



Clinton Church of Christ <churchofchristclinton@gmail.com>

October Newsletter

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Buongiorno da Firenze!

We were hoping that, that would say, "da Pistoia!" at this point, but we have not had much luck locating a place to live closer to the church building. For now we are still in Florence, working with the church at Pistoia and trying to reach the lost in all of Tuscany. Other than the stress of apartment hunting, September was a great month for us, let us tell you all about it....

Visits from Freed-Hardeman (and Arkansas)

Most of you reading this will know that Freed-Hardeman is a University associated with the churches of Christ in Tennessee. Hopefully all of you know that Arkansas is a US state in the West South Central region of the USA. FHU is where Rebecca earned her undergraduate degree, and I received my two graduate degrees. It is a school we love and try our best to encourage university bound students to attend. This month we were blessed with two groups of visitors from the school.

First, were Jenny Johnson, LeAnn Davis and her husband Judd Davis, along with Jonathan and Kimberly Moore. Jonathan is working on a project that will

happen here in Italy that will involve, to some degree, Freed-Hardeman (I realize that is vague, but the project is in its very early stages). We ended up spending part of Saturday, Sunday and most of Monday with them. It was a very encouraging visit and it was so nice to have them at worship with us that Sunday morning. The brethren really appreciated them being with us. One interesting thing about their visit is that we actually know Judd's father. He was an elder for a long time at the Palm Beach Lakes congregation in Florida. They were a supporter of ours during our time in Pohnpei. Their time with us was brief, but very encouraging.

Next, a couple of weeks after they visited we got a message from a guy named Colton. He is a student at FHU and told us that he and some other students were in Italy and they wanted to worship with us the Sunday they were here. We met them at the church building and were immediately impressed with their faithfulness and dedication to come to worship. There were six of them visiting. The Italian brethren were, again, delighted to have them with us and were also impressed that these young people would take time out of their holiday to worship God. After worship we went to lunch and got to know each other. They were super encouraging and we had a great time together. It turns out that all six of them were homeschooled, which was a nice surprise since we are now homeschooling Violet (more on that later). They were able to talk to her a little bit about their experiences.

We also had a visit from a couple, Brad and Jesse Cobb. Brad is a preacher in Western Arkansas, and runs a publishing company. They were here celebrating their 25th anniversary and wanted to worship with us as well. They were actually staying about three blocks from our house. We rode together to Pistoia for worship and became fast friends. We talked about different people we know in common, and some issues facing the church. It was a great conversation and we were happy to get to know them. After worship they spoke with the brethren, which was also encouraging for everyone. Brad was able to talk with Tommaso, who speaks a little English, for a while. After he got home he asked me for Tommaso's phone number. He, apparently, sent a text to him thanking him for being so welcoming at worship. The next Sunday Tommaso was VERY excited to tell me about that text. It was a very simple gesture, but it was so

encouraging for Tommaso. I know this will motivate him to be even more friendly with future visitors.

Getting visits like this can be a shot in the arm to our work. It is rare to get three in a row like this, so it was a very nice treat.

Hey speaking of Tommaso...



Freed-Hardeman staff and the Moores



Violet and Jenny Johnson discussing our pet bird

A Great Lesson from Tommaso

This past Sunday Tommaso preached and just did an outstanding job.

Remember, Tommaso has only been a Christian for about four years. He is on our regular preaching schedule, and he has just taken over as treasurer for the church. Last week I sent a message on the church chat group about the "rapture" that was supposed to take place on September 23rd. I noted how the Bible tells us, repeatedly, that no one knows when Christ is coming back, and that we must always be ready. Tommaso had heard me teach this before, and it inspired him to change his sermon topic.

When he started his sermon he used a story about a farmer who needed to hire a farm hand. He met a young man looking for work who, when asked if he could work a farm, kept responding by saying, "Yes, sir. I know how to sleep through a windy night." The farmer was confused, but in the end the reason the young man was able to sleep through a windy night is he always made sure the food was secured and the animals were safe in the barn. At first I was wondering where on earth the story was going (it took longer than my summary would have you believe), but in the end it turned out to be an excellent message encouraging the Christians to live faithful lives and always be prepared for the return of Christ.

Tommaso continues to grow and to be an inspiration to us. He is the main motivation behind us looking to partner with a preaching school to get training here in Italy. Please continue to pray for him.



Tommaso is turning into a great leader and preacher for the congregation.

New Class, and Bible Studies

Rebecca and I have been trying our best to encourage the brethren at Pistoia to let us work with their kids. We have about thirteen between ages ten and sixteen. When we first moved our work to Pistoia we were asked if we would teach the kids during worship. That is, we would take the kids to another classroom and teach them while the adults listened to the sermon. We told them we would be delighted to do something like that, but not during the worship time. We explained that we think the congregation should be together

during worship and that the kids should be in there learning to listen to sermons.

A couple of weeks ago one of the moms, Silvia (Tommaso's wife) asked if we could do a class again. I told her that we are almost desperate to have this opportunity, but we won't do it during the worship hour. We talked to all the parents, who all agree that their kids need to be taught, and have decided to teach a class on Saturday afternoons at 4:00.

This is a great opportunity for the kids to study the Bible in a way that they are not now. We don't know that all of them will be able to come, but if we can get just a few excited about Bible study it will be worth our Saturday afternoons.

In addition to that, we are back to work with most all of our English through the Bible students. We are also actively looking for new students. Please pray that we can find open hearts.



Some of the kids who will, hopefully, be in the class.

Homeschooling

When Violet was born we talked about homeschooling her, but when we moved to Italy it did not seem like the best option. First, while it is legal here, there are not very many people who do it (and even fewer understand it). Second, we thought it was important for her to learn the language, and we knew we would not be able to teach her. So, we decided to send her to school. This was a good decision, though not always best for her or our family. This year, with our pending move, we decided we would start homeschooling. When we asked her,

"do you want to be homesch..." we got about that far before she shouted. "YES!" There are a couple of reasons for that: first, she thought it would be a lot easier (it actually is, but not in the way she thought) and second, she was not always treated well at school. She was not necessarily bullied, though there was a little of that, but she was often left out. She is not the most bold child, so if the kids were content to ignore her she would just let them. Italian school days are looooooong with lots of homework piled on to their almost 8 hour days in class. Part of the advantage of homeschooling is having her with us more (I didn't have a child to not spend time with her).

She is actually registered with an online school, and takes classes every morning from 9:00 AM through 10:30. Two days a week she has another class online. After that we are teaching here different subjects, including Bible. So far it is going really well. There have definitely been adjustments that have had to be made, but so far we are all enjoying it. One thing I found out, her teachers were basically just passing her through in some subjects. She is good in things like Italian grammar, but she is pretty far behind in math. Thankfully, we have been able to work together at a pace she is comfortable with and she's starting to get things she's never understood before. (This is not entirely the school's fault, but they definitely could have done better).

One exciting thing, is this has already given us some ministry opportunities. We found a group of homeschoolers, most of whom are foreigners like us, and we are having get togethers every couple of weeks. When we first met the question was asked, "What do you do here?" We told them that we work with a church in Pistoia and that has led to some great spiritual discussions. We haven't had any real sit down Bible studies, but one family has expressed interest in coming to worship the next time I preach. This never happened at Violet's old school (the parents were just as content to ignore us as their kids were Violet).

Through the online program Violet has made a friend named Matilde. They have not met in person yet, but they have been on the phone together a few times. I don't know what they're talking about, but Violet cracks up throughout their conversations. We hope to meet Matilde and her family soon.

Please pray that we are successful at homeschooling Violet, and that this will help us reach these other families.



Can you believe we sent her to school with no shoes?!



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