

# *Avanti Italia!*

## *Onward Italy!*

### Let's Stay Connected!

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Greetings from Scandicci! It is difficult to believe that only a month ago I was on the other side of the Atlantic wrapping up my last days in Oklahoma. Since arriving it seems as though I rarely have a moment to stop, think, or take a breath. Instead, my aim is to keep moving and press through new and challenging circumstances. I cannot help but believe it pleases God to see His people active and engaging within the world. He reminds us, "I have given you a choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life!" (Deut. 30:19) If we are to choose, He is hopeful that we would choose to act, to engage, and to live. Every day I am faced with situations that would be insignificant if I were back in the States, but here, in this exciting and strange place, the same situations are magnified. Yet, I find courage in remembering that when I choose to engage in situations that now seem intimidating, I have aligned myself with the Lord's message. I join Him when I choose to live.



La Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore

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### *Departure and Arrival*

On Monday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, I departed from Oklahoma City headed to Florence. My flight itinerary was from Oklahoma City-Atlanta, Atlanta-Amsterdam, Amsterdam-Florence. Anyone who travels hopes for a smooth journey, and mine was almost effortless. Almost. My immediate family along with some close family friends sent me off with hopes, prayers, and meaningful goodbyes. Farewells are never easy, but despite great feelings of sadness I boarded my plane to Atlanta with anticipation, eager to finally enter into the experience that was waiting for me. Once arriving in Amsterdam having experienced no delays, no lost luggage, etc., I thought this travel was too good to be true. It was too good to be true. Due to strong wind conditions in Florence, our flight was rerouted to Pisa. Pisa is one of the nearby airports to Florence and is about an hour ride by car. It was there in the airport that I had my first observations of Italy. Though the crowds of people and the Italian language were obvious, I immediately noticed the differences in time-efficiency and crowd management. Alas, the airline had arranged for a bus service to take us to the Florence airport to be picked up by whomever was waiting for us there. At the end of it all, I arrived in Florence and was met by my Avanti coworkers. What fun is a journey without a little bump here and there?

### *Italian Language School*

Almost immediately upon arrival I began working, and the pace has only quickened. I arrived on Tuesday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September, and began Italian language school on Thursday. Classes had already begun that week, and though I was entered late, I found myself at no great disadvantage. Monday through Friday I commute to the center of Florence and take Italian language classes for 4 hours in the morning. As of now, I have completed one month of language school with two more to go. Language learning is challenging and I often feel frustrated, but I know the importance of persistence and I try to be patient with myself. Rome was not built in a day and language fluency does not happen overnight. Mostly, I enjoy the language practice and living here.



*Outside of my Italian Language School*



*With classmates at the Pucci Palace*

*To make a donation, please send cash or check payable to Britton Road Church of Christ (sponsoring congregation)*

Britton Road Church of Christ  
2520 W Britton Rd  
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### *A typical week as an Avanti Worker*

Teaching English is only part of how my time is spent in Italy because the Bible School I am working at is involved with many service opportunities. A typical week for me looks like this:

- Monday, Wednesday, Friday mornings: Avanti team meetings
- Monday-Wednesday: English teaching
- Monday-Friday mornings: Italian Language School
- Monday evenings: English Bible Study
- Thursday evenings: English Group Classes and Italian Bible Study
- Sunday morning and evening: Worship at the Florence church and feeding the homeless

Because language school takes up a large part of my week, I have a light load of students and classes to prepare for. I will start to take a full load of students in January once Italian Language School has finished.

### *Blessings and Challenges*

\* When I moved to Scandicci I prepared myself to be challenged by the Italian culture and way of life. I was unprepared, however, for the challenge of communal living. Though we have a good amount of space, I am learning that living with 8 other people requires plenty of patience, tolerance, and grace.

\* An intimidating factor in moving is the worry of loneliness. I left many wonderful and supportive friends and family, but I have been eager to see how the Lord would provide for my need of companionship. He has and is providing in more than one way. In my Italian language classes, along with my readers, the Avanti team and the Florentine church, He has raised up people who have been inviting, hospitable, and have shown an interest in me. His provisions are exceeding my expectations.



*Exploring Florence with Jodi, an Avanti Worker*



*Learning to cook Italian Cuisine*

\* The Bible School was in a stressful state when I arrived because the old directors were transitioning out of their roles. As they were in the process of moving out, the Bible School was also under last-minute renovations that had not been completed over the summer. Thankfully, things are settling down with the arrival of Eric and Jessica Smith, our new directors.

\* I currently have meetings with four students who I meet with individually for one hour a week. Three of my four students are advanced English speakers, and I have enjoyed the stimulating discussions that we have. Though I am teaching English, the richness that comes from the Word of God often leads to meaningful conversations that make my time with my students feel more like a Bible study and less like a classroom. In addition to meeting with these four students, I will soon be teaching two English group classes.

*I cannot begin to express how much love has been poured on me from back home! Sweet emails and messages have been a much needed source of encouragement. I am so thankful to you all for making it possible for me to be here, and to you who keep making it possible month after month with your sponsorship. I send out my love to all of you and receive yours with open arms. Until next time, my prayers and thoughts go out to you my brothers and sisters.*

### Prayers

- \* For group cohesion within the Bible School—that the new and old Avanti workers will learn to work and live together peaceably and in unity.
- \* For patience and persistence in language learning
- \* For my students—that our bonds may grow deep in Christ and in His Word.
- \* For the new directors, Eric and Jessica Smith—thanksgiving for their arrival and eagerness to lead

### *About Avanti Italia*

The missions program I am a part of is called Avanti Italia (A.I.). This mission program has three primary goals: 1. to use our individual talents in sharing the Good News of Jesus the Christ with those who are seeking to have a more perfect relationship with Him, 2. to learn to share Christ with others more effectively, and 3. to participate in mutual encouragement and edification with the Italian churches of Christ. Their method for achieving these goals is mainly through outreach in teaching private Bible lessons in English. As a part of A.I., I would be expected to teach an average of 10-15 Bible lessons a week. Much of the work A.I. encourages would be described as friendship evangelism, making relationships with people and sharing God's saving message with them. Each team member is not only expected to fulfill their obligations, but also to find ways of using his or her individual talents to make more contacts with people. Most of the work is centered at the Florence Bible School in Scandicci, a suburb on the southwest side of Florence. A.I. has had an extensive outreach since its beginning in 1986. Every year, A.I. forms teams of 3-7 members to send to work at the school for a two-year commitment. Team members are required to fundraise, acquire a student visa, and go through intensive training before leaving the United States. Once arriving in Florence, team members live together at the Florence Bible School and immediately begin Italian language studies while teaching English using the Bible. Teachers generally work in one-to-one or small group sessions.