



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Dec. 2020, Jan., Feb. 2021

We hope that this letter finds you doing well, standing strong through God's grace. I want to apologize for the lateness of this letter, and intend to write bi-monthly, Lord willing, for our next update. With the turn of a new year and for other reasons the past weeks have been very busy, and time has passed quickly. The Lord blessed the end of the year with a few mighty divine open doors. One being that both Tirzah and Luca were able to receive Italian Citizenship and their Italian passports. The second was that we were able to modify and translate a Christmas Gospel tract with both German and Italian Reformation Bible scriptures in them and have them printed. In December many were handed out and distributed. Two nearby villages with approximately 500 residents total all received this gospel tract in their mailbox and we praise the Lord for this. I did not count how many Catholic crucifixes and statues I saw as I went door to door, but it is no underestimation that almost all have some sort of graven image out front of the house or on the barn nearby. Please pray for the increase on this seed sown.

With this "corona crisis" and all the never-ending lockdown measures here, travel and evangelism has been somewhat limited and so we ask for you to also pray that liberty would return to be able to do more in the coming months. Two different Brothers in Christ wrote to me in the past months, having a burden for certain cities to be evangelized, where their ancestors were from. We hope to gladly tract these villages and areas when there are not so many restrictions in the coming months, so please keep this in prayer. Another blessing toward the end of the year was an open door to a small school, where I can teach about 20 children out of the Bible. Last year I was again having some discomfort in my neck and prayed that I would be able to find an experienced chiropractor in the area, and I remember praying distinctly, if it be God's will, that he would be an American. Well after a few calls, I ended up in the office of a Doctor of Chiropractic of a man named Rich, who not only helped me, but is the only American chiropractor in South Tyrol and so well known that people travel hours to be treated by him. I started to witness to him in my first visit and he surprised me by telling me he is a born-again believer and through getting to know him more and more, he has far more bible knowledge than most here and has served the Lord in the past. Rich married a South Tyrol lady only a couple years ago and lives in a place called Toblach about an hour and a half east of us. He has been without a church for many years and in a way has been selfishly "hiding out" and not active for the Lord. But now that he is married and has his first child, he seems to have been woken up to his responsibility to being spiritually active. Rich then at one of my treatments told me how his wife, Heidi, has a hotel and in it a newly started school and if I would be interested in teaching the students Bible and Bible-related things. I said that I would and now bi-weekly, by God's grace, I am able to have time with these children, ranging from four to twelve years old. The title for the class is Truth 101 and our textbook is the Bible. We have covered many things already and one being the creation account in Genesis vs Evolution. I asked every child after the lesson, "I personally believe that God made me and has a plan for me, what do you believe? You can decide.... Do you believe you came from a mud puddle and from monkeys or that God made you?" Every single kid said, "God made me" ...Amen. Well, to be expected there has been much spiritual counterattack in this open door, but God is holding it open. Heidi, the wife of Rich and school founder is not saved and is a "free thinker", but very open to the gospel, and has a respect for the Bible. She told us that in a nearby public school, at the beginning of the school year, the teacher had all children who were not baptized (sprinkled in church) come to the front of the classroom. She then declared to the seated students that these "unbaptized" will be going to Hell and you will not. This story is a sad but true source of what is really going on in the public schools over here and how badly the situation is. I read a

quote from Martin Luther on the first day in the class with the children to explain the danger of a school, which has no scriptural instruction. Luther said, "I am afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of Hell unless they diligently labour in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engraving them into the hearts of the youth." This displeases the Lord greatly when children are led astray. **(Matt. 18:6)**

Another blessing is to see Luciano, the man who recently got saved last year here on the horse farm, grow little by little. I would like to tell you a bit about this brother in Christ and how he truly is a newborn babe in Christ, on square one. On one of the first Sundays, he came to church, he came late after having an argument where he lived and jumped thru the window to come to us. The following Sunday, he came early before service and my wife asked him, "Would you like some water to drink?" and he answered, "No, that's ok, I had a beer this morning." Another Sunday he was late and so I texted him and tried to figure out where he was, and he ended up telling me that he got stuck an hour away from me at a train station and had to sleep there overnight. He did not have a valid ticket and got caught by the police and ended up being stuck there a night, missing the last train. I then asked him, why he went there in the first place. He said, "I went to look for lottery tickets on the ground...I found 5 Euro ones, 10, 20, and even a 100!" We have been having him eat with us pretty regularly after church and last Sunday I noticed that he crossed himself after the meal, like a catholic or in his case, being from Romania, an orthodox. And as I walked him home later that Sunday, he ran up to a 6-foot big crucifix statue and kissed the nails in the feet, trying to show me his devotion. Today we spent time again with him and he is growing slowly, and we praise the Lord that God has saved this man's soul and promised to do a work in him, and we are thanking the Lord in advance for what he can do, when a man gets on his potter's wheel. **"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" – (Philippians 1.6)**

Some more souls, for whom we covet your mentioning of them in your prayers are Rosa and Lubomira. Rosa is a shopkeeper in Sterzing and as my wife this past week was paying for some purchases, had the chance to witness to her one on one. Rosa, at one point in the witness, pointed up to a crucifix image up on the ceiling and said, "My Jesus is right there...." My wife replied, "But the Lord is not on the cross anymore..." And Rosa said, "You're right.... you're right again.", and what under conviction. She seems close to being saved and my wife hopes to see her again in the coming week. Another lady, named Lubomira, who lives right near us seems open as well. Her husband, Andreas, and her invited us over for breakfast last week and they both have received gospel witnesses. They are seeking souls and seem lonely. Our neighbor Armin, who I went hiking with was able to receive another witness on another hike and he was very thankful for the Bible witness and said, "Thank you for the help." He knows he needs to make a decision and be saved and is right on the edge, so it appears.

As a family we are all doing well and praise the Lord. Tirzah is learning and enjoying her little school nearby, and we have seen many contacts formed and opportunities arise to give the gospel through her school. We ask special prayer for Tirzah to be able to keep going despite the bizarre corona measures slowly being implemented. Luca is also learning and likes his Kindergarten and is picking up German and Italian as he plays. Graziella and I are glad to see Spring weather some in, after a very snowy winter with almost record-breaking snowfalls. Our first snow was I believe much more than 30 Inches and we had much more after this, with many people shoveling roofs off to prevent collapsing. We would like ask prayer for God's continual help in language study and also then, how to effectively minister to people during this strange corona situation, with the many rules etc. Thank you very much for your desire and burden to see God's word be sown here and many hear the true saving gospel. Thank you for your prayers and support. With your help, we are seeing the Lord's hand slowly gain victories. Truly, thank you for your kindness and help, May the Lord bless you for it. **"The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:" – (Numbers 6:24)**

-In Christ Jesus,

Brother Joel, Graziella, Tirzah, Luca

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