



NEWS FROM THE GIRARDS IN AREZZO, ITALY



Dear friends and family,

June 2021

As you have noticed we are not writing newsletters monthly anymore. We feel writing every two to three months gives us a chance to paint a larger picture of what we are doing for His Kingdom in that season.

Just a short word of encouragement. Now is the time to walk humbly with our God and resist temptation. 1 Cor. 10:12-13 "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. AND GOD IS FAITHFUL. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. *But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it!*" This scripture came to mind because there is a movement of darkness across the earth, seeking whom it may devour. This is not time to act and react like the world. But to stand out and be salt and light. The LIGHT does not blend in. The Light stands out. The darker and more evil this world gets, the more you will stand out. As time goes on, you may be seen more like the sore thumb, the extremist, the loser, the weirdo, or the idiot. Rest assured all the followers of Jesus will be mocked at one point or another. The more you resist the temptation to blend in with the world, the more in tune you will be with the things of God and the stronger your identity in Him will be, *and standing out won't matter so much.*

Do you stand out? Or do you blend in with the crowd? Ask Father God to help you be as bold as a LION and let him teach you how to MARCH ON humbly and resist temptation!

Now, on to some news. April and May were fantastic months where we hosted around 60 people for meals. Our mission's director John Cava was here for a few days and gave a very timely word for the body here and presented his new book (The Church In His Image), which we highly recommend. We hosted a party of 40 in our backyard to just celebrate being together and heard a beautiful testimony of a man who almost died from covid and was taken to heaven every night to meet with Jesus for 3 weeks!



We will likely be back to the streets very soon too. They have lifted the curfew of the city, which means women might be back prostituting. Because the last 14 months of our life and ministry did not resemble anything we had ever done before, we are learning to get back to the ways of 'normal' ministry. Leia just started going back to church after a 3-month break! The police were doing surprise covid inspections in other Apostolic Churches and giving fines for not following rules such as social distancing, limited capacity, etc. Our building is very small and with covid rules we cannot put more than 22 people in there. But we are 30 people coming. So, they decided that children should not attempt while the restrictions were so strict. (We are now looking for a new church building.) This is what I mean by getting back into our regular healthy habits. Leia and Eva are leading worship indefinitely now. Leia leads on guitar and Eva on her ukulele. But we have added a bass player and have 2 singers. So slowly we are building a band and it's fun!

The church has been fasting and praying together and having glorious moments in His presence and in intercession for the lost and the church. Our city, Arezzo, has become the drug hub for Tuscany. There are more drug dealers and drug deals going down than in any other city in central Italy! We have a very good friend in the police force, and he had to bust 12 and 13 year olds from doing cocaine in our town, which is extremely common. The pubs, clubs, etc., are just full of people exchanging drugs. I (Leia) recently attended a conference on worship and met a former drug addict who often comes to Arezzo to evangelize his old druggie friends. He said the problem has become so out of control. Arrogance and selfishness among the youth are such that they even do drugs in their rooms all alone, which is far more dangerous. As little as 10 years ago, doing drugs together in groups was the norm. Now young kids assume they know everything about these new mysterious drugs. They are overdosing a lot because they are experimenting on them alone! He is still close friends to a young prostitute as well, whom we have spoken to a few times. She is a heavy user. I will never forget her. The first time we met her she was only 24, and when we gave her a rose and told her she was loved, she replied "I'm only here in the streets because my life was so damned that even working as a prostitute is better." He is a faithful friend to her and still showing her Christ. We are fervently asking Father how we can reach these drug addicts in His name to see them saved!

We have been working very diligently discipling the people the Lord brings to us. I know this doesn't sound that "exciting" to report. Some of that is because when you are doing deeper discipleship and sharing life we go into habits, family dysfunctions, daily struggles, disappointments, failures, but we cannot report these things in our newsletters as they are so personal. This is A LOT of what we do! As we have said many times before, Healing for the Nations ministry has given us tools we are using very often with those we disciple. We hope that soon we can work towards getting a 'real' certification as counselors rather than having a good amount of training (with no proof of it! Lol).

One of our daughters is going through an intensive therapy to strengthen the working memory and executive function of her brain so that it can reverse her learning disabilities. This is taking many hours a day for Leia, but, wow, the results are astonishing! She will have to do a year of brain training games and exercises that are "fun" for kids but still very challenging. This is a huge focus for Leia right now and much of her extra energy this summer will be on this. The brain is the most trainable muscle of the body, and you can retrain it for many things. Likely, she will move forward with this and become a certified Equipping Minds instructor. Check them out on YouTube or directly on their website at www.equippingminds.com if you know someone with a learning disability, or a memory problem. We believe this program could be a HUGE blessing to many Italian kids who don't have access to anything this complete for learning disorders. In the meantime, Nicolas is working on translating an entire Bible school curriculum into English, originally written in Italian by a teacher in the Apostolic church. He spends most of his evenings doing this to earn a bit of extra cash and enjoys it as a Bible study.

People are willing to hear the Gospel. Stand out, speak up! Nicolas often challenges his co-workers on their humanistic beliefs and many of them contemplate what he says (when they are not making fun of his faith) and it makes for great conversation. Leia evangelized a drug addict in the hospital while she was there for a few hours getting a check-up. He was talking about how messed up his life was to his friend in English (he went to the ER after a bar fight!), after hearing him dump about his life, I started speaking to him in English too. He at first was embarrassed I had heard him talk about his failed life but then was blessed to hear I didn't judge him.

Rather, I explained to him how God loves us even when we are sinners. To which I shared my story, and about God's love, the Cross, and hope for the future. He had never heard the real Gospel before, he was very touched and very protective of the New Testament I gave him before I left.

NOW ON TO THE FUTURE: I won't bore you and make this longer, but We have A LOT of guests coming that we CANNOT WAIT to embrace, some friends from America both coming here for pleasure as well as ministry!

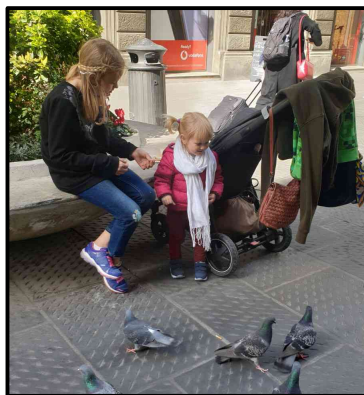
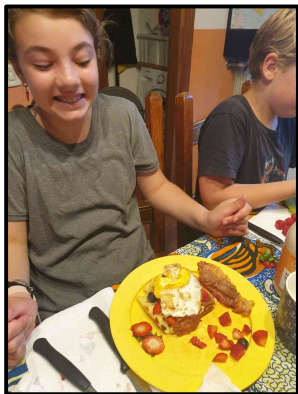
As always, thank you for your donations. This has been a very difficult year financially for many of you, yet you continue to give to us and to our ministry and to our farm in Nigeria. Your donations help us. Nicolas does not earn enough to support a whole family. Your donations make up for what we need and fund some serious project needs for Christ!

Please we would love to hear an update from you and your family.

Below are some miscellaneous pictures of our life over the last two months: sharing life with believers, having fun, ministering, family life, gardening, etc. Yes, Olivia is in most shots. Yes, she is irresistible.

With much love,

Nicolas, Leia, Eva, Elise, Sophie, Isaiah and Olivia



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