

Martin and Fran Russell working with



August 2021

Dear friends at BH

Psalm 139 has always been a special psalm for me. I (Fran) remember reading it when I was a new Christian and thinking "how wonderful, I am never EVER alone". Recently I discovered this translation and have been reading it slowly, thinking about the implication of what it says for me most mornings. Today I am praying, that as you read it, you will hear our Heavenly Father speaking into your heart and soul and brings you "wonder and strength"

Psalm 139 verses 1-6

*Lord, you know everything there is to know about me.
You perceive every movement of my heart and soul,
and you understand my every thought before it even enters my mind.
You are so intimately aware of me, Lord. You read my heart like an open book and you know all the
words I'm about to speak before I even start a sentence!
You know every step I will take before my journey even begins.
You've gone into my future to prepare the way and in kindness you follow behind me to spare me
from the harm of my past. You have laid your hand on me!
This is just too wonderful, deep, and incomprehensible!
Your understanding of me brings me wonder and strength.*



Thank you so much for your prayers, cards and thoughts for Fran's knee operation on July 1st. She stayed in hospital for physiotherapy until July 13th. Fran still has weekly physio, daily exercises and is now the proud owner of an exercise bike. Over this whole time Fran has continued to have opportunities to talk about God's faithfulness, love and provision. Mostly through WhatsApp or text messages, emails or the phone and occasionally with real face to face conversations.

Give thanks for the wonderful care she has received, both in hospital and now. **Please continue to pray** for Fran's recovery. This has been a difficult time. She had no idea that it would be so painful or debilitating. 6 weeks after the operation and she is still limited in how far she can walk and what she can do. She hasn't slept properly since before the operation.

Last week Martin had an appointment with Carlotta, his rheumatologist. Since being diagnosed in 2017 Martin has had a mixture of good and bad periods with his autoimmune disease, vasculitis. But he explained to Carlotta that since October he has been struggling continually with lack of energy and painful joints and legs. She has now prescribed a different medication, an injection every two weeks. **Give thanks** for Carlotta and her care for Martin and **please pray** that this new treatment will make a difference to Martin's quality of life.

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Florence, where we live, is almost deserted. Most Italians go away in August so many of our local shops are shut while the owners take a well deserved break. July and August are usually very hot and humid so we have been taking advantage of the early morning cool air to take Gioia for a walk at around 7.30!!! All of us walk to the bar, same one every morning, pick up a coffee and croissant and sit in the nearby park. We talk about our plans for the day, pray for them and our family and friends, and chat to any of our dog walking friends who pass by. They always make a big fuss of Gioia, so she is happy too. Then Martin goes off for a longer walk with Gioia and Fran goes home.



Give thanks for this wonderful start to the day and **please pray** that we will get opportunities to live out our faith with our dog walking friends.

Other things to give thanks for:

- Our holiday in Tuscany in June. 10 days of complete relaxation and fun with Gioia
- Fran had a lovely chat with her mother last week. They have decided that April 2022 is a good time to next visit the UK and spend time together. It will coincide with her 94th birthday
- Fran especially wants to give thanks for Martin and his care for her. Nothing has been too much trouble for him. He really is a treasure.

With our love, as always, Martin and Fran xxx

Coming up – lots of things to pray and give thanks for.

Aug 16 th -31 st	Both us continue working - please pray for Fran as she fits in her responsibilities around her recuperation.
September	September 5 th – 15 th we return to Le Marche for 10 days by the sea. We are looking forward to meeting up with both friends and family.
September (TBA)	We meet with the knee surgeon to make a date for the operation on Fran's other knee.
September 16 th – 17 th	We travel to Rome for two days of meetings with the National Leadership Team, the first-time face to face since Feb 2020. Please pray for our contribution and communication, as all of these meetings are in Italian.
October 2 nd – 9 th	Authentic Italy Tour – 5 US couples are visiting for a week to see how they can be more involved in supporting Agape Italia.
October 13 th – 16 th	Operations Team Retreat. Martin and his team (plus spouses) will take time out together for some spiritual refreshment and teaching from our Area Directors wife Gema.
October 21 st -23 rd	Agape Italia Staff Conference. Pray for Fran as she helps to organise the administration with Noemi.
October 23 rd	Fran meets with the Conference team: Brandon, Tiffany, Elizabeth, Mary, Amos and Noemi who are working with her to prepare the 2022 Agape Italia National Conference. 24 th – 26 th February.