopular opinion'. But I cannot stop asking myself: as a person of faith and as a minister of religion, what can I do against this escalation of hatred and death? I am a Waldensian pastor in Italy ... in little Italy there are many military bases; from north to south, from east to west (I live in Riesi and have two within a few kilometres). In an armed territory where weapons are so widespread, how can I successfully preach peace? When war 'is in the air', what words can I choose to proclaim the Gospel? ... but above all, how can I use the word 'peace' without someone shouting at me: 'hypocrite, you speak because you do not know what it is like to live in a country where war is fought in the streets of your city!' In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Shakespeare wrote another truth: 'All men know how to give counsel and comfort to the sorrow they do not feel'. This is often true, but the Bible reminds us: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions, that by the consolation with which we ourselves are comforted by God, we may comfort those who are in any affliction' (2 Corinthians 1:3–4). In this I believe, in this I have faith, in this I have hope. I cannot (no-one can) fully understand and experience another person's pain and suffering. But God can! God consoles us and gives us the words and gestures to console 'those who are in any affliction'. Proclaiming peace, opposing violence, weapons and revenge is not easy. But as a believer who puts himself at the service of God, I abandon myself to the hope that a different world is possible ... In the meantime, Lord, please, together with my sisters and brothers in Christ, make me an instrument of your project of peace between peoples!

Giovanni Bernardini

Paolo Ricca (1936–2024)



Members of churches the world over – Waldensian, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike – were greatly saddened by Paolo Ricca's death. I was deeply affected since he had been like an older brother to me all my life, his mother being my godmother Armanda. He was also one of my Catechism teachers when he was junior minister in Turin, and when I grew up he became a very special friend.

After studying at the Waldensian Faculty of Theology (1954–58), he studied in the US (1958–59) and in Basel (1959–61), where he also served as a minister for the Italian community that never forgot him and revered him forever. There he studied with **Karl Barth** and **Oscar Cullmann** who supervised his PhD on the IV Gospel. He was ordained at the 1962 Synod and served in Forano and Turin. The **World Alliance of Reformed Churches** designated him as their official reporter for the **Second Vatican Council** (1962–65), for which he wrote a theological comment translated into various languages – he was fluent in French, English and German. This experience led him forever to strong ecumenical beliefs and activities. In 1976 the **Waldensian Faculty of Theology** made him their Professor of History of the Church and practical Theology until 2002. He wrote innumerable books, and prefaces to many more. For 40 years he was also the curator of the **Martin Luther** series published by **Claudiana**: number 20 will come out soon. He was part of a large number of associations, not just in Italy, like the **World Council of Churches** and held various honorary PhDs, Heidelberg included. In 2022 he was the

first Waldensian ever to hold a Lectio Petri at **Basilica di S. Pietro**, invited by **Cardinal Ravasi**, who held him in high esteem and great friendship.

Above all he was a wonderful communicator; whether at huge gatherings or at small meetings, at 'lay' lectures or at Church groups, he was always preaching. When he was on a pulpit, even the easily bored or distracted would listen attentively to every word and he could get away with long, always captivating sermons. As our friend **Peter Ciaccio** emphasised, he taught us so much – above all: never undermine your interlocutors, answer every question, however irrelevant or silly. Lead your audience by the hand without lowering the level of your discussion. Ricca would attract any listener, firmly believing that his task was to be understood. Those who heard him would remember what he said and his name would fill any hall. He would accept invitations from small villages to major cities, and yet his constant humility always amazed me. He never forgot his origins (he was born in Torre Pellice), he loved the Valleys and, as Peter wrote, he was very ecumenical and very Waldensian.

For my part I can add with pride that when he presented some of my books he always said: 'Erica can write!'

He was married to the lovely **Stella**, a fantastic pianist and piano teacher, was father to two children and they had just celebrated their 60th anniversary!

Thank you Lord, for gifting us Paolo!

Erica Scroppo

Pope Francis (1936-2025)

Pope Francis doesn't need any presentation, but there is something special that friends from our Churches who have met him can add. In 2015 he accepted an invitation to attend Turin's Waldensian church (built under Charles Beckwith's supervision, who had also designed it! and heavily sponsored by our Committee and the Banker Giuseppe Malan), which was a remarkable event! The then **Moderator Eugenio Bernardini** told me that originally they were thinking of Torre Pellice, but it would have been difficult for security … Anyway the result was very special and can be found in detail in the Summer Review of 2015 (look online for no. 126). Several things were exceptional: the **Pope asked the Waldensians for forgiveness** for the 'un-Christian, even inhuman way they were treated over the centuries'. He was given a reprint of the first French Bible commissioned by the poor Waldensians after joying the Reformation in 1532. Owning it was a grave offence for the Inquisition and might lead to execution: **Francis kissed it**! The Bible is now in the entrance of the Vatican Dicastery for Ecumenism and Dialogue. And at the end of the service, he 'accepted' the invocation of the Holy Spirit by a woman, the deacon, now **Moderator Alessandra Trotta**, which apparently is unusual.

ESN

Here are the memories of **Rev. Tim Macquiban** when he was minister in Rome

Papa Francesco:
A personal reflection on his papacy from my time in Rome

I'm writing this on the day of the late Pope's funeral after watching the service in St Peter's Square and the journey from there to the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore through the streets of the city of which he was bishop to his final simple resting place in the space where he prayerfully started and ended so many of his earthly journeys as Pope. The homily of Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re summarised so much of what many had expressed in the days since Pope Francis's death of his leadership of a Church aspiring to be 'a house for all with its doors always open' and a 'field hospital for the wounded'. While the official teachings of that Church haven't always moved sufficiently to make that a reality, Francis's life in its humility and simplicity have tried to mirror the life of the saint (of Assisi) whose name he took on with its more open outlook, on those of other faiths, the poor and the marginalised, and its appreciation of the environment in which he lived, what he called 'our common home', the earth and all human and animalkind contained within it. I want just to highlight some aspects of this in the brief encounters I had with him in the five years I was privileged to serve at Pont Sant'Angelo as Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome.

Evangelisation was at the heart of a ministry devoted to proclamation of the gospel by action as well as word. Early on in his papacy, Rome hosted a Jubilee Year of Mercy where the image of the Forgiving Father was a motif for leadership which constantly sought to temper doctrinal rigidity with a pastoral sensitivity which turned its back on the more traditional judgemental attitudes regarding race and class, gender and sexuality, breaking down barriers. We remember the pictures of Francis's visits to Lampedusa and Lesbos showing solidarity with **refugees and migrants**, in contrast to many Italian politicians. We saw him visiting the Regina Coeli prison to wash the inmates' feet even this last Maundy Thursday and to welcome those of different sexual orientations to the Vatican. 'Who am I the judge?' was perhaps one of his lasting quotes.

And this was reflected also in the reforms he pushed in the Church itself, latterly focused on **Synodality** but even ten years ago, when at the Synod of Bishops on the Family he introduced the voices of more lay persons, as well as women and younger persons. They were given key roles in the Church to try to share decision-making more widely. I remember this was exemplified by Pope Francis's appearance at coffee time to chat more widely, when before his predecessor had cocooned themselves in some back room. Just as he chose to live at Santa Marta and not the Apostolic Palace. Just as he forsook red shoes and fine vestments (buried in his ordinary orthopedic shoes) and rode around in more modest transport.

His off-the-cuff remarks, his smile and humour, his gentle chiding of fellow cardinals ('Shepherds should carry with them the smell of the sheep') not to be Princes of the Church but its servants, all these meant that the Pope became regarded as a **Pope for the People**, especially those at the ends of the earth and at its margins, for whom he had a passion and affection.

Of course, his active encouragement of the conversations with other Christian churches and other faiths made my **ecumenical** work easier as we cultivated Methodist and Catholic relationships with the city and with the wider communions. Being there for the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the international dialogue enabled us to host the World Methodist Council visit in 2017 when a private audience was given, when we each got copies of the *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si* encyclicals presented to us. Such warm relations were evident too in the first visits of the Pope to a Waldensian church in Torino and All Saints Anglican church in Rome.

So much more could be said, but I leave you with the man who set aside worldly pleasures and loved his people, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, with a **passion for sharing the Gospel** with all God's children, especially the young and the vulnerable, especially those far off, like the son returning home to the Forgiving Father. Catholicism has lost a leader who inspired devotion among its followers and fellow Christians, a holy man who reached out to others, striving for justice and peace in God's world.

Tim Maquiban



Tim Maquiban and Pope Francis in Rome.

WALDENSIAN CHURCH MISSIONS, VAUDOIS PASTORS FUND
& CANON ARMSTRONG BEQUEST - SUMMARY ACCOUNTS
Year ended 31/12/24

INCOME	***2023***		**2024**	
Individual Donations	*5570 47*		2129 00	
Tax Refund	*787 50*		345 00	
Legacies				
Miscellaneous			75 00	
		6357 97		2549 00
Vaudois Clergy Trust	*1688 46*			
Publications	*1007 50*		913 18	
Dividend & Interest	*4520 05*		4949 56	
		7216 01		5862 74
TOTAL		*13573 98*		8411 74
EXPENDITURE				
Payments to Italy				
Student	*250 00*		86 55	
Casa Unionista			3401 89	
		250 00		3488 44
Review	*466 00*		484 00	
Deputation			440 90	
Sec/Post/Stationery	*3084 59*		2512 95	
Publications	*459 32*			
Sundries			220 99	
		4009 91		3658 84
TOTAL		*4259 91*		7147 28
NET INCOME		***9314 07***		**1264 46**
Opening Bank Balance		*25609 24*		34923 31
Income		*13573 98*		8411 74
Expenditure		*-4259 91*		-7147 28
Closing Bank Balance		*34923 31*		36187 77

NOTES

Income	2023 Donations includes 1 single donation £2811 2024 Vaudois Clergy Truat funds awaited
	Bank balances are held to fund future support for theological students

Government gives to Waldenses

Too good to be true? No! For every donation which you make to the Waldensian Church Missions, the Government will add a further 25%, providing you are a tax-payer.

Since 5 April 2000 the new Gift Aid scheme has replaced Deeds of Covenant and the process is much simpler. This applies to all donations of any size or frequency. Thus a gift of only £1 made once will be increased by 25% as will a monthly donation of £100.

All that is required is for the donor to complete a simple declaration in the form given below and to forward this to the Treasurer whose address is on the inside of the back page. Once this form has been completed it covers all future donations by the same person. Unlike Deeds of Covenant, you are not committed to regular giving for a number of years.

Some of you have already completed such a form, but for those who have not, I would urge you to consider seriously this opportunity for the Waldensian Church Missions to benefit from the Government's generosity, but more importantly, to enable our giving to our friends in Italy to be increased.



WALDENSIAN CHURCH MISSIONS
Registered Charity No. 277255

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To: **Waldensian Church Missions, 5 Woodgate Close, Woodgate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO20 3TA**

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. . . . . .

Postcode . . . . . Tel. no. . . . . .

would like all donations I make to Waldensian Church Missions from the date of this declaration to be treated as Gift Aid donations. I understand I must be paying income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the amount being reclaimed by the Missions. I understand that I can cancel this Gift Aid declaration at any time.

Signature of donor . . . . . Date . . . . . .

The Waldensian Church

It is the native Protestant Church of Italy whose origins pre-date the Reformation. It arose from an evangelical movement founded in the 12th century by Waldo, a rich merchant from Lyon, who was to inspire St Francis: he gave all away to the poor and started preaching the Gospel in the vernacular, which caused conflict with the Papacy. Travelling in pairs the Waldensian itinerant preachers, having learnt the Scriptures by heart, set off to found underground communities from Sicily to Russia. The ensuing persecution by the Inquisition drove them into their mountain fastness in the Alpine Valleys of northwest Italy, where they remain in what are still called the Waldensian Valleys. At their Synod in 1532 they voted to join the Genevan Reformation, a decision that brought even more persecution upon this exposed outpost of Protestantism. Their sufferings were recorded in Milton's famous sonnet "On The Late Massacre in Piedmont". Their survival down to the present has been a remarkable testament of faith.

The Waldensian community was emancipated in 1848, but did not reach full freedom until 1984. Since the Italian unification in 1860 they have established churches throughout Italy and, following emigration, in the USA, Argentina and Uruguay. In 1975 the Italian Methodist Church combined with them and they hold a common annual Synod, which is the controlling authority of the Church and takes place in Torre Pellice. The Churches of Rio de la Plata have their own Synod, Board and Moderator.

The 60 parishes have founded 120 outreach activities ranging from schools, hospitals, children's and old people's homes, radio stations, and ecumenical community centres, often catering for the needs of the most deprived and mafia-ridden parts of Italy, especially the disadvantaged South and the new immigrant communities.

The Waldensian Church has a theological college in Rome, a publishing house, Claudiana, and a weekly paper, *Riforma*.

The English Committee of the Waldensian Church Missions

This was founded in 1825 as a support group for the Waldensian Church in Italy. Since 1979 its finances, together with those of the Vaudois Pastors Fund, have been administered by Trustees under the terms of the Scheme drawn up by the Charity Commission and dated 18 January that year.

The Committee seek to arouse interest and financial support in England and Wales for the Waldensian Church. Twice yearly we publish a *Waldensian Review* and occasionally other literature. We also arrange meetings for Waldensian pastors visiting this country and support students of Theology who want to spend the compulsory 'year abroad' studying in this country.

There are similar Waldensian support groups in Scotland, USA and in various European countries.

The English Committee in aid of the Waldensian Church Missions
Established 1825

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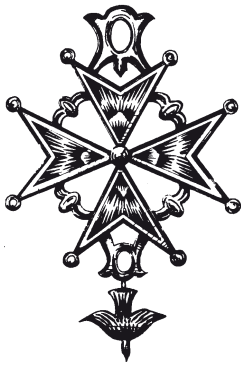

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