

JAN 2021

Vision

TRACKING THE GOSPEL ON ITS WAY THROUGH ITALY

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I've been to Italy only once - on a school trip, so that hardly counts! I was too young to appreciate all that history, culture, and architecture, and too young a Christian to be even vaguely aware of the spiritual situation in Italy.

Like many other European nations, Italy is a beautiful, diverse, and civilised modern country, but also, from a biblical perspective, a country that desperately needs the gospel.

In this edition of *Vision for Europe* we home in (mainly, but not exclusively) on Italy. We'll be tracking the gospel on its journey through Italy, making five brief stops on the way:

1. 57 AD, when the apostle Paul wrote his great *Letter to the Romans*.
2. The 1540's, when Galeazzo Caracciolo, an Italian nobleman, embraced the gospel, going on to become a leading reformer.
3. The 1960's, when John and Maureen Gilmore settled in Italy as EMF missionaries, and Gerry Brienza, the young son of Italian emigrants to Britain, had a real taste of life back in southern Italy.
4. 1978, when EMF missionary Michael Steedman began his more-than-forty-year involvement in gospel work in Italy.
5. 2021, with Jonathan Gilmore following in his parents' footsteps, Leonardo de Chirico leading a gospel network a stone's throw from the Vatican, and Stefano and Jenny Mariotti seeing God at work in Budrio, even in lockdown.

We'll also be meeting Eugen and Claire Peters, serving with EMF in the Republic of Ireland, and reading about two excellent books on mission.

Every blessing
Andrew Birch



FINANCIAL POSITION

31 DECEMBER 2020

We are grateful to all of those who have donated to the Mission in the course of the year.

Total Income:
£861,579

Total Expenditure:
£712,343

Surplus for the year:
£149,236



CONTENTS

It happened in Rome!	4
Galeazzo Caracciolo: Marquis of Vico	8
The Gospel in Italy	11
North & South Italy: a country of contrasts	14
Opportunities amongst students	16
The impact of the virus on the Gospel in Italy	18
When in Rome: life in the home of Catholicism	21
An Interview with Eugen Peters	24
Book reviews	27

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IT HAPPENED IN ROME!

It's the year AD57. One million of the 54 million inhabitants of the Roman Empire now live in its capital and some of them are Christian believers! These include Jews converted in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, Jews and Gentiles converted in other parts of the Empire, and citizens and slaves converted in Rome itself.

This infant church, however, is not as happy as it should be. There are tensions. Many of the Jewish members cannot shake off the idea that certain foods are 'clean' and others 'unclean', while most Gentile members are happy to eat anything on their plate, even if it has been offered on a heathen altar.

EVERY JEW AND EVERY
GENTILE FALLS SHORT OF THE
RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT GOD DEMANDS.



'The Scriptures reveal that God has always been willing to impute righteousness to every sinner who has faith in Him.'

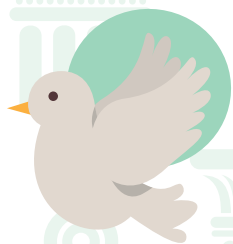
Neither group seems to understand the other. To make matters worse, everyone seems to have their own answer to the following question: if the Jews are God's chosen people, how come that the majority of people in the church are not Jews?

But today everyone is excited. It is Sunday and, instead of a sermon, a long letter is going to be read to the assembled church. It is from one of the apostles! Paul, passing through Corinth on his way to Jerusalem, has taken the time to dictate it just for the church at Rome! Some of the members know Paul personally. Some are related to him. But for most members this will be their first living contact with an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ!

As the reading starts the excitement increases – Paul has always wanted to come to Rome and is now planning to do so! In the meantime, he is going to say by letter what he would say if he was actually present. So, what will his letter be about?

Everyone realises that they will now have to concentrate. Paul's letter is about 'the righteousness of God'. The room goes quiet as he shows that every Jew and every Gentile falls short of the righteousness that God demands (chapters 1-3). Yet the Old Testament Scriptures reveal that God has always been willing to impute righteousness to every sinner who has faith in Him (chapter 4). The room fills with relief and joy as the apostle explains that the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins to satisfy the justice of God, is the living Saviour whom God has set forth as the One in whom we are to believe (chapter 5).

BECAUSE
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But God in Christ has not only done something for us; He has done something in us! As Paul explains this point, many of his listeners have that look which says, 'I see'. Because of their union with Christ, and also because of the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in them, believers are enabled to live a righteous life – a life which is pleasing to the God who has chosen them and who has promised to bring them safely to heaven (chapters 6-8). Everyone is beaming.

The room then goes quiet again. Paul is now dwelling on the sad fact that most Jews reject Christ. What is happening? Has God forgotten His promises to Israel? Not at all. The fact is that physical Israel (despite all its privileges) and God's Israel are not the same thing. The real Israel is composed of the individual people whom the sovereign Lord, from all eternity, has chosen to be His. As the gospel is preached to all, these are the ones who call on the name of the Lord and are saved. Jews who believe are the natural branches of God's olive tree. Gentiles who believe are branches of the same tree, but grafted in. Many Jews come to Christ because they are jealous of what God is doing for believing Gentiles. Gentiles are saved because of what God has done for the world through a Jew (chapters 9-11). The atmosphere in the room is wonderful. Jewish and Gentile believers together lift up their hearts to the Lord, and smile at each other in love.

The brother reading out the epistle is now getting tired and begins to slow down. In the closing chapters the apostle explains how to live the Christian life in church (chapter 12) and in society (chapter 13). He talks of how differences about foods and special days are to be sorted out, moving on to give details of his present work and future plans (chapters 14-15). There is a buzz of expectation in the church and a desire to pray for Paul. And then there is laughter and pointing and slapping of backs as he greets various members and relatives by name, before giving to everyone a final warning about false teachers and a prayerful greeting. His closing words are a benediction (16) followed, no doubt, by the now-united congregation shouting out its 'Amen'.

It happened in Rome. Something similar needs to happen in every city, town and village in Italy – and in the world!

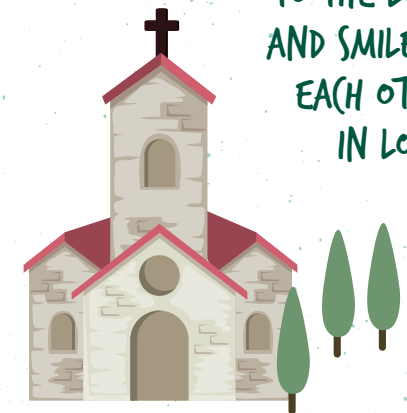


Stuart
Olyott

Stuart Olyott is a retired pastor, having served churches in Liverpool, Switzerland and Wales. He is also an excellent prolific author of several books including 'The Gospel as it really is' (published by EP Books) which is one of the best commentaries on the book of Romans.



JEWISH AND GENTILE
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LIFT UP THEIR HEARTS
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GALEAZZO CARACCILO

MARQUIS OF VICO

Vico del Gargano, the town where EMF missionary Antonio De Noia came to faith in Christ and where today he ministers to a small congregation of believers, was also the home of a famous Italian Reformer called Galeazzo Caracciolo. Antonio recounts the story.



Galeazzo Caracciolo was born in January 1517, the only son of Colantonio, Marquis of Vico, and of Giulia della Lagonessa. He died on 7 May 1586. Caracciolo was an Italian nobleman. Converted to the Reformed faith, he left Italy and settled in Geneva.

He was trained for the service of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, whom he was introduced to at the age of fifteen in Brussels. Three years later he became the sovereign's spokesman and followed him in his winter campaign in Provence (1535-36). In 1537 he married Vittoria Carafa, daughter of the Duke of Nocera; it was a happy union from which six children were born, four boys and two girls, all of whom survived.

Caracciolo became acquainted with some disciples of Juan de Valdès belonging to the Spanish-Italian intellectual elite of Naples and, although he was a man of action rather than letters, he was soon attracted by their Reformed doctrine. Friends like Gian Francesco Alois and Marcantonio Flaminio spoke openly of his 'vocation or conversion' in the early 1540s. Several times he went to Germany, where he devoted himself to reading Luther's work and, in the spring of 1551, while travelling to Augusta, he suddenly fled to Geneva and to Calvin.

In his new homeland he carried out increasingly important activities and held positions of responsibility; at the same time he had a series of meetings with some members of his family, but with negative results.

In November 1551 he collaborated in the organisation of a church for Italians exiled for religious reasons by participating in the choice of the temporary pastor and, in the following spring after long efforts, he succeeded in having Don Celso Martinengo of Brescia elected as permanent pastor. On the death of the latter in 1557 he played an even more important role in the search for his successor which ended in 1561 with the hiring of Niccolò



THE ROLE OF CARACCILO IN ITALIAN HISTORY IS REMARKABLE: HE WAS THE ONLY BLOOD RELATIVE OF THE POPE AND COURTIER OF THE EMPEROR TO BECOME A CALVINIST AND TO REMAIN SO.

Balbani as pastor and himself as an elder. Galeazzo was also officially accepted by the Republic of Geneva, which initially considered him as a possible spy. In November 1555 he obtained 'the Bourgeoisie of Geneva' for free. Galeazzo was the first of the Italian religious refugees to obtain Genevan citizenship.

Contacts with the family in Italy, however, did not end; between 1551 and 1560 Caracciolo met four times with his relatives.

In the summer of 1555 in Mantua he had a meeting with his father who was the messenger of an offer from the Pontiff on the basis of which he would be allowed to live in Venetian territory. However, Caracciolo refused, pointing out to his father that the Pope's word could not be considered trustworthy when it concerned heretics, and his decision soon proved to be wise. In fact, Pope Paul IV, who was also Caracciolo's paternal uncle, in a speech in October 1557 stated with clear reference to Caracciolo, 'our relative, the son of a daughter of our sister ... and he also has a niece of ours as a wife, went to Geneva

to live with the sad ones, to lose his soul and body ... we do not talk about this matter, because, if our own father was a heretic, we would bring the bundles to burn him.'

Galeazzo tried on a number of occasions to reunite with his wife, Donna Vittoria, but she refused to have him back unless he recanted his Reformed beliefs and returned to the Roman Catholic fold. Sadly, his wife Donna Vittoria, eventually abandoned him.

The role of Caracciolo in Italian history is remarkable: he was the only blood relative of the Pope and courtier of the emperor to become a Calvinist and to remain so. He was the only Italian noble to have definitively abandoned the Church of Rome. Caracciolo was for decades the animator and promoter of the activities of the Italian community of exiles and constituted the link between it and Calvin. He was highly esteemed by Calvin and mentioned

in his dedications in his commentary on the first Epistle to the Corinthians in 1556, and of the Italian translation of Calvin's Institutions in 1558. In 1558 he was elected a member of the Consistory of Geneva and was continuously part of the highest organ of the Calvinist Church. Caracciolo's role consisted essentially in serving as a link between the Italian Church, of which he was an 'elder', and the French-speaking community.

Caracciolo married the widow Anna Framery, originally of Normandy, and together they lived quietly, and in simplicity, in a small house near the Cathedral in Geneva for the remainder of their days.



Antonio
De Noia



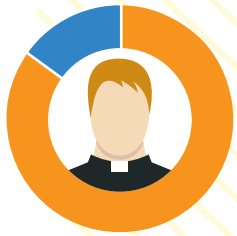
Peschici 2020



THE GOSPEL IN ITALY

Jonathan 'JD' Gilmore lives with Annette in Palermo where they are church-planting (LifeHope Church). He is also Area Lead for Acts 29 for southeast Europe. His parents: John and Maureen Gilmore, were missionaries to Italy with EMF back in the 1960s. Jonathan has lived in Italy since he was four months young and therefore is well able to give an introductory article on 'The Gospel in Italy'.

The apostle Paul was eager to preach the gospel in Rome (Romans 1:15). The need of the day, the need of the great Roman Empire, the need of the Romans was: the gospel. Today, in the land of pizza, Ferrari and Pavarotti, where history and natural beauty vie for attention, it might be easy to forget that this is still the same need – the gospel.



85%

AROUND 85% OF THE
POPULATION OF ITALY
STILL SELF-IDENTIFY
AS ROMAN CATHOLIC
(CHRISTIANS)

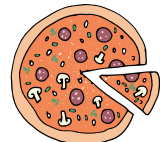
In the late 1960s my father, John Gilmore, missionary with EMF, wrote a book on Sicily: *Five Million Islands*. In it he shared the current situation and traced some of the challenges and needs. He recounted the first days of their mission in this country – he, an Englishman from Essex, and my mother from North Wales. Yes, there were joys and breakthroughs, but also many hardships and struggles at many levels. For the ensuing 40 years they laboured and toiled for the gospel, living and giving all they had and were. They lived for the gospel.

Today, increasingly, it seems, many surmise that surely Italy is already Christian. After all, around 85% of the population would probably still self-identify as Roman Catholic Christians. Presumably the gospel is there, available, known? Actually no. The sad reality is that the gospel remains a great unknown. True, the word might be there, but the meaning, the practice – it's another gospel made up of sacramental grace. It's all about doing, about effort, about behaviour, confession, works and a system of religion which is seen as the basis and means of salvation. This is certainly not Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone!

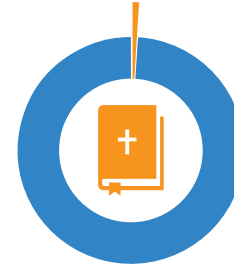
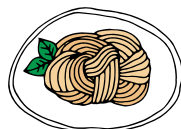
But not all Italians are religious. In this 'enlightened' 21st century, Italy too is quickly moving away from any belief system, embracing a vacuous Westernised relativistic perception of life.

Many are from the younger generation or from among sophisticated Italian professionals, many are disappointed or hurt, victims of the failure of religion. To them you say 'gospel' and they have no idea or show little interest. And yet ... what Italians want is life and hope. True meaning, significance, a sense of purpose and friendship, food and fun become their 'gospel'.

Today less than 1% of the population of Italy would identify with the biblical gospel. If you actually look for the evangelical churches that identify with the great truths of the Reformation, there may be around 50 in the whole of the country. Potentially a few thousand grace-awakened believers who have seen through the sacramental grace matrix. For the whole of the country!



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Yes, statistically all cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants have an Evangelical presence, but, sadly, that does not mean it is one that necessarily proclaims and models the gospel at the centre.

Among the smaller rural towns and villages, those with less than 20,000 inhabitants, there would rarely be a gospel-preaching and living church or even a gospel messenger. The extreme north-west and north-east of Italy have few Evangelical churches, the area north-east and north-west of Rome (Lazio and Umbria) would also have little. The large island of Sardinia has but a handful of churches. But we could also mention social groups with hardly any witness, or migrants and refugees with large communities and no known witness among them, or vast areas of cities - often the more 'well-to-do' - where the gospel is unheard of.

However dire the situation might seem there are signs of encouragement and hope. A new vision for and commitment to church-planting is developing. Increasingly younger Christian adults long for more depth, for radical gospel lifestyles and a greater understanding of how to engage with such a Godless generation and situation. More resources become available – good books, good events, facilitated access to online good things.

And God continues to do His work and to save and transform.

Among the many significant phrases my father penned over 50 years ago in his book, this one sticks in my mind. As back in the 1960s he described what Italy needs, he said: 'Men of God, transformed by the power of God, saturated with the Word of God and living for the Glory of God.'

Pray that the gospel might go forth in power, taken by those He raises up – proclaimed and lived.

As you consider the different articles in this edition, pray for Italy. For the gospel to be at the centre.

Jonathan
Gilmore



PALERMO

GET INVOLVED **PRAY**

- that the gospel might go forth in power, proclaimed and lived.
- for Italy. For the gospel to be at the centre.

NORTH AND SOUTH ITALY

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

My parents Giuseppe and Genoeffa Brienza emigrated to the UK during the mid-1950's leaving behind a small hilltop village called Forenza in the region of Basilicata in southern Italy. I was their firstborn child, born here in the UK. When I was about seven years of age, for

health reasons, my mother, my two brothers and I returned to Forenza where we lived with my paternal grandmother for approximately one year. My father continued to live in England working as a farm labourer. I was surrounded by a very large extended family: uncles, aunts and

A COUNTRY OF CONTRASTS

cousins. I attended the village school and recall having my hand slapped for using my left hand to write with instead of my right! But on the whole, it was a good school. I still have many vivid memories of the village. The landscape is very hilly.

My family had a smallholding which we often visited; vineyards, fruit trees and tomatoes were plentiful. The area also produces a lot of wheat. In those days there were no cars, everyone seemed to have mules and donkeys, the more wealthy had horses. The living quarters were very basic. My grandmother's house had two storeys; we lived in the upper storey – one large room – and underneath was a stable where various animals lived. I recall riding the donkey, Pippinello, to the watering holes at the bottom of the hill on many occasions.

Religious festivals were also a big part of life. Each village in the area had its own saint's day which was celebrated. One of the most popular saints was San Rocco of Tolve, another hilltop village. A statue of the saint would be carried through the streets and great crowds of people would follow, pin money on his image and throw coins at it. The sights, sounds, smells and tastes are all still with me.

Today it is very different. Everyone has cars, wind turbines dot the landscape, all the trappings of modern life are available. Nevertheless, it is still a very rural, agricultural area, much poorer than the industrialised north of Italy.

The contrast between the north and the south is stark; much more than say the north and the south of England. The great cities of the north of Italy, such as Milano, Torino and Genova, are wealthy and well run and compare with any of the great cities of Europe. But the great cities of the south of Italy, Napoli and Palermo, are chaotic, poorly administered, riddled with corruption, more like third-world cities. Having said that, Napoli is full of colour, noisy, vibrant, bustling, and the people are friendly and warm. In contrast Milano can seem to be drab and dull and the people not so friendly and reserved.

Yes, there are great contrasts between the north and the south of Italy but in fact each region of Italy has its own character, own dialect, food specialities, art and architecture. There is great diversity, great natural and man-made beauty.

There is much more that could be said about this; these are just a few of my reflections. Italy is a great country, but despite all its great natural resources and attributes there is also great darkness and corruption. False religion and false philosophies of life abound. It has a great need for the true gospel of Jesus Christ. In both the north and the south of Italy God is working but the harvest is vast and the workers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest field in Italy.

Gerry Brienza

OPPORTUNITIES AMONGST STUDENTS

Michael Steedman has been with the Mission for a number of years and has mainly worked amongst students in the north of Italy.

As I looked out over a sea of eager young faces I asked myself how I could legitimately reach out to them with the gospel. It was 1978 and I had just started teaching English at the University of Bologna. My classes had up to 100 students.

I approached my Head of Department to ask if it was alright to put up a notice inviting interested students to small group Bible studies in English and was surprised and delighted when she not only agreed but asked if I would like her to mention the meetings in her own classes! The next surprise came when over forty students expressed their interest. Soon I was ringing the home phone numbers they had given me (no mobile phones or emails in those days!). Often the house phone would be answered by a student's mother, but

when I said who was ringing, I was invariably shown great politeness, even deference! It was difficult to find suitable times for the meetings because of students' different timetables and my own teaching schedule. The average size of the groups was 4 or 5 people, but numbers varied from week to week and some students dropped out.

Each student was given a free copy of John's Gospel and I made it clear that I was not there to teach them but that we would be learning together. Not all the students had a good mastery of the language, but by using a question and answer

approach I was able to involve most if not all of them in the discussion. What a privilege it was to share the gospel with so many young people! In those early days nearly all of them would describe themselves either as practising or non-practising Roman Catholics, which was a great advantage in that although few of them had much knowledge of the Scriptures, they had a certain respect for the Bible as the Word of God. These meetings continued until I left the university four years later.

I found myself back among university students in 1990, this time in the town of Forlì, where a School for Interpreters and Translators had recently opened.

When I first moved to Forlì I was asked by missionaries working in the town if I could produce something for the local radio station they ran, and I suggested a series of short talks in slightly simplified English based on John's Gospel. Once I restarted meetings with students, I decided to use these talks in our meetings. We now read the passage through, discussed it together, listened to the talk and discussed it further. Students' timetables were much fuller in Forlì than they had been in Bologna, so I soon decided to start in John chapter 3, reasoning that even if they only came to the first meeting they would have learned that they needed to be born again, and who knows that in the providence of God they might not hear about the new birth from someone else later in life?

Two important events took place in 2014: marriage and retirement. What a blessing it was to be able to share the student ministry with Mary and pray together for the students! Having stopped working at the university, I no longer had regular face to face contact with students, but

my ex-colleagues were happy for me to come into their classes to invite new students to meetings, but as time went on interest in the meetings waned. We believe this was partly because I was no longer their teacher and partly because of growing scepticism among young Italians about anything deemed 'religious'. Last year we concluded that the Lord was closing the door on the work.

We still have contact with a few students by phone and email. These and others receive a regular 'Thought for the Week', a printed version of one of the series of radio talks in English. (After finishing John, I went on to record evangelistic series on the Synoptic Gospels and on Colossians before the recording studios closed down.)

Only the Lord knows what long-term effect this work may have in His purposes. Meanwhile, we rejoice over the few students who have come to personal faith in Christ and for those who are still studying the Word of God. This summer we visited Andrea, an Italian man now married to Asta from Lithuania; they have two small children. Andrea works as an interpreter at the European Commission in Brussels and although he and Asta are both Roman Catholics they have been holding Bible studies with other young couples in the city using the 'Thoughts for the Week' as an aid. We pray that they will come to personal faith in Christ. It is exciting to think that all around the world there are Italians who will hopefully never forget the words: 'You must be born again!'

Michael Steedman

THE IMPACT OF THE VIRUS ON THE GOSPEL IN ITALY

Many churches have had to use modern technology during lockdown. Stefano and Jenny Mariotti in Budrio describe the opportunities, disappointments and encouragements that were theirs both in lockdown and afterwards.

When Italy entered into lockdown we were very grateful for having already experienced the use of Zoom in online webinars with other church workers in Italy. It was, however, a new experience for our church and for other churches in Italy. I would say that being online gave many churches more visibility and accessibility. We personally found that although we didn't have new people from Budrio joining us, some of our old contacts joined in again and some friends from around the world participated in our services. We really hoped this would be an opportunity for the old contacts to renew their desire to know more about the Lord, but once we started meeting again physically it sadly didn't materialise into anything.

'Our prayer is that some people from Budrio will be made to think and made to desire to find help in the God who is in control'

At the same time, we found that some people were clearly waiting for us to open again. The local authorities kindly gave us permission to use the middle school gym over the summer and the first Sunday we met there a girl in her twenties turned up with her mother and brother. They have been coming ever since and so this is a real encouragement! A little later a new couple also arrived! Both these new contacts already had had some contact with evangelical Christianity in the past, but the lockdown was a real moment for reflection and giving the incentive for getting out and looking for a church as soon as it was possible.

I guess that, along with many believers worldwide, we really thought and hoped that this pandemic would shake people's world views and false religiosity. We did see small occasions when people seemed to think about God as they realised how helpless we all are and how out of control the situation was. But then a gradual optimism took over and a superficial hope



'THE LORD BLESSED US ALL WITH A BEAUTIFUL JOINT BAPTISMAL SERVICE WHERE THREE PEOPLE WERE BAPTIZED FROM EACH CHURCH. IT WAS A WONDERFUL WAY TO END THE SUMMER.'

that 'all will turn out well' became the motto. People found strength in themselves rather than in God and really just went back to their normal idols. This at least is how it seems as we write but, of course, there is still time for things to change as we are still in the middle of the situation. Our prayer is that some people from Budrio will be made to think and made to desire to find help in the God who is in control. Please pray for the Budriesi, what we call the people from Budrio. We really struggle to penetrate this hard terrain with the Gospel. People here are very hardworking and self-sufficient, even when difficulties come. They don't seem to need Christ but, of course, they desperately do!

During the lockdown, Stefano was involved with other pastors in Italy on panel interviews with The Gospel Coalition Italy and Acts 29 Italy discussing church life after Zoom. Many of our experiences are the same as the worldwide church seems to be experiencing. We are a small church and at our Sunday services we have about 25-30 people. Our small size has actually been a help to us in terms of being able to meet again physically. Larger churches in Italy struggle to accommodate everyone with the new regulations but the local authorities have been helpful in providing us



with rooms we can use so that all of our congregation can attend, including the families with children. However, perhaps by the time you read this article we may be back on Zoom, as anyway it may be the wiser option for the winter months.

One special blessing the Lord gave us over the summer was the opportunity to do our baptisms in the local outdoor swimming pool. We had been due to have a baptismal service on Easter Sunday but it had to be cancelled and we had no idea when we would be able to do this again. But one Sunday Stefano saw the swimming pool manager

while we were cleaning the gym after church and he asked him whether it would be possible to use the children's pool and he said yes! So we also asked San Lazzaro church if they would like to join us as we knew they also had baptisms they wanted to do. In the end the Lord blessed us all with a beautiful joint baptismal service where three people were baptized from each church. It was a wonderful way to end the summer.

Stefano Mariotti



WHEN IN ROME LIFE IN THE HOME OF CATHOLICISM

In the challenge of commencing an evangelical church in the centre of Rome with a Bible Institute Leonardo De Chirico explains his work. Leonardo, with a big vision, is also a writer, conference speaker and now pastors the church.

In the city where the Holy See has its centre and where the heart of the Roman Catholic Church lies, how does one dare to plant a church? The Church (capital C) is already there by definition! The claim of being a 'church' outside of the Roman Catholic Church is countercultural but something that most people find 'strange' and intriguing.

Spiritual barriers

Church planting in Rome encounters lots of cultural and religious barriers: non-catholics are often perceived as sects, awkward people, foreigners, or new religious movements.



Then there are the spiritual and theological roadblocks. Many words that are used are the same (eg grace, cross, gospel, salvation), but they mean very different things and their meanings have to be addressed.

The ordinary Roman is struck by the personal element of the Gospel. Their religion is mainly a set of practices and traditions, but not something that involves their whole life. For the most part Roman Catholic practice is based more on Folk Catholicism (eg devotions and processions) than biblical Christianity. The reading of the Bible was prohibited for centuries. People think they are 'Christian' because they were baptized as infants and are part of a 'Christian' culture, but there is little if any sense of personal engagement as far as the Gospel is concerned.

In Rome there is much cynicism about the church and religion in general, as is the case in the rest of Europe. The cultural climate is sceptical and so opportunities exist to introduce the Gospel based on the virtuous circle of evangelical truth, evangelical community, and evangelical culture. Church planting is key to this goal because it joins believing and belonging, proclamation and service, the personal and the communal, creative contextualization and obedience to the Word of God.

Gospel witness in Rome

Rome is no different from the rest of the country. The evangelical population equals 1%. There are at least fifty evangelical churches in the city. Most of them are small congregations made of faithful believers with little resources and in survival mood.



What makes our church Breccia di Roma distinct is that it is confessional (holding to the 1689 London Confession of Faith and belonging to a Reformed Baptist association of churches), urban (aiming at impacting with the gospel the cultural, political, media, and academic institutions of the city) and missional (trying to live to the glory of God all vocations and initiatives). Unlike cults we cherish church history and claim to belong to the catholic (not necessarily Roman Catholic!) church. Unlike cults the gospel we believe in is for the whole of life. Unlike cults we encourage constructive and critical cultural engagement. Thankfully, there is a growing number of churches like that. In 2018 a daughter church was planted in San Paolo, a neighbourhood in the southern part of the city.

In 2016 the church purchased a fantastic property in the heart of Rome. The space is next to historic sites (Colosseum), institutional buildings (Presidential Palace), financial institutions (Bank of Italy) and academic centres (two main Catholic universities are next to us, the Gregorian and the Angelicum, with thousands of students from among whom the future bishops and Popes of the Catholic Church will come). We want to be a gospel

community right at the heart of it. Apart from hosting the activities of the church, the property also functions as a theological study centre. With Istituto di Formazione Evangelica e Documentazione (a Reformed theological institute) we are providing outstanding theological training to lots of students: 130 students are enrolled in a five-year, non-residential course. We also function as a learning community of the Union School of Theology, thus offering solid theological training for students who are fluent in the English language. We have a small but well-resourced theological library providing books and facilities for our students.

In Rome we act as an outpost of Evangelical theology next to the Jesuit and the Dominican universities which are located around the corner! The space is also used as a springboard for gospel work internationally. For example, the *Reformanda Initiative* was launched here in 2016: it aims at identifying, uniting, equipping and resourcing evangelical leaders throughout the world to better understand Roman Catholic theology and practice in these confusing times and to educate the evangelical Church on how to better communicate the Gospel in such contexts.

Looking back and looking ahead

On 20 September 1870, the Italian army breached the wall surrounding Rome near the ancient port known as Porta Pia. The breach of Rome opened the door for Rome to become a pluralistic city (and therefore a pluralistic nation) whose residents

could finally begin to experience a religious liberty that previously did not exist under the rule of the Popes and the Roman Catholic Church. After 1870 the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the language of the people began to be freely distributed within the capital of the Italian nation.

On 20 September 2020, several evangelical churches gathered together in the open near Piazza Venezia to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the breach of Rome. The celebration was a time of public worship filled with singing, preaching and testifying about the good news of God's grace and the forgiveness that is freely available to all

who would repent of their sins and look to Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. The public service concluded with prayers for the nation.

The church is also praying for 'Breach 2030', our 10-year vision for the church and the city. We are praying that God will enable us to plant three more churches in the city and to be an encouragement for other churches in other cities to plant faithful, organic and self-maintaining churches. Our desire is also to see more people being

trained for gospel ministry and other vocations. From Rome our prayer is to have a local, national and global impact for the gospel.



Leonardo de Chirico

AN INTERVIEW WITH EUGEN PETERS

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

In 2020 Eugen and Claire Peters joined the Mission to serve Christ in county Roscommon, Republic of Ireland. Wendy Evers interviewed Eugen:



Wendy: Are you and Claire from Roscommon?

Eugen: No, we moved four months ago from county Donegal where we have lived for the past eight years as local directors of Child Evangelism Fellowship. Claire is originally from there, but I was born in Russia and lived in Germany since I was ten.

W: So, how did you meet?

E: After three years at Bible College in Germany, I began to work for CEF and, in that context, Claire and I met at a conference in Switzerland. Claire at that time was a primary school teacher in Ireland but took a career break to be better equipped in children and young people's work. We married in 2012 and moved to Ireland to work with CEF in Donegal.

W: How many children do you have, and what ages are they?

E: We have five children, two of these are already in heaven. Lydia is 6, Joshua 4 and, God willing, we will meet our baby boy in January.

W: How long have you and Claire been Christians?

E: Thirteen years ago, God sovereignly saved me a couple of days before my 24th birthday. Claire praises God for opening her eyes to her need of salvation as a small child.

W: How did the Lord lead you to the church work in Roscommon?

E: The Lord basically convicted me through his Word that the Lord is the pillar and buttress of truth. We took a year to think, pray and fast together with our church eldership on whether God wanted us to continue in CEF or to be more focussed on churches, particularly church planting. After that time, the elders of my sending church in Germany ordained and commissioned me as an evangelist to church work/plant in Ireland. In God's providence the placements I had arranged with local churches fell through. Then I contacted Grace Community Church in Roscommon because I believed that it would be theologically the best for us as a family and a good place to learn about church planting. After we met the pastor and his wife everything began to fall into place and we have been encouraged in seeing how God has confirmed this.

'IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE THE PLACEMENTS I HAD ARRANGED WITH LOCAL CHURCHES FELL THROUGH. THEN I CONTACTED GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH IN ROSCOMMON...EVERYTHING BEGAN TO FALL INTO PLACE AND WE HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED IN SEEING HOW GOD HAS CONFIRMED THIS.'





<1%

IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND THERE IS UNDER 1% OF THE POPULATION WHO ARE TRUE BELIEVERS AND IT WOULD BE EVEN LESS IN ROSCOMMON.

W: Tell me a little bit about Grace Community Church

E: This church is in the midlands of Ireland and part of a small Reformed church planting network. It was formed 15 years ago by Michael Walsh and at present has fourteen faithful members. Two years ago the church sent out a team to plant a church in the neighbouring country of Longford.

W: Are there many Christians in that part of Ireland?

E: In the Republic of Ireland many call themselves 'Christian' but, unfortunately, there is under 1% of the population who are true believers and it would be even less in Roscommon.

W: What is your responsibility and involvement in the church?

E: I will take some time to learn from the pastor and the people by serving in whatever way I can; at present I lead and teach the young people, regularly preach on a Sunday and teach the equipping hour. Claire is involved in the children's Friday Club. In the future, God willing, I desire to become an elder in this church and help to pastor the flock, serving the body of Christ in Ireland.



'I will take some time to learn from the pastor and the people by serving in whatever way I can'

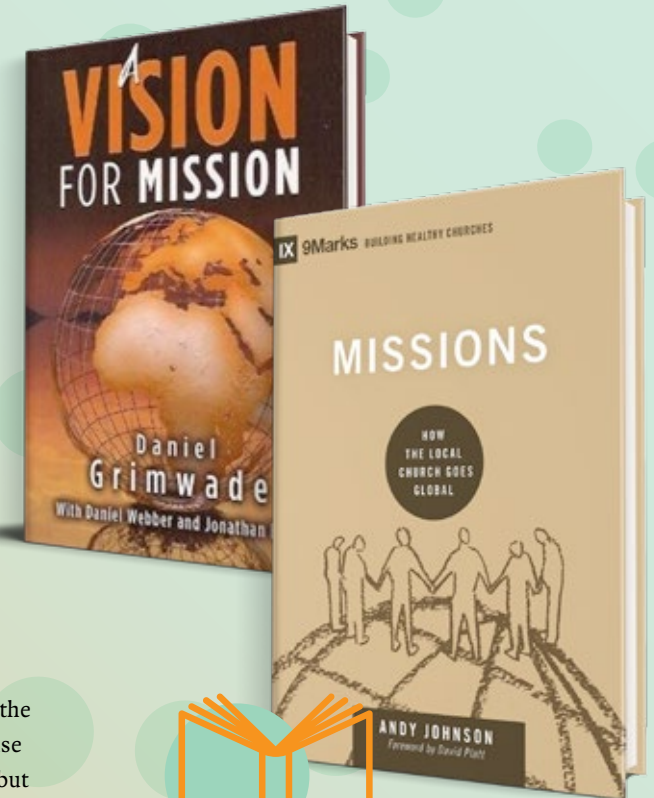
BOOK REVIEWS

A Vision for Mission

Daniel Grimwade (with Daniel Webber and Jonathan Bayes)

Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global

(9Marks Andy Johnson)



Reviewing two books on the same theme at the same time is both good and bad! Bad because you have less space to devote to each book, but good because it is interesting to compare differing approaches.

Both books have the merit of being short (certainly not shallow), easy to read, thoroughly biblical and practical. *A Vision for Mission* has, in fact, three authors. Daniel Webber wrote the introductory chapter on Mission to Europeans, assessing the European scene. This has particular importance to those who take an interest in EMF. The last chapter, written by Jonathan

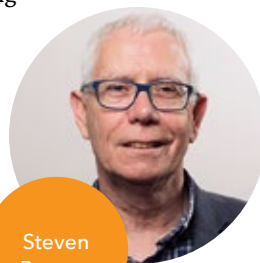
Bayes, provides a corrective concerning the missionary endeavours and influence of John Calvin, particularly in France, the place of his birth. *Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global* is part of the 9Marks series entitled 'Building Healthy Churches'.

So, what can you expect to gain from these books? *A Vision for Mission* explores the missionary character of God himself. It addresses the urgent question of the need for a conscious faith in Jesus as essential to salvation and encourages us to think about taking the gospel to all nations (people groups). The willingness to suffer and the place of suffering in mission is tackled here with two telling quotes: 'Suffering is often a seedbed for missionary zeal', and again, 'we need to lower our expectations for this life'. There are ten important conclusions on the need and benefit of engaging with mission. The penultimate chapter is particularly suitable for those involved in or interested in how to receive a deputation visit from an EMF missionary! Once again here we have the biblical example from Acts 14 and wise suggestions on how to go about it.

Mission: How the Local Church Goes Global poses some big questions on our awareness of, definition and commitment to mission. Again, biblical foundations are laid down. There is a short chapter on what the gospel is and defining the terms 'mission' and 'missionary' – basic but essential. The idea of sending and supporting well is looked at with some great insights from 3 John 1-8, a short New Testament letter with a big message! This is followed by a chapter entitled 'Getting the House in Order', dealing with quality rather than quantity. Rather than spreading itself too wide and thin, how a local church can sharpen and deepen its missionary involvement. Next comes 'Healthy Missions Partnerships' – an important matter. You will find here six characteristics of a healthy partnership. 'These six qualities will go a long way toward making your partnerships more God-glorifying and, frankly, more fruitful for everyone.' Six principles that are full of wisdom. Chapter 6 looks at reforming short-term missions – a relevant and sometimes controversial matter.

After looking at more biblical material the author considers concerns about short-term mission trips and then discusses short-term missions that actually can help. There is an eight-point plan on how to prepare and use them; a very constructive re-think on short term missions. Chapter 7, followed by the conclusion, looks at the task of engaging the nations by other means and what the author calls 'stepping towards the nations'. This involves considering those from other nations in our own localities; a careful look at English-speaking expatriate churches in other countries and how they can be a beneficial gospel platform. It is followed by a consideration of reaching the nations through our employment – working and living among people of a foreign land. This can involve supporting a local church plant. Towards the end of his book Andy Johnson writes, 'As we engage and labour in the work of missions, we need urgent confidence. We should have an urgency because sin is real and hell is bad and confidence because God is so good and heaven so glorious. Why dawdle on the way to the victory celebration?'

Of course, there are gaps in a variety of matters relating to mission, and doubtless not everyone will agree with the authors on every point! But having had my first flu jab this year it reminds me that a small dose of the right thing can have a big impact.



Steven Bowers

DOCTRINAL BASIS

- The verbal inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy of the Old and New Testament Scriptures as originally given and their final authority and sufficiency in all matters pertaining to faith and practice.
- The unity of the Godhead and the eternal co-equality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; the sovereignty of God in creation, providence and redemption.
- The Lord Jesus Christ as true God and true Man; His deity, incarnation, virgin birth, sinless life, atoning death and physical resurrection.
- The work of Jesus Christ in His life, death and resurrection as Representative and Substitute; His atonement for sin thereby securing righteousness, forgiveness and eternal life for all who are united to Him by faith.
- The ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, His intercession at the throne of God, His coming again personally and visibly in glory and power.
- The Holy Spirit's deity and personality; His essential work as the sole Author and Interpreter of the Holy Scriptures and in regeneration, conversion, sanctification and Revival.
- The creation of man in the image of God, his sin and fall, the consequences passing to all humanity, extending to every part of human nature and resulting in the universal guilt of mankind before God.
- The personality of Satan, his opposition to God and His purposes and his corruption and enslavement of man.
- Salvation as solely by the grace of God accomplished by God the Son and applied by God the Holy Spirit; appropriated by God-given faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and including regeneration, justification, sanctification and final glorification.
- The bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the one to eternal life in heaven and the other to eternal punishment in hell.
- The one holy, universal Church which is the Body of Christ to which all true believers belong.

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EUROPEAN
MISSION
FELLOWSHIP

MISSIONARIES DEPUTATION SPRING 2021

VISITING ENGLAND & NORTHERN IRELAND



**José Moreno
Berrocal**
(Spain)
6-29 March



**Antonio & Anna
De Noia**
(Italy)
10-22 March

VISITING ENGLAND & WALES



José de Segovia
(Spain)
12-22 March

The deputation programmes are under constant review due to the coronavirus situation. If it is not possible for missionaries to come in person, due to the coronavirus, there may be opportunities for them to attend meetings via Zoom. Please check our website or contact the Leicester Office for meetings in England, Wales or Scotland, and Phil Dunn, NI representative for those in Northern Ireland (details inside front cover).