

**Richard, Pinuccia, Stefania, Daniele, Luca, Mattia**

Helping a church to plant new churches and start new ministries in Trento, Italy

As the top line says, with this newsletter I have reached a milestone and chalked up a ton. The number is a bit arbitrary, not least because there have been over 60 email only newsletters that do not get counted. So I will hold off the celebrations for another few months, when my 25th anniversary newsletter comes up. However, there is much to celebrate in this 100th issue as well.

**In the (new) church**

On April 23, the church had its own milestone, celebrating its first service in the new hall. It is about three times as big as the hall we had been using, where it was often a tight squeeze with people sitting on the stairs or on window sills. So the new hall feels very roomy. However, the first Sunday was anyway standing room only, with a dozen people standing up until the children left for Sunday School, but that was because we do not have enough chairs rather than not enough space. The challenge will be, in any case, to fill up this hall as well.

The other big difference is that the church has bought the hall rather than renting it. Not only are the mortgage payments less than what we were paying in rent, but in 20 years' time it will be all

paid for, so that we (or rather our children) will not have to worry about that expense. This has come about 50 years after ECM started working at Trento, and is the result the some wise and long term thinking on the part of the church leadership over the past couple of decades, as they prepared for this moment. It is also maybe appropriate that the first Protestant owned church in the city of the Council of Trent was opened a few months before the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

The desire is, of course, to use the hall as much as possible, and not just on Sunday mornings. The refugee ministry and sports ministry, for example, have been thinking about how to open it up to serve both the immigrants at Trento, and the people in the area around the building. Now that the hall has been opened, we have to see what we can actually do. The limiting factor is the human resources: with work and other commitments, and the fact that a lot of people in the church do not live at Trento (since there are only two evangelical churches in the province outside of Trento), it is not easy for church members to go to the hall during the week.



**Before and after:** the first photo I have of a church service (1996), and how it is now. Of course, there is the church planted at Rovereto to add to the now picture as well.

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It is hard to give an idea of how the church hall looks with only words and photos. I have prepared a short video that you can watch to have a guided tour. You can see it at <http://www.laparola.net/hall.wmv>

We are now less than two months away from the church children's camp (16-18 June). Pinuccia and I are organising it together with Jury and Gloria, with help in the kitchen and with some activities from Leandro and Maddalena, and Mary, as well as from two teenagers who are in training, Samuel and Gaia.

A couple of snapshots of other directions in which the church is reaching out: One weekend in March the Christian groups (IFES) at the universities of north-east Italy had a camp together. A group has just been started at Trento thanks to the witness of Bruno, a Brazilian student. At the camp there were Bruno, two of his

### Points for prayer and thanksgiving

- Give thanks for the hall, and the 50 years of evangelical witness that it represents.
- Pray that we would have good relationships with the neighbourhood of the hall.
- That the hall will be well and often used.
- For the preparations and running of the children's camp.
- For the different ministries the church members are involved in, for example the university, the persecuted church, using sport, and others.

friends, plus two students from the church at Trento and one from Rovereto who are studying in other cities. It is great to see the university ministry taking off again - it remains close to my heart and was the main reason why I came to Trento in the first place. The following weekend, Ruben (a Brazilian missionary working with refugees), Latif (the pastor who fled from Pakistan) and two other Christian refugees from Pakistan drove to Switzerland to speak at the United Nations about religious freedom in Pakistan. Our ministry to refugees is not only to help with their immediate needs, but to give them a political voice as well.

