

In the church

The *exciting* and *gratifying* events that I was looking forward to in my previous letter have taken place in the last few weeks, with the official steps for the creation of the autonomous church at Rovereto. First there was the annual general meeting of the church at Trento. These are not always the most exciting of times, but this year there was the important step of the church as a body ratifying the birth of the new church. It was great feeling to write, as I took the minutes, that the church unanimously approved the church plant. Everyone without exception agreed with the vision and direction and supports it, which is not a common situation for such a big change in a church. In fact the elder taking the meeting seemed almost disappointed that no one spoke up about the church plant. This of course is the fruit of 17 years of talking about our church planting vision, and especially in the past year talking about the vision and our plans to implement it, getting people's impressions, and encouraging them to get behind it.

A couple of weeks later there was the commissioning service for the 11 adults and 9 children who will be forming the church at Rovereto. There were quite a few tears shed, a mixture of the joy of a historic moment in the life of both of the churches, and the sadness of sending people to a new ministry. It was a time of remembering God's faithfulness over the 48 years of ECM work at Trento (for which it was good to have the ECM International Director with us for the weekend), and of putting ourselves in God's hands for the future knowing that we are not able

to plant churches with our own abilities. After the service, the festive nature of the day continued with a picnic at the park, the first of the new season now that the weather has improved. The commissioning service was the climax of a weekend dedicated to church planting, with training from the International Director on Friday night and Saturday evening.

Points for prayer

- Thanks for the unity of the church in its vision, and that it will continue.
- The missionaries going to Rovereto.
- For conversions at Trento and Rovereto.
- For the voice of the church at Trento.
- That my computer work will help people to understand and teach the Bible.
- The preparations for our trip to Australia

The final step of this process was the inaugural general meeting of the Rovereto church the following Sunday, when it was legally formed as an association. Naturally I was not there; it was a matter for the new church there. Now comes the hard part for them and for us: for them as a small group to live as a church, and for us to adjust to the loss we feel and to look to God to send more people and leaders to replace them.



The missionaries going to Rovereto, during the commissioning service.

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Apart from these events, the usual activities of the church have continued, which a few other special events as well. One Saturday night we invited all the young adults of the church to our house for dinner. Not all could come, but we ended up with 25 adults and four children. It is the most we have had for dinner, but by now we have got a bit of a system for such numbers. As a novelty for the Italians, who usually have limited culinary experiences and preferences, we prepared Mexican food (tacos), which went down well (literally). The rest of the evening went well also, with a talk and discussion to get the group of young adults active and effective again, after more than a year in hibernation. This "relaunch" of the group was the not too hidden agenda of the dinner. They are planning to meet again shortly, so we pray that the group will become as strong as it once was.

The social-cultural arm of the church, *Altrimenti*, has also been active with a series of meetings of the theme of "Freedom". There are four public conferences at the library, a showing of a film on the life of Wilberforce, and a night at the theatre with a famous mime artist, who is an evangelical from Spain. So far, there have been a lot more people at these meetings from outside the church than from the church, which is always a positive sign. It has also been a

good way to get *Altrimenti* and so the church known in the town, known as associations that do something important. For example, it has been invited to be a part of the Trento Forum on Peace and Human Rights, and the Councillor for Culture at Trento gave the president of the association a big hug in front of the whole theatre for having brought such an important artist to Trento.

On the computer

At the beginning of March, I completed the preparation of the Bible studies that I am doing in Acts, and of the outlines for the other group leaders. This means that until the church activities restart in September, I just have to go over my notes for each study that I will do. Hence I will have a lot more time for other projects, especially developing the LaParola web site and computer program, that have been more or less static since last August. For example, I am writing short comments on some Bible verses, which will become a resource available on my Bible web site and computer program, to answer the common questions that I receive about the Bible. I have also been doing some computer programming – my favourite hobby, especially when it means learning new technologies (such as in web design and Javascript), as has been the case so far.

Upcoming events

April 21: Fourth public conference on "Freedom"
April 28: Film showing on "Freedom"
May 7: Youth Group
June 2-August 18: In Australia on deputation

