



José, Elisa & Filipe Rodrigues

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"The LORD has helped us this far." (1Sa 7:12)

Dear Friends,

Thinking on those words of the prophet, we can find much help looking to the past, present and future. Past present and future is a part of all individuals and institutions.

- Looking backward - there are so many blessings and encouragements of which to be reminded. For it was but by God's grace that we have been sustained this far.
- Looking upward - brings the reality of the past into the everyday. It highlights God is with us all to come this far. For with God "there is no inconsistency or shifting shadow." (**Jas 1:17**)
- Looking forward - "we can confidently say: The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid... is the same yesterday and today—and forever!" (**Heb 13:6,8**).

Acknowledging, "*The LORD has helped us this far*" supplies understanding of the past, gratitude in the present and confidence for the future, with all whatever it holds.

Looking backward, upward as much as forward, we would like to highlight some matters of thanksgiving and prayer.

Matters for thanksgiving

Church premises:

- In this regard, it is more than a few months story. In fact, a story of many years. At last all the process has been completed and papers were signed on 7th October. The church owns the place.
- In relation to the finances side, the church did not have the full amount of the cost and was raising a loan of 20,000 euros. Through the European Mission Fellowship, churches and individuals had sent gifts that almost covered the 20,000 euros we needed to buy the place and pay taxes. We are very thankful to the churches and individuals that sent generous gifts, that amounted to over 18,000 euros.
- Now starts a new phase. Before we move in, it is necessary to renew the toilets, build a small kitchen, and decorating.

Encouragements:

- As we move forward, people in general are encouraged and committed to the work. Starting in the new school year, we have the joy of seeing Bruno Pires start a three-year course of theology with the Portuguese Bible Institute.
- Ten people from our local church started a two-year course based on the Gospel of Matthew and the book of Acts.

- Three others are doing a four-year course based on the book of Romans. All these courses are provided online, by the Portuguese Bible Institute. We praise God for the privilege of encouraging and to be encouraged by those that are committed to learn more to serve better.
- We are encouraged with the experience of having all the meetings available on Zoom and at the same time having people attending at Alto do Moinho and Azoia. This past Sunday, all together were about fifty people attending the meetings.
- No less encouragement are the numbers attending Sunday School for adults and for children, at the same time in separated Zoom rooms. For obvious reasons, it is the children's Sunday School, that takes more preparation to have their attention for an hour or so. It is a blessing to have a good group of people committed to this demanding but blessed work.
- The different people that have come to us this past year or so, are coming still. I will just mention Sergio and Isabel. Sergio, moved from another town, and looking for a local church in the area found us on the website and appeared for the first time at a young people's meeting. Since then, he is coming regularly and taking part in the meetings. His prayers express deep thoughts. He is one of the ten studying the course mentioned above.
- Elisa's illness. According to the last result of exams and blood test, doctors, from two different hospitals, have agreed for Elisa to be followed at home with palliative care. Her breathing is better since 1.1 litres of liquid was removed from her right lung. Though we have the oxygen machine installed in our house, so far it has not been necessary to use it. With the increase of tumour marks, the volume of the belly has increased. She gets extraordinary help from the doctors and is without pain. Though she is very fragile, she has been able to take a monthly meeting with a few pastor's wives. So far, she has been able to attend all the online meetings. We have also to give thanks for the fact that her illness has been an opportunity for fellowship and witnessing the grace of God to our everyday living. We give thanks for all the received encouragements from so many of our spiritual family, near and far. Elisa's illness has been used by God to unite the church in prayer, and also caring in practical jobs related with the home. Some others are cooking meals, others entertaining in different ways. There are good efforts trying to make things as pleasant and easy as possible.

Matters for prayer:

- The necessary works to be done for the church's new premises.
- For the preaching and teaching in these peculiar times. Recently, Fabiano Fernandes, Director of the Portuguese Bible Institute, is preaching for us first and second Sunday of each month. He is as much appreciated as well as a blessing to the pastoral ministry.
- For strength and wisdom to lead with the demanding situations of online meetings, especially the work with children.
- For all the students and teachers at different bible courses.
- For Elisa. She is very confident in her faith, taking every opportunity to witness the hope of eternal life, to doctors, nurses, and many others that can be reached by social groups, phone, e-mail and so on.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Pr.^(s) Jose and Filipe Rodrigues



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