

Corato, Italy
Fall, 2021



Dear Praying Friends,

It seems like 2021 has flown by rather quickly. Despite the scarring that Covid-19 has left on society and many lives, the Italian soccer team's victory in winning the European Cup in mid-July was quite symbolic of getting back to some sort of *normal* as we celebrated in homes, even hugging one another. And, what more celebratory than an **outdoor wedding** that same month, where Denise was able to give a word of challenge to Luigi and Cinza who both found the Lord within the last five years. It has been a joy to minister to them by way of the **Life Group ministry**. Speaking of which, we were able to host our leaders two weeks ago for an evening of vision sharing, prayer and BBQ. We are



“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

Romans 13:8



experiencing some very special blessings from this ministry: firstly, most of the leaders *and* members are active in serving in other areas of our church's ministries and secondly, we are reproducing new leaders from the very one's who first came as unbelieving visitors! This is a very exciting aspect but also a serious step of faith as we delegate them to do ministry while staying close by for assistance or advice.

This fall we have four groups starting up: two in homes, one in our church's cafe' and one still via ZOOM. In fact, a third blessing from this ministry is that we are able to encourage believers who cannot always come to church due to distance, work obligations or chronic illness.



«All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.»

Matthew. 28:18-20



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Last Sunday, we had our **annual baptisms**, which was a powerful service as we sensed the presence of the Lord and rejoiced in the salvation and growth of three young adults. Last fall two of these



precious ones literally showed up at church, one a dental technician, having immigrated from Cuba and another who moved back home after a motorcycle accident and marital problems. This actually leads us to a fourth benefit of our home ministry as both were soon after invited to attend a group where they experienced not only new friendships but also spiritual encouragement in their growing faith. It was only natural that baptism was the next step in totally committing their life to Christ.

With the sincere hope that the fallout from Covid-19 will dissapte, we continue to dream and inspire vision about **future ministries**. About 12 years ago we came across a country home on the grounds of a restaurant with 10 accompanying guest rooms, pool, etc. The owner was interested in selling for *only* about a million dollars. Fast forward all this time now, the gentleman has passed away and his widow has met with us indicating she is willing to rent or even sell it at a fraction of the cost as the place was in essence vandalized by a previous renter. This campus could be ideal for retreats, conferences, children's camp as well as a B & B. We would appreciate your prayers in discerning God's will as to the feasibility of taking on such a large project.

In the meantime, **counseling opportunities** on a national level are beginning to open up for Denise as she has been asked by her supervisor to be a teaching assistant with an online training course. In addition, we are exploring our participation in a new church plant back in Bari as well as branching out in new areas with Life Groups.

We sincerely thank you for your prayers as we shift gears from summer activity, which is very relaxed in Italy, and get back into the fall season of starting up ministries.

Mark & Denise