

# RICHARD AND PINUCCIA WILSON

## SERVING IN TRENTO, ITALY

With Stefania, Daniele, Luca and Mattia

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Over the past few weeks, the restrictions in Italy have gradually been lifted, as the corona virus is under control (even though there are still more than 250 new cases and 50 deaths every day). The main limitations that still exist are social distancing and masks, no meetings or crowds, and everything done on-line or with a lot of hand washing. There are however some exceptions, as I will explain here.

### In the church

When Italy started to open up again after the lockdown, the Catholic Church put pressure on the government to allow church services, and was successful. Soon after, other religious groups made similar agreements with the government, and church was the only place it was possible to have meetings, even if with many restrictions. Our church has had three services so far. It has been great to see friends again, but it is not like before. Greeting without Italian kisses and hugs and speaking at a distance with a mask is not the same thing. The services must be significantly shorter than before. To maintain distances, the capacity of the hall is about half of what it usually is, and children can not come. Only about a third of the people are coming each Sunday, partly due to the restrictions about children and partly because there is still some fear about going out and people have made a habit of staying at home. The services are still streamed on Internet for those who do not come to the "live" service. The church leadership will need to do a lot of thinking over the summer to work out what sort of church we can be and should be in the new culture.

During lockdown, two people started regularly attending the mid-week Zoom meetings of the church. **Nino** is the patient of one of the church members who is a physiotherapist. After many months of conversations, he started logging on to the church meetings. He has got to the stage of writing his prayers before the meeting and reading them when we pray for each other. A big change from being a "dedicated atheist" a few months ago. **Alice**

is a university student who has experienced God's presence in the past but then lost it. She wants to try a new approach now and, knowing nothing about the Bible, contacted us through the church web site to participate in some of our Bible studies. After the first meeting she wrote, "Yesterday's meeting was very interesting, and necessary for me. I don't know what God has in mind for me, but it was the perfect Word that I needed in this period." She was also very moved when someone prayed for her in the meeting, it was the first time someone had actually prayed for her. It would have been better to be able to meet them both personally, but I can see spiritual interest and growth over Internet. Pray for Nino and Alice, that they will come to a mature faith in Christ, and despite the current limitations enjoy the fellowship of the whole church.

### In the family

Stefania and Daniele finished school for the year on the 10th. After almost four months of school by Internet, it was a bigger relief than usual for them. However, with many usual summer activities not available this year, it will be hard to keep them occupied and interested for the three months of holidays.

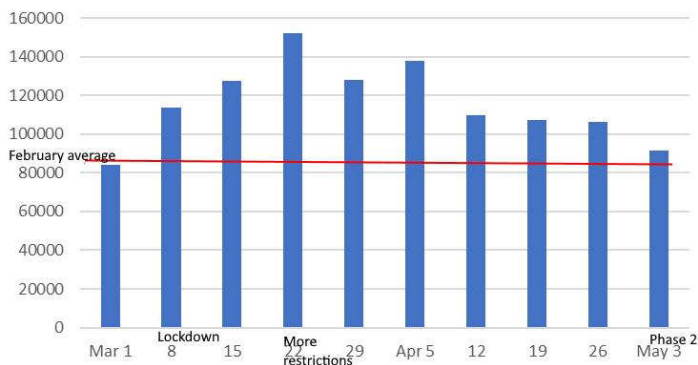
On the other hand, the provincial government decided to reopen the preschools in mid-June, principally to help working parents. They will also be kept open for a month longer than usual, until the end of July. However, there are many restrictions there as well, so the preschool is not like before, and we decided to not send Luca and Mattia back. Pinuccia however did not have a choice, so is back at work now. She is not too happy about this (due to health risks, and the restrictions on what the children can do at preschool), along with most of the teachers! She will however probably take leave in July, partly because we are planning to go to Sicily for a few weeks towards the end of the month. In the meantime, I will be looking after the children and the home while she is at work.

At the moment, I do have some help with the house since Pinuccia's parents are still here, as their three week trip in February has now stretched to four months. However, barring last minute obstacles, they will be returning to Sicily on the 19th. I will miss their company and their help!

### On the computer

My main project during lockdown was to rewrite and improve my Italian Bible reading app for iOS. The current app is so old, that Apple was going to remove it from its store at the end of June. This meant having to buy a new Macintosh computer, setting it up on the dining room table after lunch most days and putting it away before dinner, and doing some programming whilst the other seven in the extended family wandered around the house. But I made the deadline, the new app has been sent and is waiting for approval, and I know it will be very appreciated by my users.

The usage of my web site on the Bible in Italian has measured the effects of lockdown on Italian society.



### Prayer and thanksgiving points

- Give thanks that the situation has improved greatly in Italy.
- Give thanks that we can meet together as a church, and pray that our fellowship, worship, witness, and church life will not just return to normal, but be improved through what has happened.
- For Nino and Alice, that they might continue to grow in faith.
- For Pinuccia working at school this month.
- For our summer together as a family.
- Give thanks that I was able to get the new iOS app, and pray that it will help people read the Bible everywhere.

In February, in an average week 85000 people visited the site at least once, a number that remained fairly constant each week. Then in the first week of lockdown there was a one third increase in the number of users of the site, and the numbers kept growing as further restrictions were added. Then there was a gradual decline, and by the beginning of May with the first loosening of the restrictions, the number of users was almost back to the pre-lockdown levels. I don't know if the sudden increase was due to increased spiritual interest or more free time, but it was probably both, although with other sites reporting similar increases maybe it was mostly just having to stay at home.

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