

---

# *The Johnstons' Italian Job*

January 2016

---

*Eph. 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Happy New Year! Buon Anno!

Thank you so much for your prayers last month and over the Christmas period. We were so grateful for those of you who gave us lifts to and from airports, called to see us, met us for coffee, gave us thoughtful gifts and ministered to us. The latter is so important because when we come home we need the ministering love of friends and fellow believers.



December was another good month in our work here in Italy.

While the hype of Christmas isn't as big here as it is in the UK we did notice that this year there seemed to be more effort made to bring Christmas into focus. Granted this focus was a worldly focus and centred on commercialism. During the time Tracey had before she headed home and in-between doing all the end of year book work, she

decorated the large front window of the church to represent what Christmas meant to those who know Christ.

The lights on our Bible Christmas tree remained on throughout the Christmas and New Year period.

It was a very busy time for Tracey as she was also trying hard to get all the end of year finances in order often working more than 9 hours a day.

---

The year finished well with the boys at Porto United as we had a rematch with a strong local team who both outnumbered and out muscled us to a 6-5 win. Our boys were delighted having come so close to a draw!

The final training session was on the 18th December and we were able to clearly speak to them about the true meaning of Christmas and then give them gifts that Tracey had prepared of chocolate bars, pens with verses on them and a very well produced gospel tract printed within Italy.



*Some of the boys with their Christmas gifts.*

They all received them well and as Andrea was taking time to speak to one of the parents I noticed his son sitting quietly by himself carefully reading the tract. Little things like that delight our hearts as we see the seeds being planted in young hearts and minds. Our prayer is that all that has been said, virtually every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, will produce fruit and bring glory to God.

The English class finished on the 16th Dec. with a very good evening where we did work on the idea of Christmas and they all said that they would be back in the New year. We are really praying that through this group relationships can be built and opportunities for sharing the gospel would open up on a regular basis.

On the night before we returned to N. Ireland all those who help in any way in the church went out for an end of year meal. This was a great opportunity for us to be able to say to people that they have a role within the church and also to show our appreciation for all they do. With us that night were the three ladies who were pregnant along with their husbands. During the meal Tabita calmly leaned across the table and said to Maurizio, "I think we should perhaps go to the hospital." Unbeknown to us she had started to have contractions that afternoon and had



brought a bag for the hospital in the car because she didn't want to miss the evening! They left after much hugging and well-wishing and the next morning we received the wonderful news that little Sofia had been born early that morning.

We give God thanks for another safe arrival to our church family and for a healthy mum.

We continue to watch and pray for Sefora and Andrea. Sefora has been in hospital this week with high blood pressure and has been they are going to induce the baby at the start of next week.

Maria and Massimo are moving house this weekend with Maria still carrying the twins. This will be a busy and possibly very stressful time for them.

While our creche is booming at the moment we are under pressure to get someone to teach Sunday school and it will be a few years before our great numbers in creche become a viable Sunday School. This is a point for concern and we need much guidance and wisdom regarding it.

Currently, Alan is back in Mantova with Connor who started back to school on the 7th.

Tracey will be joining them this weekend as her doctor didn't want her to return until she had had an appointment in the ENT dept. of the Causeway Hospital. She is also currently on a waiting list for a respiratory investigation which will most likely happen later in the year. For now she has been passed fit for work after nearly 10 different appointments and hospital visits during December and early January alone. We are so very grateful for your prayers.

Niamh is currently doing assignments and waiting to see if she gets offered an interview in Coleraine to do a PGCE in child education for next year.

Ross is studying hard (nothing new there!) for exams in the next couple of weeks.

---

Connor returns to Verona international school for his last five months after passing his driving test just before Christmas but not legally allowed to drive in Italy until he turns 18 in February.

We continue to pray and seek someone to represent Coram Deo in N. Ireland although through a couple of conversations over the last week we might be a step closer to realising this.

Our prayers are continued from last month.

Please pray for:

- 1) We give God thanks for positive end to the year.
- 2) For the English class with potential openings to share the gospel.
- 3) For the continued encouragement in Porto United.
- 4) For the remaining two pregnancies within the congregation
- 5) For wisdom and guidance regarding the Sunday School.
- 6) For a future representative for Coram Deo in N. Ireland.