

Richard, Pinuccia, Stefania, Daniele, Luca, Mattia

Helping a church to plant new churches and start new ministries in Trento, Italy

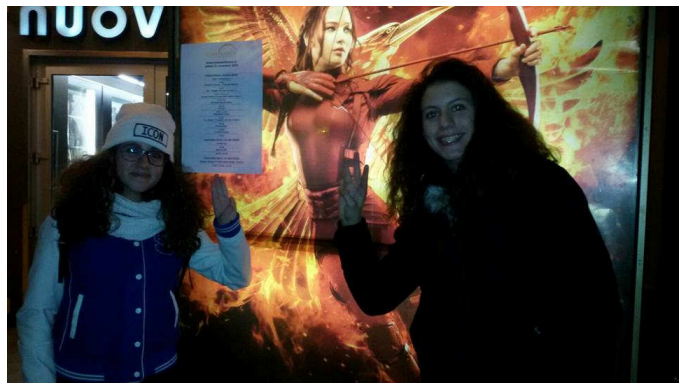
In the mission

One part of my ministry that I do not often write about is my responsibilities with the European Christian Mission. As the church matures, there is less that I need to do there, and I have been able to use more time helping other missionaries in their ministries. This has mainly been in two ways: firstly, being responsible for all the ECM ministries in Italy, and secondly, working with all the leaders of the various countries on the future direction of the mission and on how we can help the current ministries on the field. However, it has been difficult to do the latter part lately. We do have fairly regular Skype meetings together to keep the work going. I am usually able to participate in these meetings, although sometimes I have taken minutes of meetings with a baby or two in my lap, or had to miss them because I was looking after the children. The best work gets done when we get to meet each other and have a good time in relationships, although as before I have had to miss a few of these meetings, and will miss some more still, due to the family situation. So it was great, when Pinuccia's parents were staying with us recently, that I could leave the family with them, and go to England for a meeting. It was just one very full day, with a couple of days for travelling, but it was worthwhile being able to see and work with friends and colleagues that I have known for many years. Unfortunately it is back to normal now, and whilst most of the leadership of the mission is meeting in Madrid this week, I am at home with the other responsibilities that God has given me.



In the church

"And so it ends", said Gioia wistfully and a bit nostalgically as we left the cinema. She is one of the four 13 year old girls in their third and final year of the Sunday School class I teach, which corresponds to the three years of middle school in Italy. (There are also two others in the class who are a year younger.) We had created a tradition in the class of having a pizza and film night each October of these three years, in which we watched the first three films of the *Hunger Games* series. Then this November we reached the climax of our program, and went to the cinema together to watch the fourth and final episode, which had just been released.



Gioia and Gaia getting excited about the film before we go into the cinema

So it was a time of closure for our time together in the Sunday School (although we still have half a year to go!), and also for their pre-adolescence, of which these films and the books have been a big part. Now there are no more films, and the girls must move on to a new and bigger world, which is why I detected a bit of nostalgia in Gioia. After every film that we have watched, we have spent a couple of lessons talking about the themes and the messages, what we agree with and what we don't, so they have been learning to think critically about what their culture is presenting to them. So, I'm happy that they are ready for the next stage in their life, being able to reflect from a Christian view point on the many different messages that they will hear.

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In the family

Lavis was on the world stage last month, as it hosted the Italy-Finland test match, one of the qualifying matches for the 2017 World Handball Championships. With about 1000 people present, it was a much bigger event than the Italy-Germany cricket match I went to almost 20 years ago, when most of the time I was the crowd. Since Daniele plays for the local handball club, he was part



of the group of children who accompanied the players onto the field. So he had his 5 minutes of fame, as the photo I grabbed from the telecast shows. For the record, Italy won 27-19.

Stefania continues with her gymnastics. Daniele liked it so much when he saw it that he has taken it up as well. Stefania has taken up the guitar now, whilst Daniele continues with chess. Last weekend we played in an informal tournament together, with Daniele getting second place in the junior section and Richard third in the open section. We also got third place in the family section, but we were also disadvantaged in having only two members in our team. However, we are hoping to double our size and become a formidable team in a few years' time.

Points for prayer and thanksgiving

- For my roles in the mission, that my service will be a help to ministries throughout Europe
- That the children in my Sunday School will have a faith that knows how to respond to the world they live in
- That living in Trento gives many opportunities for the children to develop, and that they are well looked after by the school and government
- For our witness to people from the schools, other parents, chess players and band members.



Celebrating Luca and Mattia's first birthday.