

# JULY 2020



Dear friends,

Thank you so much for your prayers and partnership in the Lord's work here in Naples over the last five months. We remain convinced that without them and your friendship towards us as a family, we would have struggled to keep going over this time. In these months of lockdown, we've reflected much on what it means to experience the joy of the Lord as our strength amidst the tears (Neh 8:10), and our conviction despite circumstances (Hab 3:17-18). Also our Lord's desire for us (John 15:11) and his Spirit's work in us (Gal 5:23). Piper's book: *When I don't desire God: How to fight for joy*, has been a real encouragement. We pray that the Lord would be cultivating this deep, Christ-focused joy in each one of you as you grow in your knowledge and love for him.

### Please give thanks...

For the many evangelistic opportunities COVID-19, lockdown and the internet have provided us as a church. From evangelistic articles to webinars on suffering and sovereignty, from evangelistic Easter videos to children's summer holiday clubs online, from Sunday sermons streamed live through our Facebook page to prayer meetings and bible studies on Zoom, the Lord has opened many doors and given us the strength and technological know-how (praise the Lord for Sofia!) to sow the seed of the gospel into many lives. We pray for good soil.

“

The Lord has opened many doors and given us the strength and technological know-how to sow the seed of the gospel into many lives...



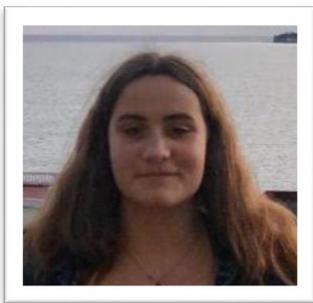
Give thanks for the opportunity the Lord has given us to care for the needs of our community. On 14 April we set up Neapolis FOOD - a food bank that ran for two months, feeding 60 families twice a week with essential food stuffs (including olive oil, essential if you live in Italy!). It has been a joy to serve alongside brothers and sisters from our church and members of Christ Church Naples in this ministry. We have built relationships with many locals (see photo left), have had many opportunities to share the gospel, and have seen people attending our church services both virtually and physically. We give great thanks for this opportunity!

Give thanks for the unity we have enjoyed as a church. Neapolis will, God-willing, celebrate its fourth birthday this October. We are a young church and still relatively small, (mid 30s on a Sunday, adults and children). A global pandemic and a severe lockdown could easily have crushed us but, in the Lord's kindness, it has served to strengthen relationships and deepen the faith of many. We give great thanks for the Lord's protection over this time.

Give thanks for the possibility to meet physically as a church. With various restrictions, we were able to re-start Sunday services on 24 May (see photo right). We absolutely don't take this for granted, aware that many in both Italy and the UK are still not able to meet in their buildings. We are very grateful to the Lord for his making this possible.



For the provision of a bursary and funds to send Sofia (16) (pictured below) to Dean Close School in September for her sixth form years. As you know, seven years ago we made the decision to bring our four children to Naples. Since then they have been



schooled in the Neapolitan state education system, which has been an adventure! We have no doubt that the Lord will have used this experience to shape their characters and mould them into his Son's likeness. We have been able to make many friends through these schools, many have come to church and we believe the Lord to be at work in a few. We are, however, incredibly grateful for the opportunity, both from a spiritual and academic perspective, to complete Sofia's education in the UK. It makes our ministry here feel more sustainable.

### Please pray for...

Sofia - that she would settle quickly and really enjoy her time at Dean Close. That she would not be modelled by the multitude, but that she would grow as a follower of Jesus and understand even more the goodness of his ways and how to live for him. Pray that the Lord would protect her physically as she flies back and forth and help her to adjust to studying in the English education system.

Us as a family - that we would all adjust to a new dynamic with Sofia back and forth (Inez 14, Luisa 12, Archie 9). Pray for Inez as she starts at senior school in September, that she would thrive spiritually and in every way in this new environment.

Home leave - that we might be able to encourage and be refreshed through time with our families and dear friends in the UK. Pray for safety as we drive and for protection from illness.

The Law family - although Rob and Claire, Barney, Toby and Edward (due to be born shortly!) were with us for just over six months in Naples, our two families grew very close. It has been a great sadness for us all that they will remain in the UK and not return to Naples. Pray that the Lord would protect Claire and Edward in this last stage of pregnancy, that he would provide for them as Rob starts a new job in September and that they would continue to re-settle back in the UK.

Neapolis over the summer as rhythms and routines change. Pray that the Lord would keep us in his word, lovingly serving each other as a church even when we're physically not in the same place. Pray that the Lord would protect us from sin, particularly in the summer heat when remaining patient and calm seems to be much harder!

Senior Minister's Preaching Workshop (26-29 Aug) in Rome. It is a privilege to be involved in the organisation of this second national preaching workshop. Pray that the Lord would sharpen the 17 of us as we consider how to preach the parables.

**Mark and Jane Oden**, Via Monte di Dio 25, 80132, Napoli, Italy.

[oden@crosslinks.org](mailto:oden@crosslinks.org)

**Crosslinks**, 251 Lewisham Way, London SE4 1XF | 32 Montgomery Road, Belfast BT6 9HL | +44 (0)20 8691 6111 | [pletters@crosslinks.org](mailto:pletters@crosslinks.org)

