



MINUTE FOR MISSION

August 15, 2005

In the Steps of the "Poor of Lyons"



Evangelical Waldensian Church congregations welcome people of many ethnicities and languages.

We in the Evangelical Waldensian Church in Italy have much to be thankful for over the centuries of mission as God's witnesses in our small area of the world. Our forebearers began mission in the twelfth century as itinerate preachers. They broke away from the Roman church to spread the gospel in the Italian language. They were called the Poor of Lyons and held true to biblical practice and word. During the fourteenth century, the Poor of Lyons spread the message of the Lord from the originating French Alpine area to Northern Italy, Southern Italy, across middle Europe, and as far away as the Czech Republic and Poland. The word of the Lord as understood in the language of "the people" could not be stopped!

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After centuries of persecution and martyrdom, our churches were finally recognized by constitutional law in Italy in 1984. The modern-day church in Italy faces a multitude of challenges in today's society. One of these

challenges is immigration. Ten years ago Italy mainly dealt with migrants from Africa, but that quickly changed to welcoming brothers and sisters from Eastern Europe as well. We have discovered that when there's a concern in these immigrant groups, they often come to Protestant churches. Today our churches welcome various groups to worship, often incorporating them into our congregations. On a typical Sunday, from Turin in the north to Palermo in the south, one can find services in a plethora of languages and cultures, from Romanian to various African languages and dialects.

With a new government tax incentive in which churches can receive 8/1000 of a taxpayer's assessment, we have decided not to take this money for our denominational expenses; rather, our synod voted to put these monies directly toward diaconal mission at home and abroad. In being politically active and thinking of God's justice on earth, we have formed relationships with African denominations in order to walk hand-in-hand in experiencing the love of Christ. It is exciting to think that we are carrying on the calling of the Poor of Lyons 800 years later, whether that be immigration services in Italy, economic development with brothers and sisters in Africa, or walking alongside our brothers and sisters spreading the gospel and God's love.

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