

MARCH 2020



For the long term...

We moved to Bologna almost 12 years ago to begin a city-centre church proclaiming Jesus Christ faithfully and to contribute nationally towards equipping a future generation of Italian Christians. Since then, we've always been aware that this is a very long-term work! The truth has been greatly borne out in experience! Yet recent months at Forte Torre have seen very encouraging steps forward in building that long-term goal of establishing a strong, healthy local congregation, in which maturing Christian men and women are dedicated to the harvest-field of Italy and beyond. Five recent little markers point in this direction.

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1. Graduations

In recent months we have seen a number of our students graduate. There are five church members in particular: **GL, Y, N, G** and **I**. Most encouragingly, all of them are working hard to find employment in Bologna (not easy), because of a real desire to stay at Forte Torre. Our prayer is for the long-term transition of graduates into Christian men and women who find work in the city, learning to serve Bologna for many years to come alongside the church. As they mature in Christ with us, we pray that they will learn also to help fund the ministry in the future.

- **Give thanks for these spiritual convictions and pray that God may open paid employment in Bologna to our graduates. Ask that they might become long-term partners with us in seeking to reach the city.**

2. Marriages

Very wonderful this year are plans for three church marriages of Christian couples - **Y and G, GL and S, M and M**. This is in addition to another couple marrying last November (**S and S**). It is exciting to see these young couples desiring to honour Christ in a long-term marriage commitment, which is as counter-cultural a move here in northern Italy as back in the UK. Furthermore, having younger married couples as part of church life, ready to open up homes and offer hospitality, is a great gift for present and future fellowship.

- **Give thanks for these young Christian couples. Pray for the witness their lives together will bring. Pray that Forte Torre will help, sustain and encourage them in married life.**



3. Associates

Over recent years, we have been establishing our internship scheme Applicazione (www.corsiapplicazione.it). In God's grace, we've reached the point of inviting more formally 'associates' into a part-time programme of biblical studies, training and service. One great challenge is creating financial bursaries to help associates train with us. Raising support personally is pretty unthinkable in a country where very few pastors are paid! There is no concept of trainee associates. Yet three men in particular, **G**, **GL** and **N**, are committing some hours each week to serving with us at Forte Torre. The church, benefitting from their varied services, is excited to support such men. However, funds remain limited.



- **Give thanks that we now have a teaching programme, a great building, a nascent library and young men keen to become associates!**
- **Give thanks that Applicazione is an audio-video resource available nationally; pray it would benefit many who, by expressing their thanks, help to partly fund our own future resident associates.**
- **Pray that the Lord would provide further funding more immediately to help make this happen!**



4. Da femmina a donna

A new ministry among **women** has begun to inspire our Christian sisters to wholehearted godly-living. It is very exciting to see 'da femmina a donna' taking shape: an opportunity to talk through real issues of Christian living, open up contexts for sisters to expound the Scriptures and lead study groups, and to strengthen ties of love. With great thanks to the women co-ordinating the work in addition to **Susan, P, A, E, A**.

- **Thank God for this new ministry, born and developed by different sisters in church.**
- **Pray that these termly meetings will help build strong bonds between sisters committed to living sacrificially for Jesus Christ.**

5. A plurality of preachers

Over the years, JP has poured energies into a number of men to help train and equip others to preach alongside him. Various men at Forte Torre have preached at times, albeit rather sporadically. Now this pattern has (finally) become more formalised, with two deacons appointed and recognised (**S and D**), who both preach reasonably regularly (once each in every two months), accompanied by two younger men (**G and G**). This enables a strong and healthy mix of expositors, leaving JP preaching with more manageable regularity (five times in eight weeks). In addition, these men serve as midweek leaders (as this year we work through the book of Numbers). It is these men we trust may become long-term leaders for the ministry.



- **Give thanks for them, praying that they will develop as good and godly leaders of others.**
- **Pray that some of those who train with us at Forte Torre will extend to other future churches with strong Word-teaching ministries.**