

Salvation Army officer writes from lockdown in Italy

By Ryan (Bear) Bearchell, Lt.—

We embarked on a journey of international service last summer full of anxiety, hope and faith—a family of five picking up from a wonderful appointment in Southern California to Torino, an unknown city in Northern Italy.

At this very moment, I am writing “stuck” in my apartment with my family. Because of the coronavirus we have now been indoors for two weeks...with many more weeks to come.



Ever since we became officers, Jennifer and I have desired to be open to follow God wherever he would lead us, regardless of our personal desires for comfort. So we left a large five-bedroom house and two vehicles and moved into a tiny two-bedroom apartment in the middle of a city without a car.

Instead of driving to the corps every day, we walk downstairs. Our ministry here has truly focused on relationships. The corps does not have programs every day—in fact most weeks we do not have more than a few. Instead, our time is largely spent visiting people in their homes, meeting for coffee (which lasts at least two hours) and growing relationships. It has been an adjustment to focus less on the busyness and more on growing deeper with people.

Italy is a wonderful country and we love where we are. We encounter struggles: simple communication can be hard, walking every day can get old...and now we're on a country-wide lockdown. But we wouldn't change any of it. We have seen God do so much for us in this short time already. Our family has grown closer, and our dependence on God has grown so much more.

With the mandatory closure, I'm using this time to clean the chapel and do repairs where I can. Our church body has a text group and we are always texting with them and sending Scripture verses of encouragement. We make sure to call those we can and send Facebook or email messages to some as well. Most people we talk to are fine, they are just very worried. We're reminding everyone to remain patient and to use the time to rest. We've asked our corps people to work on future ministry ideas while they're at home.

One of the things I love most about The Salvation Army is that each appointment is so unique. Being the hands and feet of God—even in this particularly unique time—is an honor and I am glad we have been given the opportunity to be here doing his will.

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A Dio sia la gloria per sempre!

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