

Avanti Italia

Promoting a two-year mission involvement of college graduates

Newsletter

"What is this ministry?"

Our good friend, Oleta, wrote us recently about this ministry:

"It seems to me, as a bystander, that you are so much more than a school for future missionaries. You have a strong outreach in the community [as seen] in the numbers of baptisms you have had. How are you reaching those people? It appears you are members of a local church. What contributions are being made to that church by means of Bible studies in the community, etc. . . Since I haven't been involved with missions before, I truly do not understand how it all works."

Oleta is not alone. Avanti Italia touches many lives and is not easy to describe. People who support this ministry are helping. . . 1) A *chosen force* of American workers. 2) A *central facility* in the heart of Italy. 3) A *church family* which influences many other foreign churches and countries.

I. The *chosen force* is the program known as Avanti Italia ("Forward Italy"). This is an intercontinental team of selected American college graduates who interrupt their careers and studies for two years, move from the United States to Europe, and give that part of their lives to foreign evangelism.

Over the last 18 years, about a hundred young adults have accepted the Avanti challenge. For many, the experience is life-changing. Some participants change careers. Some have met life partners. Some have since given their life to serve in Italy or in other mission efforts.

II. The *central facility* is the Florence Bible School (Scuola Biblica di Firenze), a building suitably located on the edge of Florence. Inviting and versatile, the Bible School is a hub of constant activity for Avanti workers, their students, church members, visiting tourists, and Florence residents. It is both the home and the primary evangelistic tool of the Avanti Italia workers.

The Florence Bible School advertises free lessons in English, using the Bible, and Bible courses in Italian or English.

God's word changes people. One man came saying, "I only want to learn English.

I'm not interested in religion." Soon he was fascinated by the Bible and introducing his teacher with the words, "This man is teaching me about Jesus."

III. The *church family*, the Florence Church of Christ (Chiesa di Cristo di Firenze), is attracting believers and seekers who come to Italy from all parts of the world. It gives people a place to belong and grow together in faith. Members and visitors in recent weeks have represented at least 16 different countries (Albania, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Columbia, Ethiopia, France, Ghana, Italy, Korea, Moldavia, Nigeria, Mexico, Peru, Romania, and the United States).

The church now also oversees a new initiative to train leaders for churches of Christ throughout Italy.

A *force*. A *facility*. A *family*. All interrelated.

With the Lord's help and with supporters like Oleta, all three are working together and touching lives throughout the world.

—Gary Williams



White unto harvest

Among those who have been taught and baptized in recent months include [back row] Mihyun (Korean), Ben (Nigerian), Nicola (Albanian), Angelo (Albanian), Paolo (Italian); [front row] Raquel (Peruvian) and Roxanna (Peruvian).



THE NEW TEAM: Those participating in the Avanti Italia training sessions in Searcy, August 11-22, include (front row, seated) Adam Halford and Wesley Riddle; (back row, standing) Marilee Sutherlin, Danielle Grampp, Michelle Scobba, Sara Rabon, Kristine Loy, Althea Pate, and Katie Chambers.

Recent reports from current AI workers . . .

Sarah Bailey

Let me update you on what has been happening around here.

I gladly report that the New-Christian's class is going well. Currently they are talking about spiritual gifts. They are taking a spiritual gift evaluation that will help them understand better their various roles in the church. We have some beautiful young Christians that just glow. In general they are already evangelistic and are growing very quickly.

The Florence congregation is getting more international by the day. We have a couple of Romanian men and a woman that have been visiting regularly for a while now and lately they have been bringing at least one or two new friends every Sunday. Last Sunday there must have been 10 of them. Also, one of Blaine's new students (an Albanian guy) came to both the Tuesday night Bible study and services on Sunday. Then, he stayed after and ate lunch with some of us and got to know us and especially the other Albanian brethren. The Albanian brethren are hoping to start a Bible study in Albanian soon.

On one Sunday, a large group from the Florence congregation went to a nearby city to encourage the church-plant ministry that is going on there. One of the former missionaries in Florence is working to establish a church with one other family in this small area outside of Florence. It is slow going, but they continuously work faithfully.

Fortunately and unfortunately, we have stopped the Tuesday night Bible study for the rest of the summer. Here, everyone goes on vacation in August and most are gone a good portion of July as well. Anyway, we always 'pause' for the summer. It is nice in the sense that everyone gets a little break and it leaves us free to do other activities with students as well.

The majority of my students have already begun to drizzle off for the summer, but I do have a couple of new students. I have an Ethiopian girl who is already a Christian. She meets with a community of fellow Ethiopians to worship, but is very interested in fellowshiping with other Christians in Florence. She lives with and cares for an older couple who have been in and out of the hospital, so she has not been able to visit us yet on Sunday. She and I study English, but often we spend an extra hour together discussing the Bible or sharing prayer requests. My other new student came to me more recently, honestly admitting that she was

more interested in the English since her daughter was to marry an Irishman and she wants to be able to communicate a little with his parents since they will be staying in her home. However, after talking with her some, I found out that she is very religious and has an interest in learning more about the Bible as well — just needs to get the more 'immediate' things out of the way. We, too, have exchanged prayer requests and I am happy to be studying with her. Oh, I do have yet another newer student. I have been studying the Gospels/Life of Christ in Italian with a lady who went through Blaine's Old Testament course first. She and I have fantastic Biblical discussions. She really does her homework before coming to class and I enjoy studying with her thoroughly.

As I am nearing the end of my 'official' time with Avanti Italia, I am working on some special projects, trying to leave some things I started in order before I leave. These include updating, proofreading, and leaving a good master for all of our current teaching materials. This also includes a project that I have not yet had time to start and that is to format the Bible course I created in Italian so that it can be turned into an internet correspondence course.

Ok, now I come to the really sober part — my future. Sometime back I decided that I would like to serve at least another year here in Florence. So, I prayed about it and it appeared to me the right thing to do. I sent out support letters, first to various congregations in the States, and then to individuals that I know. I have received a mixture of positive and negative responses as is always the case. I have received monthly commitments from several individuals and my sponsoring congregation that total \$585 out of the \$1,500 a month that I need. I also expect to hear from several more soon. I also have friends and friends of friends in the States that are acting as liaisons for me and trying to find me more support, especially in the one-time donation area. However, as you can see, I still have not reached the half-way mark. I know that in the end God will make the total add up to what I need. If I need more, he will provide it, and if I need less, he will bring me only what I need. I also have need of one-time support (nearly \$3,600) as I am currently searching for an apartment.

I'm just a 24-year-old girl who wants to serve God in a special way and I need your help to do it. All I ask is that you pray about my situation and if you can help monetarily, wonderful; if not, then I ask that you continue to pray for me and for

the work here in Italy. (If you can help, please send your donation [in my name] to Woodlawn Church of Christ, 3185 N. 10th St., Abilene, TX 79603.)

Thank you all so much for everything you do for me. I love you all and would love to get a response from every single one of you even if it has nothing to do with my plea for money.

Update: God has blessed me with the opportunity to come home during late July and early August to finish raising my support and to, of course, visit friends and family before buckling down for this next year. On one Saturday I will be hosting an Italian Dinner/Presentation in Abilene. I will be making a sampling of various Italian dishes and my favorite Italian dessert.

Do you realize how depressing it can be packing up your stuff after living in one place for a good period of time? I have been trying to get my room packed up so that I can move into my apartment as soon as I return from the States. My poor room that I spent two years finally getting the way I wanted it has gone back to being a bare, hospital looking room. Oh well, I suppose that is life. The sadness I feel leaving this room does not come anywhere near the excitement I feel moving into a new apartment and venturing out a little on my own.

Abraham Chambers III

Here I am, sending greetings to you all again from Florence, Italy. May the blessings of our Father continue to rain on you as He continues to reign over your lives.

The weather here in Florence has been tremendously hot. I've found myself consuming more water than I have in any previous summer. However, God's work is still moving forward and the Seed is still being planted.

Through my years at Southwestern Christian College and Harding University I came to the truth that when you're busy the suns and moons come and go very quickly. Here in Italy the story is similar. The difference is that my time here seems to be moving even faster. I've heard people say that music and laughter are universal languages. I too believe this. I also think that being busy is a universal language. No matter what language you speak you can always identify laughter. When you hear music we all move to the rhythm. Being busy is something that we have all experi-

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ABRAHAM CHAMBERS III

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enced (I hope). Whether you're an accountant, preacher, teacher, musician, parent, or student, our time is filled with exercises to equip us to conquer our objectives. Here in Italy my time has been occupied with speaking, teaching, singing, studying, making friends, and helping people. It's amazing to think that I've been here for almost a year. I still remember my first day as if it was last week: As I got off of the plane my new family was waiting at the airport for me and we went straight to a pizza parlor. The jet lag was taking its course on me and all I could think about was sleep. Two days after that I started language school.

Learning a new language is an experience of its own. We missionaries who have learned – or in my case still learning – another language, experience what we call "plateau." Webster explains it best: A temporary halt in progress. We also know that a plateau is a mountain with a level top and has edges that drop off. I have my share of these experiences. The only way for getting out of these plateaus is more studying and more speaking. It's a challenge but one worthy of battle. As I look back at almost a year of learning Italian I see plateaus and valleys. Let me quickly say that the plateaus look like steps going upward. The journey is tough at times but in our lives God brings us through some of the most beautiful terrain. However, if the land being traveled is flat and dry what sense of accomplishment would we have?

The teaching here is going great. Right now I have a student named Fabbio. He grew up in the Catholic faith but at an early age he observed the overload of tradition and how inconsistent it is with the Bible. Fabbio has studied the Gospel of Matthew previously and together we are studying the Gospel of John. He is looking for a deeper, truer faith in life. I hope that through our studies and through my actions that he sees Christ inside of me. We are becoming friends and because of this it's easier to ask questions that you wouldn't ask someone you just met. Fabbio is also an Italian language teacher so he and I also spend time speaking Italian.

Then there is Josephine. She's from Peru and speaks Spanish, Italian, and English fluently. She's been a good friend of the Bible school since before I arrived here and she's a wonderful student. I enjoy watching her expressions when something from the Bible is revealed to her. We've been studying scripture on baptism. Josephine and I have been studying together since I arrived here. We have a pretty good friend-

ship and like Fabbio it's easy to talk with her about spiritual issues on a deeper level. Josephine is very receptive to the Gospel, and baptism is the last stretch of the journey. Josephine like many others who come from the Catholic faith sees baptism as an obligation. She is not saying "no" but she does want to continue to study and find out this privilege for herself. With time, prayer, and further studying I'm confident that this will be a step that she will make.

Another student of mine is Saverio. He and I are going over grammar lessons together. He speaks English on a basic level but he understands quite a bit. Our grammar lessons are applied to stories from the Bible. With Saverio I also practice my Italian because there are times when he can't understand some words or phrases and I have to explain in Italian. Saverio told me in our first meeting that he's never studied the Bible before. The growth for the both of us will be a wonderful journey in the Bible, English, and Italian.

Since I arrived here in September we have had six baptisms. A lady by the name of Raquel from Peru was number six.

The church here in Florence is steadily becoming more international. We have people from Columbia, Peru, Mexico, Argentina, Nigeria, Ghana, Korea, Brazil, Italy, the U.S.A., Moldavia, and Romania who are members here or are studying and worshipping with us. A couple of Sundays back we had over 22 guests and about 11 were from Romania.

Thank you all for your prayers and for your support and encouragement. I just ask that you all continue to pray for us here at Avanti Italia that we may continue to plant the Seed.

Everyday the Lord is blessing us with opportunities to accomplish what we could not the previous day. Strength is added daily. In my own personal journey I have learned to let go and let God. Satan doesn't care who you are or where you are. He will attack in ways that can convince us to give up at times. Praise be to our Father, peace and faith have become mine more than ever. Only God can make this possible and with further conviction from my journey I stand a man firm in the Faith. Matthew 14 has a beautiful passage. Jesus and Peter walking on the water is a story that should encourage us all to keep our eyes on Jesus. Peter appeared to be doing okay until he began to notice the harsh winds in the storm around him. Like Peter, we too sink when we allow life's bitter days to take our vision away from our Savior. So, with learning to become an effective teacher for the Kingdom, God is also teaching me how to place my trust and faith in Him.

I have eight students at the moment. I'm in the process of getting my ninth student Lord-willing. His name is Marco Paoli who is a doctor. It's encouraging because he wants to study the Word and improve his English as well. If Mr. Paoli is able to become my student I will then have two lawyers and a doctor as students. It just goes to show that even people of higher status in society also need Jesus.

More about Josephine Alfero – the student I mentioned previously. She is originally from Peru in South America. She's been living in Italy for 11 years now. She has never really heard much about the Gospels or Paul's letters. Growing up in the Catholic church I assume that she is familiar with Jesus and the "power" of the Virgin Mary. However, she is very receptive and very open to the Truth. She knows for herself and accepts that Catholic doctrine is not consistent with the Word. Through our Bible studies she believes that we are connected to God through Jesus. She now knows and understands that we pray in the name of Jesus and not Mary or anyone else for that matter. I showed her John 14 where Jesus told Thomas that no one comes to the Father except through him (Jesus). Now, all I can continue to do is show her Christ inside of me and continue to pray that God allows the seed to sprout inside of her. Josephine is eager to know the Truth. She enjoys the lessons that we have and she has been coming to more of our events that we host.

Gladys is another student that I have. We actually just started our sessions. She loves the Lord as well. In my quest I have learned that many people here love the Lord. In many cases they don't know how to love God in the correct way, in the correct light. It was a joy to find out that Gladys has a sister and two nephews who live in San Antonio. I enjoy meeting people who are familiar with my home state. She told me that Texans are the friendliest people. Well, I have no arguments there. She is gaining wisdom already (smile).

I'm still speaking at Pepperdine and leading the singing from time to time. Last Sunday the lesson came from 2 Peter. We all have an election/calling from God. Without trying, without filtering through the weeds we will never find the rose that God has chosen just for us (individually).

I thank you all for your prayers and support. Avanti Italia is here because you all are here in spirit, exalting this ministry to our Father constantly. Please continue to pray for us and our efforts for the Kingdom. I want to be able to rejoice with as many brothers and sisters as I can one day. I'm sure that you too feel the same way. God bless you all.

Tanya Kuhnley

Summers in Tuscany are beautiful! Everything is brilliant in color and in bloom. The flowers smell sweet and the sun rises to wake me. I love summer. Though I am not sure what God's plan is for my future, this is most likely my last summer here and for this I am trying to remember each day to take in my surroundings and snap plenty of photos. I am super excited to report that my mom is coming in two short weeks. We are going to have fun, fun.

I know I have said it before, but God has blessed me immensely with wonderful students. I love them all! In many ways I feel like I have learned more than I have taught. I have one student in particular that has been quite challenging. She is a character and a half. When I first began teaching her she was more interested in the English aspect of our lessons. Now, a year later, not only are our lessons focused on scripture but she finds every opportunity to come and learn more. She attends church, Bible studies, and church activities whenever she can. The Lord has changed her and continues to change her life and mine as well. It's difficult to admit but I have had to pray many times for patience and a loving spirit in my interactions with her.

When I arrived here, I prayed that God would give me students whom I could reach and connect with and though it has been a long time in coming, I feel I have finally reached a place where I can do this with her. I am reminded by friends and loved ones that God has given me this challenge and that I should thank Him for it as hard as it might be. I do thank Him and continue to pray for our relationship and for her continued growing in the faith. The passage, "For nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37) has been a real truth in seeing the transformations that God continually makes in our lives and in our students here.

I cannot thank you enough for your support of my time here! God is awesome! I ask that you continue praying for our work here that God will use us to spread the good news and to show the love of Christ. You are in my prayers and I love you!

Brooke Smith

Wow, such a long time has passed since I have been able to share news from Florence. I'm so glad to have this chance to talk about all the good happen-

ing here.

I was blessed to spend a fun evening in Florence with Kay Martin (from the New Braunfels church) who took me out to dinner. And my brother Stephen came to visit for spring break. This second year is really flying by! And what growth here! Growth in church members, growth in commitment of the Christians here, growth in visitors at church, growth in students, growth in language study.

I really do feel a little guilty because I think I am learning a lot more than I am teaching. The past year was full of challenges, and yet I am still convicted every time I read what the apostle Paul described: "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11-13).

As far as lessons go, I have added a few more students and ask that you continue to pray for these special people: Samira, Olga, Maturin, Veronica, Patrizia, Carlotta, Marzia, Francesca, Lucia, Sabrina, and Marco. Please pray that I can communicate that Christianity is a life-changing message of hope and not just a set of religious morals. I also have been volunteering at the hospital here once a week which has proved to be a really good learning experience.

I want to especially thank the Newburg Church of Christ for generously funding my way to the Christian camp held in Vlora, Albania, this summer. I am really looking forward to this camp as well as hopefully an Italian Christian camp this summer. I sincerely thank you all who have been encouraging me with your notes and financial support. It means so much to me.

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Ciao tutti! This year is flying by and it is becoming time for me to start making decisions. I will officially finish Avanti Italia in December and then. . . My missionary friend Carla is trying to convince me to stay in Florence afterwards and I really need your prayers for my future decisions.

The church in Florence is doing really well. We have so many visitors every week and we are really blessed to have new Christians maturing in faith and taking active roles in serving the church.

I took an Italian proficiency exam in June. I think it went well but I won't get the

results back until September! The same day, and actually before the test, I managed to lose my wallet, so I was stranded all day in Siena. And, as I rode the train back without a ticket (because I had lost all my money, ATM card, etc.), the train checker had mercy on me and instead of giving me a fine, which is what I deserved, after hearing my story he actually paid for my ticket back to Florence out of his own pocket. His kindness really touched me and just reminded me how God does the same thing for us on a much bigger scale. Like the checker, God is just, so he has paid for our transgressions with the death of his own Son.

Last month our new sister in Christ Raquel was baptized (see photo below). Raquel is from Peru and has been studying the Bible and attending church for a while. Praise God for her decision!



This summer is pretty busy, which is good since a lot of my students are busy vacationing. I will be a counselor at Italian Christian youth camp, which is held in the mountains down in southern Italy. This is my first Italian camp and I'm looking forward to it! Most of us will also be attending the Pan-European Lectureship, which is held in Geneva, Switzerland this year. When we return from Switzerland, I will be departing for the U.S. for two and a half weeks, going to three weddings, spending some time with my family, and getting to see my new nephew for the first time.

Please remember my students and contacts in your prayers.

Renaissance Reflections: When the Church Loves

*"I was a stranger and you invited me in."
-Jesus*

The Lord's church often fails its Creator. This time it did better.

God recently created two new love stories within the church in Florence. With what may have looked like chance encounters, He brushed the lives of two strangers briefly against those of caring Christians. Both were greeted, loved, and taught. Their decisions for Him encouraged us all.

"I've never heard of this!" exclaimed Elsie Larouche, age 68, when she heard how to become a Christian. After a hard life journey through several countries and crises, God brought her to us for a short time.

Born in Haiti, Elsie speaks French and has lived in Mexico for over 20 years. Over the years she survived many trials as she raised three sons to adulthood. For two years, supporting herself as a language teacher, she saved her money so she could visit Italy and study Italian. Last fall, Elsie came to Florence.

Studying here, Elsie noticed a flyer advertising our weekly English worship assemblies at Pepperdine University. The night she visited, she was so shy she left before we dismissed and could meet her. An observant 20-year-old Pepperdine student, Diana, followed her out and got her name and email address. Weeks after I sent her a message, Elsie suddenly responded and was eager to talk. We soon had her at our Bible School for lunch and she visited a ladies' Bible study led by Carla Borja, an evangelist from Mexico, who befriended her.

As the holidays approached, Elsie was alone and running out of money. Church members shared agape meals with Elsie and encouraged her. In order to save money, she planned to spend Christmas in Sicily. When Christians prayed for her before she left, she cried. A girl urged her to take her umbrella, then another girl did also. Elsie ran away, embarrassed. She was unused to such love and attention.

Traveling back from Sicily, Elsie found the Church of Christ in Rome. Missionaries there gave her a place to stay.

Soon after Christmas, Elsie called Carla and said, "I am out of money and have to go home." "Come stay with me," Carla said. Elsie did, for several days.

Soon Elsie was asking, "Carla, please tell me about your life. I want to know about the things you do for the Lord. You are doing what I have wanted to do for a long time. Tell me how you got to this

place and how I can become like you."

Again to save money, Elsie planned to travel to Pisa on a Sunday and wait overnight in the airport for her Monday flight home. At a party for our students the Friday night before, our friend Andy Lowe, visiting from Fort Worth, heard Carla talking about Elsie. "I'll pay for a hotel room for her," said Andy. When Carla told Elsie, she cried, again embarrassed. "The Lord wants you to know that he wants to bless you," Carla explained.

A California university student, an evangelist from Mexico, a computer engineer from Fort Worth, workers at the Florence Bible School, Christians in Rome – God used many people to show Elsie love. This time, Christians loved and taught as the Lord's church should – parts of the body working together.

On Elsie's last night in Florence, Saturday, Elsie was packing as Carla and others were teaching a young girl about baptism in Carla's apartment. Elsie was at first withdrawn, then interested, then transfixed. "I always knew there was something I was missing about being baptized, but no one would explain it to me!" Elsie exclaimed. "When can I be baptized?" Her questions were simple. Innocent. Like a child's. "Can I be baptized here before I go home?"

The next morning, Sunday, we baptized Elsie into Christ (see photo below). Carla, Andy, and others traveled with her to Pisa and found a hotel for her. "In the church of Christ, I have seen the love of God that I have never seen before," Elsie told us. "I see Christ alive in you."

God is alive and at work. With Him, things are always happening. They never "just happen."



An Albanian man, Nicola, watched Elsie's baptism with particular interest. Befriended by a Christian American, Tamara, on a city bus in Florence, Nicola had been so self-conscious of his nationality that he lied at first and told her he was Greek. Then embarrassed as we learned the truth, he withdrew from us. In time, as the church loved him, he realized he was accepted. He is one of the many workers from impoverished countries who are coming to Italy and finding a racially prejudiced society. We had to convince him race does not matter in Christ.

A few days after Elsie's baptism, we rejoiced as we baptized Nicola. Another new Christian, Paolo (an Italian), was most responsible for befriending and teaching him (and the one who is baptizing him in the photograph).



All of us have seen the church behave poorly. None more so than the Apostle Paul, who listed "perils among false brethren" as some of his many trials. But Paul also was inspired to write that the Lord's church is no less than the way the world can now know "the manifold wisdom of God." In our troubled world, where every soul is wounded and lonely, His church shines when it loves like it should. Here in Florence, the church is small and weak, but we are learning to let God's love shine through. Even small candles shine brightly when lit.

A few days ago a lady called the Bible School and asked, "I left the Catholic Church and I have been looking for a church. I've been very disappointed so far. What kind of group are you?"

This is, indeed, the question. Pray that, for her sake, we will be what we should.

Jesus told us simply how to prove we are who we say we are. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

-Gary Williams

An open letter from Gary Williams to friends and supporters of Beth Florea

Thank you for helping Beth Florea succeed here in a difficult ministry, and for your prayerful consideration of her ongoing needs.

We want to formally affirm our pleasure in working with Beth and to announce her successful completion of duties here at Avanti Italia. It will be no surprise to you to hear that Beth has proved herself to be a resourceful, industrious, and well-organized worker. She has excelled at learning the Italian language, embracing the culture, and befriending a variety of people. At the Bible School, Beth handled numerous important – and often less-than-fun – tasks. Among many other duties, she managed our library, office filing, and the chore schedule for all other workers. A lot has happened during the two years she has served here, and Beth has done well.

This letter is also to ask you to continue to pray for her and help her in any way you can so she can fulfill her desire to continue living and serving God in Italy. As you know, Beth is pro-active and very gifted. She has already begun working in some part-time positions and is currently looking for other employment opportunities so she can support herself here. Her strength of character and good qualities equip her for many types of work. In time, she can no doubt find the employment she needs.

But the U.S. dollar is currently weak against the Euro, prices are high here, and it takes a while for foreigners to establish themselves in paying positions. Beth sold most of her belongings and made a big financial sacrifice two years ago in order to participate in the Avanti program. Starting over, financially, she now needs as much help as possible from her friends. Any one-time gift you can afford to give her will be very useful and money well spent.

I have known Beth Florea for almost a year and have worked closely with her for the last six months. My wife and I have benefited greatly from her friendship. She has a good heart. She can be funny, sensitive, and kind as well as decisive and direct. I have often seen her help people even when doing so was not convenient or easy.

We at the Bible School hope Beth can stay near us. Avanti will be a stronger program if she does. Only God knows what opportunities await her.

As you know, you can reach Beth at biondona@hotmail.com and learn more about Avanti Italia at www.avantiitalia.org.

Thank you again for helping to make Beth's work here possible. Because of your help, God has worked through her and she is now more equipped to serve Him effectively wherever she goes.

First student finishes online Bible course

Paolo Bianchi and Tammy Mobley have worked endlessly for months putting together a website that can host Bible correspondence courses. Paolo is a new Christian and accomplished computer technician. Tammy was raised in Italy as the daughter of missionaries and consequently speaks excellent Italian.

The courses went online May 29, 2003, at two different addresses: www.scuolabiblica.it/corsibiblici.htm and through the Florence church site: <http://chiesadicrosto.firenze.net/ita/corsointernet.htm>.

Nineteen have enrolled so far: 17 from Italy, one from Canada, and one from Morocco. Four have finished the course. Tiziana, a student of Avanti worker Tanya Kuhnly, completed the course and has expressed the desire to be baptized. She was very skeptical at first but was drawn by the study of the Word. She was presented a certificate for completing the course.

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