

Richard, Pinuccia, Stefania, Daniele, Luca, Mattia

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

The opportunity came up unexpectedly, and with some quick work and decision making we took it up. Last month the church found out about a hall that used to belong to a bankrupted business, and that the bank was trying to sell. The price was down to less than half of the original asking price and its market value. We worked out that with a 20 year mortgage the repayments would be considerably less than what we are currently paying in rent, but for a hall that is twice as large (345 m²). As well, at the end of the mortgage we (or rather our children) would no longer have to pay anything. So the church bought it. As I write, we are still going through the paper work with the bank and various government departments, and making plans with an architect, but the idea is to actually get the keys soon, do some renovations, and then move in at the end of the summer (September).

Although the church is able to purchase the hall by itself, it also wants to give others an opportunity to be a part of this historic moment – the first ever Protestant owned church in the city of the Council of Trent. If you would like to be a part of this project (helping to purchase the folding walls that will divide the Sunday School rooms), you can send a donation to ECM, marked as *Trento Church Project*, and it will be forwarded onto the church at Trento.

Through the mission and contacts with other churches and missionaries in Italy, I know it is difficult for an evangelical church to possess its own premises in countries like Italy. Usually funding comes from overseas; a church that obtains a hall from its own resources is quite rare. I'm thankful for the people God has sent to Trento who have made it possible:

- for wise decisions taken more than 10 years ago, setting up a fund to create a reserve in the case we ever would buy a hall, and that served as the deposit;
- for people like **Salvo**, a deacon and the treasurer of the church, who at his work in a bank evaluates and approves large loans to businesses, and has been doing all the investigative and planning work;
- for the members of the church, who through their giving are willing to give to make this purchase a possibility.

The week after purchasing the hall, there was another happy moment for the church. **Nasir**, one of the Pakistan refugees (from religious persecution) was finally given residency status after about 5 years. This meant that his family was allowed to come to Italy as well. But how to get his wife and six children (6 to 17 years old) to Italy? Through the generosity of one of the church members, who bought the seven plane tickets for them. So there was a happy reunion of the family, and the church was overjoyed to see them all in church together.



A happy Nasir (holding the umbrella) at the airport, with his wife and children, and the Pakistan pastor Latif on his left.

We are coming up to the end of the school year now, which means finishing up many things and preparing for the summer. So we are just starting the end of year recitals and parties for the various activities we are involved in. I have finished preparing the rest of my Bible studies for the year, although I

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still have four to actually lead. I should start preparing the studies for next year – but in the meantime there is the children's camp in June to think about. There is a whole new team to help me this year: **Christof**, who I mentioned last newsletter; **Gloria**, who teaches in the Sunday School with me; and **Pinuccia**. This means that we will also have Luca and Mattia with us as mascots, and Stefania and Daniele as participants. Having the whole family there will be good, but will also be tricky – at all times either Pinuccia or I will have to be with the twins. We also use the camps as training for the teenagers, and it will be great to have **Samuel** as a helper this time. He was in my Sunday School class for many years, so I know him well. He is the son of Massimo and Ester who lead the ministry in the Valsugana valley, and like them is a great evangelist – almost half of the people who attended the teenager camp are friends that he invites.

PS I have created a 5 minute video in which I talk about some of these things. If you would like to watch it, it is at <http://www.laparola.net/video.wmv>

Points for prayer and thanksgiving

- Thank God for the opportunity to buy a better hall for the church, and pray for its good use
- Thank God for how he helped Nasir, and pray for the other Pakistan refugees in church still waiting for residency
- For the preparation and running of the camp, and that it would help grow the faith of Stefania and Daniele (and the other children)

Upcoming events

16-18 June: Church camp for 7-11 year olds (with all the family)

19 June: end of school year presentation of the Sunday School

26 June: open air evangelistic meeting in the Valsugana

9-16 July: Church camp for 12-16 year olds (we have only a small role helping in this camp)

some time in July-August: in Sicily with the family

16-19 August: ECM Italy prayer days

