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### **When the unexpected happens... And Even More!**

**This morning...** my first coffee of the day... about 6:15am:

After making a comment about my early morning rising habits, T. the shop owner said: "I want to become an evangelical". (!). This friendship has been building for a good while. T. is from Albania. Our relationship has been building as our Logos church men's group have been meeting in this small "trattoria". T.'s mother makes some amazing lasagna, so we meet, after work, for fellowship and focus on God. At

the beginning of the year, a missionary friend got me a calendar with scripture verses in the Albanian language. Brick after brick, inch by inch, God is giving us an opportunity to build a bridge to this dear family.

### **A couple of weeks ago...**

Coffee shop worker S. asked me: "What does it take for a Muslim to become a Christian?" (!). What? Really? I had to pinch myself! After all, coffee shop workers usually do crack lots of jokes. (This is my favorite place to go study and, by the way, I do switch to decaf after a while!). But S. was dead serious. He said a good friend of his is Muslim, but wants to embrace Christianity. I promptly gave S. my cell number and am looking forward to meeting with his Muslim friend asap. My prayer though is that God will do more than that. I have no doubt God is working in S.'s heart as well. We've had meaningful conversations for a long time now.

### **Two days ago...**

P. our neighbor helped me fix Stephanie's bike. P. has been listening to our Sunday messages online. His father was a famous artist and P, now an elderly man, has also been a successful painter all his life. His son S. has recently had an amazing breakthrough with a new medication from the US. He has a rare genetic pulmonary disease. Thanks to our apartment's very thin walls, we could hear him cough all day long. Truly heart wrenching. S.'s coughing is over! This new medication has worked wonders. Our prayers for this family are being answered! Now we have another great reason to speak to these friends about God's deep interest in our lives.

### **Praise God for the unexpected!!! And we are ready for more!**

**Yesterday** I ran into M. He and his wife asked us to go out for pizza together. They have also been listening to our Sunday morning service online. We talked about getting together this coming Sunday. Can't wait to see what God might do in their lives!

And then there's another brand-new invitation, a young couple across the street. We hope to get together with them very soon. And then there's C., another elderly neighbor who is wanting to come to our home to talk about our faith in Christ. And then there's C., the neighbor above us. We watched Inter, our favorite soccer team, play last night (...we won, by the way!). May this regular contact bear fruit. His wife M. was in our home for last Friday's meeting with our ladies from church. We have already shared with you about this family. Please don't stop praying for God's ongoing work in their lives.

We are so blessed! God has given us His light so we can shine for His glory and be constantly surprised by the unexpected!

**On the family front:**

Many of you have prayed for our family this summer. Thank you so much for doing so! God was so, so very good to us! As you read in our last praise and prayer letter, God opened some amazing doors to minister to our children and help them experience His deep interest in their lives. We are so grateful for your support as we dedicated our attention to their physical and spiritual needs. Elisa has been able to resume her studies at Liberty University with renewed strength and focus. Simeon has tackled his medical studies very well and has overcome a mild bout with “good-old” covid. Everyone was vaccinated, but seven students got it!

**On the church front:**

In spite of the distance, and thanks to zoom and Whatsapp, our contact with the Logos church continued, from the US, on a daily basis. Through weekly ladies and men’s zoom meetings, very early Sunday morning live messages, and online devotions I had the privilege of preparing Monday through Saturday. God enabled us to keep serving our precious Florence church family. We are now in the process of taking additional steps in sharing ministry responsibilities with faithful men and women in the church. We ask God to give us wisdom as discipleship continues. Please pray for church growth in a spirit of humility and a deep willingness to be used by God.

**Dear friends, we love you.** We are extremely thankful for your partnership!

Steve, Stephanie, Simeon and Elisa Standridge

**p.s.** I started this letter two days ago. After the first three paragraph I had written: “Praise God for the unexpected!!! **And we are ready for more!**”. **This afternoon** as I was leaving home to work and finish this letter another neighbor stopped me. This wasn’t the first time we met on the way in or on the way out. Several times he had questions and we had stopped to talk. Well, he had a couple more questions and then said: “I want to come to church some time”. I said: “Come this Sunday, we will also stay together and grill after the service.” M. said: “I will be there!”. Yes, **we were ready for more... and so was our great God! He is eager to do more!!! Let us always ask for the unexpected and more!**

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