



### Meet Paolo Naso

Professor of Political Science at La Sapienza University of Rome and Coordinator of the Masters Program on Religions and Cultural Mediation. Author of several books on the role of the religious communities in the public space, Naso is a lay person, active in the Waldensian Church in various positions: Former Director of the Media Program of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy, he currently serves as National Coordinator of BCT (p.1). Paolo is married to Angela and has a 23 year old son, Daniele.

### National Office News

#### • OFFICIAL ITALIAN LIAISON APPOINTED

The Waldensian Board in Italy, La Tavola Valdese, confirmed Dr. Paolo Naso as a liaison person for the US partners of the Waldensian church. The letter from Moderator Maria Bonafede states, "His experience, talents and commitment in the life of the Church and BCT are very good reasons to recognize him in this role, hoping that he'll be instrumental to even deeper transatlantic relations."

#### • TEN FOR TWELVE CAMPAIGN

Current donors, friends of the Society, friends of friends and relatives of friends and donors, are all invited to participate in the \$10 for Twelve Campaign. The Board of Directors recently voted to appeal to 1000 individuals with a request for gifts of \$10 per month for 12 months. The hope is to raise annually \$120,000 strictly to support current programs, like Being Church Together in Italy and future ministries, like Urban Ministry Development in the Waldensian Church in South America. Email or call the office to request a *Welcome Kit*.

#### • SPRING BOARD MEETING HELD IN VALDESE, NC

The Society held its board meeting May 20-21, 2011 at the new Town Hall in Valdese, NC. The Board had the honor of several guests attending: Dr. Theodore Runyon and Dr. David Jenkins of Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA; Mr. Jack Ferlino, former board member from Allentown, PA; Mr. Frank Cicero, first-time author of *Relative Strangers* from Evanston, IL, and Professor Daniele Garrone of La Facolta Seminary in Rome.



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# AWS UPDATES



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### WHAT IS BCT?

Italy is more and more an immigration country. Despite anti-immigration policies adopted by the Government, the number of persons who entered the country legally or illegally jumped last year.

The reasons are:

- 1) thousands of miles of unmonitored sea coasts;
- 2) possibility of those who enter the country to find work, often undocumented and underpaid;
- 3) unrest at home due to economic, political and religious causes

Since the Government refuses to recognize the immigrations, integration policies are meek and poorly implemented.

The presence of Presbyterian and Methodist immigrants – especially from Ghana and Nigeria – is growing. The concentration is in the NE region where established Italian congregations have been transformed and enriched by the presence of African brothers and sisters, and new multi-cultural congregations have emerged.

In the face of these developments, the strategy of the Union of Waldensian and Methodist Churches has been to promote multi-cultural congregations and facilitate a mutual integration. Activities that seek to establish, strengthen, or revitalize multicultural congregations is the "core business" of the program Being Church Together. The program is managed in cooperation with the Federation of Italian Protestant Churches (FCEI).

## Being Church Together – A Program Promoting Multicultural Congregations and Facilitating Mutual Integration

Reported by Brad Lewis, President

For me the high point of the last seven months was a week-long trip in March to Italy to personally see the work being done with immigrant groups and multi-racial congregations as part of Being Church Together (BCT). Michael Otte, Francis Rivers, Sheila Young, and I, and for part of the time, Duncan Hanson, joined Paolo Naso, National Coordinator for the program, in visiting churches and mission sites in Milan, Bologna, Parma, Palermo, the suburbs of Naples, and Rome. We were welcomed warmly and had many opportunities to talk with both Italian and immigrant pastors and lay leaders about the difficult but inspiring work they are undertaking.

*Pictured Above L to R: Brad Lewis, Rev. Michael Otte (AWS Treasurer), Paolo Naso, Pastor of Milan Methodist Church Eliana Briante, Francis Rivers (AWS Executive Director), young adults Kassim Conteh and Hannah Markay.*

At every stop we saw evidence of the importance of BCT both for the immigrants and the Italian members of the Waldensian and Methodist churches—and for outreach and social witness as well to an Italian society that is not always coping well with the fact that immigrants are in Italy to stay.

Multi-racial churches and their ministries

provide education, shelter, food, job placement, aid to victims of exploitation, and many other services, with varied partners, amid countless daily challenges but with a vibrancy and conviction that the world really can be changed. And we saw healthy examples of a collective life guided by the powerful vision of *Revelation 7: 9-17*, of "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from, all tribes and peoples and languages," rather than the fear and violence that so often greets the immigrants—in Italy and North America as well.

At the end of our visit we met the governing body of the Waldensian and Methodist churches, La Tavola, to discuss how best AWS, Italian Waldensians and Methodists, and denominational partners, especially PC(USA) and RCA, could work together to maximize the resources we bring to the task of becoming a multi-racial church and extending Waldensian ministries of all kinds.

My long-run hopes are that BCT will continue to grow in Italy and that as AWS supports it financially and by acquainting others with it, an increasing number of our board members and other North Americans will learn about, support, and even experience first-hand the effects such an intentional, multi-racial strategy can have on congregations and society.

## Improving Relations with South America

At the request of the Board of Directors and in order to facilitate communication and coordination with AWS and ecumenical partners in the US with the Waldensian Church in El Río de La Plata, S America a USA Working Group was recently appointed by La Mesa.

Excerpt from the letter by Marcelo Nicolau, Moderator

"With this note we would like to inform you that the Mesa Valdense, after conversations with AWS Director Francis Rivers, has decided to appoint a Working Group to help in all the brotherly and institutional relationships between AWS in the U.S. and the Iglesia Evangélica Valdense in the Río de la Plata.

This group is formed by Dario Barolin, Jorge Roland, Analía Alvarez and Federico Plenc.

This group is expected to facilitate communications between Mesa Valdense and the AWS, and to cooperate in definition and follow-up of programs, working projects, learning, internships and brotherly collaboration in general.

Among the tasks/projects in which the Working Group is already involved, we should mention:

- Internship of Annie Paulson (June-August)
- Participation in the DWELL Project
- Possible presence of two members of the working Group at the 2012 AWS Spring Meeting
- 2012 Travel/Study Seminar in Río de La Plata
- Consultation on AWS collaboration with U.S. denominational partners and the Union Seminary in Buenos Aires (I.S.E.D.E.T.)



## Mesa Valdense 2011

The 48<sup>th</sup> synod assembly of the Waldensian Church of Río de la Plata was held February third through the sixth. During this time the leaders of the church were elected.

From Left to Right: Dario Michelin-Salomon, Silvia Benech, Mabel Gonnet, Marcelo Nicolau and Mario Genre-Bert



## Rome: A Crossroads of Religions 2011

### Second Successful Execution of Immersion Course

In collaboration with Facolta Valdese di Teologia (Waldensian Theological Seminary), Starr King School for the Ministry- Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA; Union Theological Seminary in New York; Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, VA and the American Waldensian Society held an international, interdisciplinary course in ecumenical theology during January 2011. The course was another huge success, sponsoring 38 participants from the US. Rev. Dr. Gabriella Lettini of GTU was the primary program director and the Society is indebted to her for her investments in the program.

Rev. Dr. Daniele Garrone, professor at La Facolta was instrumental in the program as well. Both are pictured above with students around as they listen to Dr. Garrone lecture right on the streets of Rome.

Two additional faculty members, Dr. Dawn De Vries, Union PSCE and Dr. Euan Cameron of Union, NYC accompanied the students. The Society provided \$16,000 in scholarships and faculty stipends and Rostan Family Foundation of Valdese, NC provided another \$9,000 for students of PSCE, VA. The group included Protestants from different denominations,

Roman Catholics, 1 Greek Orthodox, 1 Coptic Orthodox, several Unitarian Universalists, 2 Jews, 1 Buddhist and a few humanists.

Selected lecturers and guests: **Maria Bonafede**, Moderator of the Waldensian Church Univ, New Testament Prof **Francois Bovon**, Harvard Univ, New Testament Prof **Fulvio Ferrario**, La Facolta, Systematic Theology Prof **Corinna Landi**, La Facolta, Early Christian Church&Archeology **Gianna Urizio**, Pres of FDEI and journalist at Protestantesimo **Lothar Vogel** – La Facolta, History Prof **Martin Walraff**, Theological Seminary, Univ of Basel, History

## John Lafferty and Daughter, Catherine, to South American Synod . . .

When persons in the United States think of Waldensians, minds usually turn first to Italy. We need, however, also to remember the vibrant group of Waldensians who live in El Río de La Plata (Uruguay and Argentina).

Waldensians arrived in Uruguay in 1857 and inaugurated their first church building in La Paz in 1893, the same year that Waldensian immigrants arrived in North Carolina. The Waldensians who settled in Uruguay came from different places in the Waldensian Valleys: Villar Pellice, Torre Pellice, Rorá, Prarostino, San Germano, Pramollo, Inverso Pinasca, and Pomaretto.

Approximately 15,000 Waldensians currently live in Uruguay and Argentina. The Iglesia Valdense del Río de La Plata includes 24 congregations and 20 specialized ministries that address the needs of persons on the fringes of society. The church is committed to making life better for all people and to conducting its ministry in an open and democratic manner. Like their counterparts in Italy, Waldensians in El Río de La Plata are dedicated to communicating the message, based on the Gospels, that believers are "set free by Christ for personal and public responsibility."

For the past several years, the American Waldensian Society has sent representatives to the synod meeting of the Iglesia Valdense. The synod traditionally takes place during the first week of February and often is held at the



Parque 17 de febrero, a camp located on the shores of the Río de La Plata and at a distance of approximately ten kilometers from Colonia Valdense.

In 2011, Dr. John Lafferty and his daughter, Catherine, attended the synod and brought greetings to the 100 delegates on behalf of AWS.

One of the primary purposes of the Society is to increase mutual understanding, cooperation and support between the Waldensian Church and its international, ecumenical partners in the US.

Accordingly, AWS seeks to encourage and facilitate relationships between individuals, judicatory bodies, seminaries and church-related organizations. In an effort to give substance to this mission, the

Society is planning a travel/study seminar to El Río de La Plata for late-May or early-June of 2012. In order to lay the groundwork for this trip, AWS Office Manager, Sheila Young, will travel to El Río de la Plata in August 2011 and collaborate with the members of the U.S.A. Working Group (See sidebar on this page) to establish an itinerary and work out logistics. More information about the 2012 trip will be forthcoming in the next issue of the newsletter.

## Upcoming Events

**August 6, 2011**  
**Waldensian Festival, Valdese NC**  
Celebrates the Glorious Return on Main Street annually with a community festival.

**October 9-10, 2011**  
**Fall Board of Directors Meeting**  
Amgad Beblawi, new Europe Area Secretary for the PC(USA), invited the 2011 Fall Board Meeting of AWS be held at the Presbyterian Center in Louisville, KY.

**February, 2012**  
**Annual February 17<sup>th</sup> Celebrations in the USA**  
New York City at First Hungarian Reformed Valdese, NC at Waldensian Presbyterian Church



**August 21-26, 2011**  
**Synod of the Waldensian and Methodist Churches in Torre Pellice, Italy**  
Rev. Laura Jervis, Executive Director of West Side Senior and Supportive Housing and Board Member of the AWS will represent the Society in August.

**2011**  
**1861-2011 HAPPY BIRTHDAY ITALY**  
150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Italy's unification is being celebrated across the country this year. The pride of the country can be seen and felt as you walk the streets this year. For more information, visit the official site, <http://www.italiaunita150.it/>.

## DAVIDSON COLLEGE - Coltrane Visiting Professors

The Lester Coltrane III Visiting Professorship in Religion enables Davidson College to bring a Reformed thinker to campus every other year for one semester. The 2011 Spring Semester saw two innovations: Paolo Naso and Daniele Garrone. They shared the opportunity to teach at Davidson, and both Naso and Garrone are members of the Waldensian Church in Italy. Naso was on campus from January until Spring Break, and Garrone from late-February through Commencement.

Naso taught the first half of two courses—a senior seminar entitled "From the 'Secular City' to the Resurgence of Religion: A Theological Approach," and a course entitled "Anti-Judaism, Anti-Semitism, Xenophobia: A Protestant Theological Perspective." Garrone taught the second half of both.

According to Dr. Doug Ottati, Craig Family Distinguished Professor in Reformed Theology and Justice Ministry, the courses were very well received. "Students were exposed to first rate teaching and scholarship and learned along the way a good bit about the distinctive witness and history of the Waldensian community." While at Davidson, Naso and Garrone interacted with faculty members in various departments and had the opportunity to participate in an informal seminar offered by Davidson College Presbyterian Church. The presence of Naso and Garrone also created the opportunity for conversations about the possible establishment of programs for undergraduates in Rome. "All in all," Ottati concludes, the 2011 innovations in the Coltrane Professorship were "a most rewarding and enriching experience for the College."