

Richard, Pinuccia, Stefania, Daniele, Luca, Mattia

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

In the church

Recently I tried something new in the church, proposing a *Christianity Explored* course to which people in the church could invite friends or relatives. It was new, in the sense that although the majority of new Christians in the church come about through relationships with existing members and listening to the Bible being taught, our public evangelism has always been in other ways. So it was an attempt to help people to do what they do best. The idea was generally welcomed by the people in the church, who invited a lot of friends. However, none of these friends accepted the invitation. The only response was from someone who attends the church but is not yet a convinced Christian, so someone will do the course with him individually. I was not too upset that the course did not go ahead, because the church did do their part. However I'm trying to think through the reasons why the invitations were not accepted. One reason that I heard back was that a commitment of six evenings was too much in our cultural context (we had actually cut the course down from 10 evenings and a weekend). So now I am thinking of preparing a mini version: reading as much of Mark's Gospel as is possible in an evening, and getting the people to discuss who is this Jesus that they are meeting. The idea is still a bit vague at the moment, but I hope to try it sometime in the Spring.

Last year a highlight of my ministry was helping the children of my Sunday School class (10-12 years old) prepare and present a lesson to the class of the youngest children (4-6 years old). This was not so much for the lesson itself, but for the opportunities it gave to teach about ministry, not only in theory but in the midst of our preparation. So this year I repeated the process, and we gave the lesson in January. Only again, it was a great help in their growth in discipleship. After the summer break, the whole class will be moving to the Youth Group. Some of them I have taught for 6 years between the various



The Sunday school class (Giorgia, Kora, Alessandro, Gaia, Gioia) at another opportunity to serve (lunch for the rest of the church), surrounded by the team of teachers Enrica, Gloria and myself.

classes, so it will be sad to see them leave even though I am confident that they are prepared to serve in the church and in the society in new contexts. So in the next school year (September) I will be restarting with a brand new class (that will include Stefania and Daniele) to teach and disciple for the next three years.

A few people in the church are trying to develop a sports ministry with the youth age group. These include Cristof, a German missionary who moved to Trento from another part of Italy in September, and Ini, a Nigerian/American basketball player and coach who does not call himself a missionary, but is the sort of missionary the church wants to have, people who witness in society where God puts them. (You can read some of his reflections on this at <http://bit.ly/1WS0wM5>.) So at the end of January they organised a sports afternoon (with an evangelistic talk) for teenagers and young adults from our and some nearby churches, from the camps we have run, and also invited friends. They are also involved in the two camps that will be held in the summer, one for children 6-10 years old that Pinuccia and I are organising, and another for 11-16 year olds.

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In the town

I continue as well as I can to keep in contact with people outside of the church. I can not participate in all the activities of the town band any more, but they are understanding and let me choose the concerts I want to play in (usually the major ones that require more players) and enough rehearsals to know what I am supposed to be playing. So I enjoyed being able to participate in the Christmas concert. As it was part of the band's 160th anniversary celebration, the music was from that era and the concert was together with a group who does dances in period costumes. Then last month there was a concert together with the most well known local rock band, doing covers and original songs in the Trentino dialect. *Johnny B. Goode* never sounded so good—a 60 piece orchestra with electric guitars! Daniele's continued interest in chess has revitalized, and I occasionally play at the club where Daniele has his lessons. In fact, last month after a life time of trying and many minor places, I was victorious in a sporting contest and, with a bit of luck, won a tournament at the club, as immortalised at <http://bit.ly/1VMMiMg>.

Points for prayer and thanksgiving

- That the church will find good ways of presenting the Gospel to their friends, and that it will continue to take up the opportunities that it has
- That we will be a church full of missionaries
- For the maturity of the Sunday School class
- For the preparation of the children's camps
- For our friendships in other associations, at Pinuccia's work and with the other parents in the children's schools



At a rehearsal with the bands (that's me in the front with the clarinet).



Rugged up during a walk (and push) around Trento in December.