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Happy New Year!!!

2025, wow. Can you believe it? Remember when we were worried about Y2K? That's a quarter century ago. We hope that you all had a wonderful holiday season. We had a very nice Christmas and New Year. We went back to the little village of Arfons, France for New Year's eve. It is very quiet there as it is way out in the country. There are no fireworks, parties or loud noises. In other words, it's perfect. Normally, I would be in bed when the clock strikes midnight, but Violet wanted to stay up this year so we did. I think it was pretty anti-climatic for her. As we just counted down from ten, said "Happy New Year" and went to bed.

There is not a lot to report on as things were very quiet the last two weeks of the year, but here's a few things that have happened and what we are working on for the new year...



Our wild New Year's eve.

Fellowship Meal at Pistoia

The week before the holiday we had a fellowship meal at Pistoia. Pistoia does not, generally, have potlucks. Normally what we do is Sara, the matriarch of the biggest family at church, cooks the meal and we all help pay for it. We will usually provide drinks and maybe desserts. This time our Chinese visitors wanted to help, so they provided several dishes, and Sara made a pasta and a meat. I made brownies and cookies, which were a big hit. I saw one of the older men pick up a snickerdoodle, look at it kind of funny, smell it, then bite into it hesitantly, then smile and eat the whole thing in two bites. That made me happy.

The food was glorious, and everyone had a great time of fellowship. It was an interesting mix of Chinese and Italian food, but everything was good. There was plenty for everyone. I think our Chinese friends were very happy to provide something for us. One of the things that they have done, which stand out to me, is take part in cleaning up and organizing the building. Every Sunday now, one or two of the ladies will get up immediately after worship and start to clean the Lord's Supper trays. Some of the men will go around and collect the song books. We are so blessed to have them with us and we hope they will continue to learn and grow. After the fellowship meal we told them to relax, but they had none of it and all got right to work helping to clean up. This group truly has a heart to serve.

Because of the fellowship meal we did not have class that week, nor the two weeks after, but we have kept in touch and I send them regular exercises to do for homework.

The church at Pistoia has been a great blessing to us and we are so happy to be with them. Please continue to pray for us as we work together to glorify God.



Always nice to have a full house for a fellowship meal and worship!



Violet and her buddy made themselves comfortable while everyone else worked.



Barbara was not prepared for this picture.



We had a real east meets west thing going on.

Arezzo

Things with the Arezzo group continue to go well, though we have not seen them in a couple of weeks. The family that we worship with went out of town for the holidays, but we will be with them again this coming Sunday.

The first Sunday in December it was just me, Nikolà and Sonia. They were nobody strange neighbors and family would come, as they had been. But my wife was able to be there. So, we talked about the importance of worshipping God even if we are by ourselves and they were encouraged by that. The next week, both of their mothers, the caregiver for Nikolà's mother, and their son were in attendance. It was a very nice service. Nikolà's mother is developing dementia. So far it is not terrible, but she does struggle at times. However, this particular Sunday night two pretty funny things happened. First, while we were worshipping she told him that she really liked to hear me sing. Then after worship he said, "So, you like to hear Scott sing?" She said, "No, I've never heard him sing." Then he said, "We just worshipped together and he led singing, you said you liked to hear it." Then she looked at me and said, "Can you believe he's trying to trick me into thinking I've heard you sing before?" That was pretty funny. Then, as I was getting ready to leave she was talking to her daughter on the phone and, to understand this you need to know she broke her arm a few weeks ago and she has a cast, she looked right at me and said to her daughter, "I will have to hang up soon. The doctor is here and he is going to remove my cast." We all cracked up at that.

One very important thing, that you need to pray about, is that while we were talking after worship Sonia's mom and I were talking. She told me, "I have never been baptized, but my kids tell me I need to." I said, "Well, the Bible says you need to be if you want to be saved and go to heaven." She said, "How can I be baptized? I'm an old woman now." I told her we would study about it. She said, "okay." Please pray that I will be able to show her from the Bible that it's never too late, until it is eternally too late. Pray that she will make the right decision.

Reporting trip

That's about it for the work from the last month. Everyone is back to work in Italy and our studies are going again starting today. (In most of Europe the Christmas season goes through January 6th). We are starting to look at our next reporting trip and it looks like we will be back in the States from June 9th, through August 22nd. We will start the trip with our home congregation of Margaret Street, and then visit all of our other supporters. I will be in touch with all of you personally soon to plan our trip to see you. If you are an individual and your congregation does not support us, but you would like for us to come and present the work please let me know and we will arrange to do that. Thank you!



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