

Martin and Fran Russell working with



June 2021

¹Lift up a great shout of joy to the Lord!

Go ahead and do it—everyone, everywhere!

²Worship the Lord with gladness.

Sing your way into His presence with joy!

³And realize what this really means

We have the privilege of worshipping the Lord our God.

For He is our Creator, and we belong to him.

We are the people of His pleasure.

⁴You can pass through His open gates with the password of praise.

Come right into His presence with thanksgiving.

Come bring your thank offering to Him

and affectionately bless His beautiful name!

⁵For the Lord is always good and ready to receive you.

He's so loving that it will amaze you— so kind that it will astound you!

And He is famous for His faithfulness toward all.

Everyone knows our God can be trusted,

for He keeps His promises to every generation!

Psalms 100

Dear friends at BH, thank you for your love and care for us

As I (Fran) was reading this psalm I couldn't help but get excited about knowing and belonging to our Creator God, who we worship and love. This psalm reminds us of why and how we can worship. If you are getting a bit weary of spending time with the Lord or your times with Him seem dry and just going through the motions, then I am praying that this psalm will help you. That you will hear the Lord's voice through these words and believe that His promises in this psalm are for you too.

Italian Home Group and Church

Both of us have had the opportunity to lead the bible study in these last two months. What a privilege. Our church friends are always so patient with us and encourage us to take steps of faith with scary Christian vocabulary or terminology!!! Fran's language teacher, Simonetta, helped Fran with her preparation for the recent study on "The woman caught in adultery". Fran explained the concepts she wanted to share: Jesus's love and compassion, His mercy and forgiveness, His lack of judgement and kindness. Simonetta helped her phrase everything in an Italian way. Please continue to pray for Simonetta, as Fran meets with her weekly, for more opportunities for spiritual conversations.

Please pray for us as we think about the best contribution we can make to “Vigna Vecchia Brethren Church”. We have been worshipping here since November 2012 and would love to make more of a contribution. Thanks so much.

Our Summer

Since we last wrote our plans have changed rather a lot. Fran had her knee appointment on May 17th and the orthopaedic doctor told her that the operation would be soon. She went for all the pre op tests last week and was given July 1st as the date for her left knee. We scrapped our plans for a month by the sea in July. Instead, we are having 10 days on the Tuscany coast from 14th June. Fortunately, last month, our landlord put air conditioning in some of our apartment, so we will be cool here in Florence for all of the hottest summer months.

Fran will be in a hospital outside Florence for 10 days, The extended time is for regular physiotherapy, that will help with her recovery. The second knee will be operated on in October, all on the Italian National Health System. Fran is looking forward to being in the countryside, being with Italian speakers and improving her spoken Italian and finishing a knitting project. She is praying for opportunities while she is in hospital to talk about Jesus and the difference knowing Him has made to her life.

Praise the Lord for this answer to prayer. Please pray for Fran after the op, she is not very brave, and her pain threshold is very low. Pray the nurses and doctors will understand this.

Martin’s health and other news!



Martin has good days and bad days with his vasculitis. His rheumatologist wants him to have another PET scan in July and then she will make a plan for his future treatment.

Please remember Martin and these ongoing challenges with his health in your prayers

Above you can see both of us with Gioia, she can be a handful but makes us laugh a lot.

Meanwhile, he is enjoying Gioia, our 6-month-old Jack Russell puppy, and with the help of Elena, an Italian dog trainer is teaching her how to respond to his call, sit, wait and walk by his side. Martin and Gioia are both doing really well. Fran helps too, but he does the major part of her care. He also meets and chats to many Italian dogs and their owners every day, which is wonderful for language practice.

In October last year Martin went to exchange his UK driving licence to an Italian version. It should have been completed by 1st Jan 2021 but because of his illness the licencing agency insisted on him having a medical exam. Thank you so much for your prayers for this medical exam on 31st May. It went really well, and he came home with a health certificate confirming he is fit to drive. Unfortunately, the licencing staff don't know how to process his application anymore as we are now in the period "post Brexit". There are clear guidelines on the UK embassy website stating that there is agreement to continue accepting conversion through to the end of 2021 but sadly this hasn't yet been communicated to the licencing agency staff.

Please pray that he can get through the red tape and receive a new licence before his UK driving licence expires in October.

Answers to your prayers

Fran continues to organise a weekly Zoom meeting with her AILO friends. Praise the Lord for the opportunities this has given her to pray for these ladies and sometimes have more spiritual conversations. Thank you for your prayers for Fran, the Lord is at work. Yesterday she received this Whatsapp text message from one of the AILO ladies. It was in response to her daily "good morning message" which she started sending out in March 2020.

Dearest Fran,

I wish you all the very best for your knee repair! You are always in my prayers. I want to thank you for your consistent good mornings. You share your faith and love of the Lord in a way that can only inspire and strengthen my own faith. I will miss your input in my daily life. The past year and a half has been so very different I cannot begin to tell you how grateful I am to you. I cannot thank you enough for your generosity, and goodness in sharing your love of Jesus with me. Hope to chat again when you are all better! Love to you, Martin and Gioia 🤗🥰

Last week Felice, the café owner, where she goes most days, asked Fran had she always read the bible. Fran, in very simple Italian, told Felice how she asked Jesus into her life in 1989. What a wonderful opportunity. Praise the Lord.

Thank you for your prayers for Fran, who was really struggling with motivation for her administration responsibilities. In the last few weeks, thanks to your prayers, there has been a remarkable difference in her attitude to the more mundane tasks. What a wonderful answer to prayer – Our God is a great God.

Continue to pray for Fran as she leads the conference team and particularly with managing these admin tasks that are a vital part of her role.

Thank you so much for your ongoing prayers, encouragement, and financial support for us. We wouldn't be here without you and because of you, and the part you play in our lives, we are able to make a difference to the Agape Italia staff and the people the Lord brings us into contact with – you are such a blessing to us from the Him.

With our love

Martin + Franxx

Coming Up **Please will you keep all these events and happenings in your prayers**

Fran still has a number of things to do before the operation. Please pray she gets everything bought (compression stockings etc), taken (medicines) or done (test for Covid etc) in a timely way.

June 14th –24th

Because of the generosity of a friend we can have a holiday on the Tuscany coast. We have rented an apartment, to make life easier with Gioia. Plus we have use of a friend's car for the whole time. Praise the Lord for His goodness to us.

June 18th

Agape Italia staff have a two hour zoom meeting for teaching, training and fun, led by the rest of the National Leadership team.

June 29th

Martin goes to Rome for a National Leadership Team meeting. The first in person since February 2020

July 1st

7.00 a.m Martin drops Fran off at the hospital for her knee replacement operation.

September 4th

We have been invited to a wedding in the UK. The son of dear friends. He is also our godson. Currently it is difficult to know what to do? Will it be safe to travel? Will we have to quarantine in the UK? Will Fran be mobile enough? Lots of questions. Also if we come to the UK we would love to visit all our family, but including brothers, sisters, nieces nephews and their children there are more than 50. Plus Fran's mum and elderly auntie. Please pray for wisdom for us.

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