

In the church

We had a successful first study with the Youth Group earlier this month. It is always a challenge to get all the teenagers at the same place at the same time, and then back home again, as they are spread out in three corners of the province, and most travel about an hour each way to get to the meeting. But they want to make this sacrifice, which is encouraging for us. In fact, two of the girls got angry with their mother, because it seemed at that time that there would be no way for them to come. It was not good that they got angry, of course, but it was good that they wanted so much to travel two hours each way for a 90 minute meeting. So keep praying for this group. The study was in fact taken by Daniela. She is in her 20s and is leading with us this year, and I hope she will take over next year. She did a great job with the study, and is doing well in building relationships with the teenagers. So pray for her growth as a leader as well, and for our training.

One of the advantages of leading a Youth Group is getting to do all the fun activities that you would not otherwise do. So one Sunday afternoon recently I went ice skating for the first social activity of the group. It is interesting discovering what gets you excited and joyful. For me that day it was finding

myself skating with a group of 10 youth (between the teenagers of the Youth Group and some of the older Sunday School children), and three adults (Daniela, as well as Enrica and Gloria that help out when needed) committed to making sacrifices to help the youth grow in their faith and in their relationships. After years of seeing one or two or three youth go through the church at a time, with few peers to give them support, it was exciting to be with this big group who really look after each other. It is a big indication of the changes that the church is going through.

Points for prayer

- The youth group, the teenagers in the group, and Daniela
- That the church adjusts to changes created by its growth
- For Suzanne
- The spiritual growth of our children, and of us as parents
- For the people who are learning about the Bible from using my site



The Youth Group meeting in our house.
Daniela is on the right hand side.

You may remember that a bit over a year ago, Suzanne Bikker arrived from Holland as a missionary, working mostly at Rovereto. She has been doing a good job there, and helping the church in other ministries. We meet regularly to talk and pray about how our different ministries are going. In July she was diagnosed as having a genetic heart problem, which is being monitored. As I write, she is in hospital for the third time, after having felt unwell. She has been under observation there for a week, and will have surgery next week to put in a defibrillator. So pray for her as well, for her future, fears and witness, and for the church as it supports her in this time.

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In the family

It is fun playing with the children. It seems that each week they have a new interest, so we find everything we can about the interest whilst it lasts. So for example for a while there was astronomy, then firemen, then fashion shows. Stefania's long term interest however is dancing. A couple of months ago she started weekly lessons, although at her age it is more movement than actually dancing. But her dancing costume is one of her prized possessions. The teacher is in fact the mother of Stefania's



Stefania practising her dancing.

best friend at school, even though she is in a different class - which was the class that Pinuccia now teaches in.

Sometimes their interest is Sunday School (although usually Stefania is more interested than Daniele), which is gratifying for us. One week Stefania had her usual lesson on Sunday morning, whilst Daniele, who had a slight fever from a cold and stayed at home with Pinuccia, had a personal Sunday School class. At lunch time they asked for another Sunday School lesson, so in the afternoon we did the lot together: prayer, singing, lesson, craft, prayer. It meant that I was able to repeat the lesson that I had done with my class that morning. Hence I was finally able to teach, not once but twice, on Luke 5, which is a great passage in Italian. Peter says, "I am a sinner (*peccatore*), leave me". Jesus replies, "No, I won't leave you, you instead follow me and I will make you a fisherman (*pescatore*) of people". So Jesus changes everything: instead of being sent away he invites us to him, transforming us (as is needed for us to come to him) from *peccatore* to *pescatore*. I first thought of using this word play more than 17 years ago, when I heard someone that was learning Italian mix up the two words. And I have been waiting since then for an opportunity to teach Luke 5 and use it. Finally I've done it. It was easy to create a craft for the lesson as well. Even better, the children understood and appreciated it.

On the computer

A few weeks ago I received the following:

I wanted to tell you that I have begun to study the Bible, using your Internet site. I am happy to be able to count on your help.

Just an encouraging reminder for me that my site on the Bible (<http://www.laparola.net/english.html>) is used and helpful for Italians to get to know the Bible better. Unfortunately in this period, with a lot of Bible studies to prepare, I am not able to work on improving the site, but it is sitting out there in cyberspace doing its job anyway. And I do keep up with the e-mail correspondence that I receive as a result of the site.

Upcoming events

December 4: Evangelistic concert, by Samuele from our church and some friends from other churches, with a presentation from the social work arm of the church of a project in Cameroon.
December 18: Youth Group Bible study.
December 19: Sunday School market, selling biscuits and bread sticks (made by the children on the 11th) to raise funds for a school in India.
December 23-January 9: In Sicily, for a last visit to Pinuccia's family for a year.
January 15: Youth Group Bible study.
February 7-10: ECM leaders' meeting at Madrid.
February 12: Youth Group Bible study.
February 12-13: mission weekend in the church.