

In the family

With the help of my parents' frequent flyer points, we are getting a special treat this Christmas, as we are all going to Australia to spend a couple of weeks there. It will be an unofficial trip, with no formal meetings, although of course we will be going to church services on the Sundays. We will however have lots to do with the family. We have a few surprises lined up for the children, and Stefania is looking forward to getting her swimming costume out again to go to the pool and to the beach. For me, it will my first summer Christmas for 18 years, and will make a change from trying to get around through the snow as I usually do in that period. Although, being a Northern Hemispherian now, it won't seem the same without dashing through the snow in a one horse open sleigh. Pinuccia is keen on having a holiday, and seeing and doing the things she enjoyed on her two previous visits. It will be her first time there in Summer, which will give more opportunities to do things in the great Australian outdoors.

Lately we have had some guests staying with us who only spoke English. This meant that Stefania was forced to speak English. At least in theory. Although she does understand English well, she is losing her ability to speak it, and never does. Not even to me, replying to my English with Italian answers. So we kept telling her not to speak to the guests in Italian as they did not understand it, but it meant that she would not say anything rather than speak in English (because she couldn't, not because she didn't want to). Hopefully having to talk to her relatives in Australia will help, although the time there will be short. Daniele, in the smattering of words that he utters, does prefer English to Italian. But so did Stefania at that age. My guess is that it is easier to say simple words in English than in Italian.

A joy lately happened in Sunday School. A few volunteers from the children pray at the

beginning, and the older children are usually happy to. But the last two Sundays Stefania asked to be one of those who prayed, despite being one of the youngest and usually a bit shy. She prayed well too.

In the church

The main event in the church lately was a **weekend dedicated to the family**. A speaker came from America to do training and conferences in various places in Italy, and spent a weekend at Trento. He spoke once on Friday night, twice on Saturday afternoon and in church on Sunday on communication, couples and parenting. It was a helpful ministry for many people. As well as that, on Saturday morning, the ladies had a prayer meeting for their children and their schools. This was part of a world wide prayer day promoted by *Moms in Touch*, and a few ladies from other churches came to pray with them.

There is another major event coming up soon, with Carl Trueman from the Westminster Theological Seminary in the USA **speaking on December 8 on the Reformation and the evangelical faith**. It will be interesting to have a talk on the Reformation on a public holiday dedicated to Mary's Immaculate Conception, just a few meters away from where the Council of Trent was held! The day after he will be speaking



The Rovereto group: Suzanne Bikker, the new missionary, is third from the right, next to me.

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at a Catholic study centre at Trento on John Calvin, for the 500th anniversary of his birth. Then he will do a speaking tour of other cities in Italy. Through our new social-cultural association *Altrimenti*, we obtained funding for 60% of the cost of bringing the speaker to Italy from the sponsorship of a local bank, which was interesting in itself.

Last month there was a meeting for the Rovereto church planting project for all interested in helping to plant a church there. Of the 13 people present, eight were from Rovereto. (This is a lot different from the first such meeting two years ago, when there were just three of us, none of whom were from Rovereto.) We looked at how we could improve our current activities (Bible studies, services, bookstall and literature distributions), and considered some ideas for the future.

In the meantime, Suzanne Bikker has been away for the one month of her three month fund and prayer raising furlough

in the Netherlands. Although we are encouraging the other members of the group to be active and committed to the project, I am sure that her return to Rovereto to really start serving there will have a big impact on the church planting project. Keep praying for the growing witness in that city.

The **new "baby boom" group** in the Western Valsugana has started relatively well, although the fact that it is only every 2 weeks, and the high number of small children (who tend to get sick and make parents stay home), means that it has been hard to get much continuity and sense of group membership and ownership going yet. Since the group started, there has been the



The "Baby boom" group (with 2 babies missing).

announcement of another pregnancy in the group, so when the summer break comes we will be up to 11 children from Stefania's age down, spread over the six couples.

Upcoming events

*29 November: **Bookstall*** at the annual town market day at Rovereto. This time we will be collecting signatures for the "Micah Challenge" petition (of the *World Evangelical Alliance*).

*6 December: The **Sunday School's "Christmas market"*** in the church, to raise funds for the school they support in India. On 28 November there will be an afternoon together with the children to prepare the material that will be sold and to practise a new song that I have written for the occasion, that will be presented at the church service.

*8 December: **Three public conferences*** on "The evangelical faith, from the Reformation to the contemporary world" with Carl Trueman of the Westminster Theological Seminary in USA.

*9 December: **Another public conference*** by Trueman, this time on Calvin at a Catholic study centre at Trento.

*14 December-2 January: **Trip to Australia.***

*19 December: **Bookstall at Rovereto.***

*20 December: Monthly **service at Rovereto.***