



The Bates (not yet) in Italy
Training Italian pastors to reach
the Italian people.

Bates Family Newsletter: September Update
Church Edition: Trento



This week we shipped out our household goods. Though we are still looking for an apartment in Italy, the process for shipping goods can take several months and we decided that it would be best to get things moving. During this time of waiting, we wanted to begin a series of newsletters dedicated to the Italian churches that Clark will be working with through IFED. We're going to begin in the North and work our way South. This month's church is the Evangelical Church of Trento.

Trento is a town nestled at the base of the Italian Alps. It was once a territory of

Austria but is now part of Italy. Because of this, and its proximity to countries like Austria and Switzerland, the city has a very Austrian / German feel with many residents speaking a form of German or even French, rather than Italian. Even the food of this region is largely inspired by its Austrian roots. You will find hearty soups with bread dumplings and apple torts in many of the restaurants as opposed to pastas and pizzas that most think of when they think of Italy. Trento is a testament to the long and storied history of Italy beyond what most visitors experience.



In the history of the church, Trento is the site of the sixteenth-century Council of Trent, convened by the Roman Catholic Church in response to the Protestant Reformation. It was at the Council of Trent that the Catholic Church formally declared which books of the Bible belonged in the Canon, including the apocryphal books of the Old Testament that the Reformers rejected. The Council also affirmed that anyone who declares that justification is by “faith alone” is anathema and outside the Church.



The Evangelical Church of Trento was originally planted in 1964 (before this time there was no Protestant presence in the city) with 25 people. In 1969, a missionary couple came and began to lead the church. However, in the ten years that they were there, the church lost all but one family for various reasons. Some died, others moved to Rome for work, and slowly the church dwindled. The church remained on life support until the 1980's when an Italian pastor began to lead.

After 8 years, he moved on and was replaced by another, and in 1998, the church became self-governing rather than missionary-led.



Today the church meets twice a week, with Sunday worship and Wednesday prayer and Bible study. They, like many churches, average around 20-30 believers each Sunday and meet in a small storefront below an apartment complex. They are led by a wonderful man of God named Giuseppe Rizza, broadcasting their Sunday messages on YouTube and hosting regular summer camps for children in the area.



The church in Trento and its story is emblematic of the Protestant movement in Italy. They have seen periods of growth and absolute loss. The gospel has spread and receded. It is a challenging life of faith for the believers there. As you can see in the photos, it has no appearance of a church by American standards and doesn't look like a church in the Roman Catholic sense, which most Italians are familiar with. Because of this, inviting Italians to come and experience worship can be difficult. To them, it has the appearance of a cult or some form of sect and not a church. Paradoxically, these storefront spaces are all that Protestant churches can use if they want to be centrally located in their community. It is one of the many paradoxes that the Protestant church in Italy must face every day.

Will you join us in prayer for the Evangelical Church in Trento and Pastor Rizza?

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Clark, Jessie, Bethany, Alex, and Levi
(The Bates Family)

