

Corato, Italy  
Spring 2018

# Stevanus News



Dear Praying Friends,

It's hard to believe that we are already in April of 2018; it seems like just yesterday we were with our family in the States for Christmas and New Years. Time seems to go by so much more quickly as we get older. Exciting things are happening for which we praise the Lord and want to share with you.

Over the holidays, we passed the leadership of our cell group over to our senior pastor. He and his wife willingly took the helm and were pleasantly surprised as well as personally touched by the enthusiasm of several young people having come to the faith, desiring to grow in their new walk with Christ. With the addition of three mature Christians who joined to train as cell leaders, **we soon grew to 25 members** and could barely fit everyone in our living room. We began to finish training our future cell leaders and changed our name to *Life Groups* in an effort to distinguish ourselves from any hint of terroristic activity. We have since “multiplied out” two new groups: one *in* our town (as ours is in the country) and another in a neighboring town. We also began to teach about the objectives and benefits of this type of ministry in the adult Sunday School class of our church with enthusiastic support from our pastor. As many know, transitioning a tradition church into home groups can receive “resistance” from long-time believers but as the Pastor said himself, “we cannot deny the fruit of and necessity for this ministry,” as it serves as an excellent “net” for quickly inserting new believers into the church family. It is a wonderful means for discipleship, enabling the newcomers to express themselves and ask questions.

Over the years, March 8<sup>th</sup> has developed into *International Women's Day*. In Italy it was and still is a “**Ladies Night Out**” initially signifying a commemorative event to remember poor working



conditions for women over 100 years ago. It is an occasion for women to go out to eat leaving children and husbands at home, a *very* rare moment. Some churches have used the opportunity as an evangelistic event creating a festive event including: games, prizes, skits, testimonies and a brief message. Since we've had experience doing this over the years, Denise was able to put the event together in a short amount of time, seeking to get as many women involved as possible. Many did not know what to expect but everyone had a wonderful time—young and old. In fact, the men were curious to watch and were “allowed” to observe only if they were willing to serve refreshments.

A few first-time visitors came out, in fact, the fiancé of one of our young women, new to an evangelical church, was particularly touched by the message about placing one's faith completely in the Lord Jesus.



Just recently, we were able to receive Joe and Stephanie DeMott who serve with *Missionaries2Marriages.com*, travelling to many nations giving deep teaching on the preservation of marriage. We had the privilege hosting and translating for them for an evening of intense ministry and teaching. This month we are starting pre-marital counseling for several engaged couples and this served as a marvelous event to launch this program.

In His Service,  
**Mark & Denise**

Once again with grateful hearts we thank you for your support and prayers as we continue to serve in this special nation, profoundly in need to the Gospel message.