

In the church

The church is going through a time of reflection on its relationship with and ministry to refugees. Although it is great to have a lot of Christians who fled their country because of persecution, there have been difficulties being in the same church at times, with cultural differences creating misunderstandings and different expectations. As always, when we want to do something in the church, God sends the necessary resources. There is a missionary from Brazil, Ruben, who in the past has worked with refugees in Africa, in the Caribbean, and now in Italy (mostly Sicily). He has now moved to Trento to work more with the church, although still with a wider ministry in Italy. In the last couple of months he has led three meetings of discussions with those that live in Trento on how we can help the refugees among us, both those in the church and those not. Then he repeated the discussions for those that live in the Valsugana valley. At the same time, he organised a discipleship course for the Pakistan refugees in the church. On December 14, all the groups will get together to talk about how we can be a church together, how we can help each other, and about what sort of church do we want to be and to plant. Pray for this meeting, that it will be useful for the congregation in the future, and not just a time for dwelling on the differences and the misunderstandings.



Ruben leading the meeting at Trento

This month there was a baptism service in church. It is always great to see the hall packed, including many old friends now at the Rovereto church, celebrating together the work of God in the lives of others. This one was special in a couple of ways. The first was having three more mature people witness to their faith, which does not happen as often as with younger people. All three became Christians through the witness of family members in the church (the parents of one of the young adults, and a man with a complicated family relationship), and through the ministry of the group in the Valsugana, where they all live. Another special characteristic was that it was the last baptism in the current hall, as the renovation work on the new hall has started, with plans to move in January. Not all the bureaucratic problems have been solved, but we are doing what we can now. So next time, we will be in the new hall, with the baptisms during the normal morning service, with room for a baptismal tub (rather than having to set up a children's pool) and having everybody comfortably seated.

For the past couple of years I have been doing less in church, mostly because I have been concentrating on the ministry to my family, but also because others have been able to do what I had been doing. It is always my desire to have others take my place. However, now we are coping better as a family, and I am getting back to some of the ministries I had before, and looking at starting some new ones. I have restarted visiting all the small groups and other ministries of the church, to help them grow in the same direction as the rest of the church. We always have a risk that the church becomes too fragmented, due not only to our geographical dispersion. Its is also due to the church's vision of encouraging and equipping all members in the ministry to which God calls them, rather than making them fit into the ministries that the church wants and has. This is a positive thing, but has the risk of everybody doing their own thing, instead of working together as a church.

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In the mission

Also in the mission my desire this year has been to get back to my responsibilities, that I have not been fulfilling in the past couple of years. One of these is representing Italy at leadership meetings of the mission, and being a part of two small groups that look after various aspects of all the ministries of the mission on the field (one group on ministry development, the other on vision and strategy). I did not quite get to fulfil all of my desire, but it was not my fault! In September I had two days of meetings in Madrid, but when I arrived at the airport I discovered there was a 24 hour strike by Alitalia, so I had to go back home. However, I was able to go the next day to catch the meeting of one of the two groups. Tomorrow (27th) I will go to Germany for another couple of days of meetings (and two days of travel), and I am happy to be involved in the work of the mission and so help hundreds of missionaries in this way. Pinuccia is a little less happy that I will be away, but she will take a few days off work and will cope as best she can.

Points for prayer and thanksgiving

- For the meetings this week, that I will be able to help the missionaries across Europe with my contribution. And for the family who will be at home.
- For the meeting on December 14, that it will help us help the refugees and be helped by them.
- Give thanks that we are almost ready to move into the new hall.
- Pray that the resources that I continue to distribute and develop will help more and more people to know the Bible.

On the computer

Similarly, on the computer I am getting back to normal, after a period in which I could only maintain what I had done. I have completed a new section of the site with a harmony of the Gospels (<http://www.laparola.net/sinossi.php>), to give another tool for people to use to study the Bible. I have also been able to make a lot of progress on an app for Windows Phone, and should be able to release it in a few months. I always receive quite a few requests for such an app, because Windows Phone is a lot more popular in Italy than in other countries. This, of course, has meant learning new tools and systems, which is something I enjoy doing.

