

## **Pakistan-Trento**

J was the pastor of a church in Pakistan who, due to various threats, was forced to flee the country. After a few adventures, he arrived at Trento 18 months ago with just the clothes he was wearing. Eventually the church was put in contact with him, and we helped him practically and with the paperwork he had to do. After about a year, he was granted asylum, and last December his wife and son, who had been in hiding in Pakistan, joined him. Now that J's situation has become legal and almost normal, he is looking at how he can serve where God has put him, and the church at how we can help him. He has already travelled a bit around Italy to help various immigrant churches, especially from the Indian sub-continent. In fact, on Good Friday there will be a service in our hall for Indians and Pakistani at Trento, which will be a first for us. He could also have a good input in discussions on religious freedom. So last Thursday the church organised a public meeting on this theme in which he spoke, as well as representatives of the provincial government and the Catholic Church. Unexpectedly, there were also five Muslim Pakistani students, who spoke a fair bit and contested what J was saying was the situation in Pakistan. They did create some anxious moments as they took many notes on the meeting, but J continued regardless. This week he will also be at Geneva to participate in some discussions of the United Nations on religious freedom.

As you may know, there was another outbreak of violence against Christians in Pakistan this week, which obviously upset J and his wife. So there was also an opportunity to manifest our fellowship with the persecuted church through the

encouragement and support of this family. Pray for J, his ministry, his family as they adjust to a new country, and for the church as we try to help him and follow where God leads us, towards ministries we were not expecting.

## **Women's meeting**

Last Saturday there was a women's meeting, which Pinuccia helped to organize with a few others. It was an opportunity to witness to many of the church members' friends, as three ladies spoke on anxiety and worry, including the wife of the Pakistani pastor. It was good to be able to use our own hall for such activities, that we could not do in the past. Pray that these events will help our continuing witness, both in the public sphere and towards our individual friends.



J's wife talking on anxiety at the women's meeting, with Enrica chairing.

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## Losing my job

Lately I have been preparing a group of five people (Marcio, Ruben, Samuele, Andrea and Andrea) to lead the church services, to help out the current leaders and to be ready for future church growth. Some of them have already led a service, to be followed in the next few weeks by the others. It is great to see them do such a great job, I think better than how I do it! This will mean that there will be another "public" part of my ministry that I will have to do very little in the future – only one Bible study group and sharing a Sunday School class with two other people remain. But there is still a lot to do preparing new leaders for the various ministries of the church, and helping and encouraging the existing ones.

## Upcoming events

*23 March:* A day of training and on the ground evangelism with Athletes in Action

*4 May:* Festival for the part of the town the hall is in, where we will have various activities

### Points for prayer

- Pray for J and his family, that he will find how to serve here where God has brought him, and that he can transform Italy and Europe with his message.
- Pray for the church in Pakistan.
- Pray for the continual witness of all the church members, especially to the ladies who came to the meeting last week.
- Give thanks for the leaders that God continues to raise up in the church, and pray that I lose my current jobs, so that I am free to start other things at Trento and elsewhere.
- Pray for Andrea and Daniela, for their service in the family, at work, and in church.

## Church corner

**Andrea** and **Daniela** are almost our twin couple – he is two months younger than me and she two months younger than Pinuccia. The difference is that they were married a couple of months before I arrived in Italy, almost 21 years ago, whereas we are only approaching 9 years. So they were one of the first couples I really got to know well in the church, and are long term friends. Due to a heart problem that Daniela had, they were advised not to have children. But after her heart got "unexplainably" (for the doctors) stronger, they had a daughter Alice 2.5 years ago, so once again we became similar in being late comers to parenthood. Daniela is one of the three teachers, together with Pinuccia, in the Sunday School class for the smaller children, whilst Andrea co-leads one of the Bible study groups and is also doing the training to lead the service.

