



*Guesthouse Casa Cares Newsletters*

*1985-2015*

# Summary 1985-2015

## Newsletter 24 April 1985

Donation to the Waldensians in 1983, important Protestant tie to Italy  
The church invests in important renovations  
I Graffi - gift of the Lord for His people  
Volunteers: Gioele Mongiovetto, Verena Ludwig. Paul  
Antoinette and Paul accept an 18-month trial period

## 1985

Marco Jourdan, Teresa, Nelly Frieden were the important figures 1983-1985  
February-March Antoinette & Paul Krieg return with Luca and Leah  
Antoinette only paid employee  
Guests July-September  
13 rooms, 40 beds

## Newsletter October 1985

About 400 overnights, primary users regional church groups, German and Swiss youth  
Low capacity permits personal contact aiming at retreat and reflection  
Attractive particularly for persons looking rural setting  
Poor heating and limited request make closing in winter logical The  
water problem limits development

## Newsletter January 1986

Appeal for volunteers

## 1 1986

First falö (Waldensian commemoration), Caresini reunion, Diaconi meetings  
3500 group member overnights, 2000 overnights of singles, couples, families  
Antoinette alone in the kitchen, but much independent meal preparation  
First Bad Kissingen church family retreat  
First national meeting of Waldensian and Methodist deacons

## Newsletter Autumn 1986

Search for solutions for the land  
Thanks to Marco Jourdan (to Switzerland for sabbatical)  
Thanks to Giorgio Bouchard (finished as moderator of the Waldensian Church)  
Recognition of limited public and retreat experience in Italian Protestant churches  
First chance for many Italians to have Protestants, certainly true for the local community

## Newsletter March 1987

Thanks to main volunteers Inge, Laragh, Eliseo (triangular table) Samuele (1st objector)  
Evidence of transformation of semi-abandoned country villa to functional guesthouse  
Unable to meet all requests for Easter and Pentecost holidays (Germans) and summer  
Over 1000 volunteer days to help in house and help Gioele on the land

## 1987

Falö Pastor Emidio Campi  
New floor in 228, finished upper floor internal bathrooms  
Downstairs renovations start in villa  
First returnees  
Children's camps

5300 overnights  
Semi-annual deacons' meetings continue

Newsletter December 1987

Finished downstairs renovations for guest kitchen and eating rooms  
Foresee winter consolidation: woods, shutters, new beds and mattresses  
First consideration of a library, Gustav-Adolf-Werk donations, colonica

1988

Kriegs to USA December '88-January  
Summer groups up to two-weeks  
Half independent cooking  
Long-term volunteers Michael Kaus and Stephan Deiss  
Library started thanks to Claudiana donation: theology, ecology, church reform  
Mimmo Veneziano begins help with the land  
Meeting of Italian Brethren, Methodists, and Waldensians

Newsletter 20 September 1988

Blackberries  
First ecology meeting - Acid rain  
Planning for colonica renovations  
First Casa Cares membership participation in Switzerland of an Oikosnet meet (Ecumenical Association of Academies and Lay Centers in Europe)

1989

Kunst Gewerbe Schule Zurich, Jugendzentrum Frankfurt, Weilburg Gymnasiumchor  
First work on colonica, urgent but also a considerable increase in space  
First good post-freeze olive harvest  
Jams: cherry, plum apricot, pear, fig, blackberry

Newsletter October 1989

First of annual newsletters  
Mimmo turns down employment offer  
Chapel and former frantoio ignored

1990

Junge Kirche Schweiz  
Iris Amico, cook, hired mid-year at 30 hours

Newsletters Christmas-New Year 1990-1991

Antoinette first additional note, looking back  
Reflections on cultural exchange, place of retreat, Jack-of-all-trades Special calling to environmental issues  
Thoughts of formalizing a circle of friends.

1991

No falö! Gino Conte's meeting at Gould due to snow "Christianity and ecology" Michael Kaus leaves after 5 years of voluntary service  
250 bottles of grape juice (thanks to Kathy Marti, Anne Danz, Michael)  
First set winter closure 6 January-15 February  
Weilburg High School teacher Michael Glotzbach brings the first of his choirs

Newsletter January 1992

6500 overnights, 70% of which members of groups  
Mimmo Veneziano, Caresino and recent volunteer, dies at home in Liguria. 46 years old

1992

Shell of colonica complete

Fewer volunteers, but longer commitments: Stefan Deiss, Martina Fries, Oliver Speer,  
Annamarie Danz, Jonathan Werner, Michael Kaus, Mirjam Hank, Andrea Koehn

Newsletter January 1993

Reflections after ten years of the consequences of the Waldensian ownership  
Appeal for volunteers and financial help (eating room chairs downstairs, piano)

1993

Falö - Giuseppe Platone "L'impegno valdese in Sicilia"

Evangelische Jugend Werk-Württemberg colonica workcamps colonica,

Gustaf Adolf Werk donations, 3 x 25 participants for 2-week shifts

Three two-week workcamps on colonica, EJW Württemberg

Most dramatic accident - German youth falls from upper window

Meeting of Oikosnet South centers in Malaga, Spain

Krieg family moves to colonica

7500 overnights, many due to workcamps, shift from independent to Casa Cares meals

Newsletter January 1994

Finally another Italian objector

Development of Centro Formazione Diaconale a Gould 50

participants in child and youth camps

With development of colonica, three additional guestrooms in villa

Updated licenses from the local public administration

1994

1300 volunteer days plus Gioele

Michael Kaus and Mirjam Hank cover for Kriegs summer in USA Volunteers  
to the colonica

Primary guests: German groups, Italian Protestant churches and organizations

Newsletter January 1995

First computer letter

Note evolution from youth to adult groups - Very slow guest season, need for promotion

Volunteers moved to colonica, guest apartment also available for first time

Support of Waldensian administration in office

1995

First women's meetings organized by Antoinette

Coro Valdese from Uruguay

Gioele (79) returns home to Piemonte, replaced at the moment by Mari Polastra

Newsletter November 1995-January 1996

55 beds, only 16 bedrooms never filled except with youth groups

Michael decides to not accept employment but return to Germany Ideas

become clearer for another employee

Volunteers - room, board, Lire 210,000/month (\$150)

1996

Falö Piero Bensi "La Riforma Protestante: Uno stile di vita"

6500 overnights, 70% of guests are group returnees

Elke Hablitzel employed

Newsletter January 1997

Evident reduction of funding for German youth groups  
Note to Tavola Valdese regarding need to work on villa roof  
Statement on commitment to the environment  
Volunteers from 5 countries  
The fifth Italian in alternative service, Cristiano, the first to complete a year  
Reduced German State and church funding for youth work

1997

Falö Gino Conte "Il Cristiano e la salvaguardia del creato"  
Elke Hablitzel becomes fourth employee  
Swiss, German, Italian guests, but also from Slovenia, Austria, USA, Sahawari, U.Kingdom  
Volunteers: Italia, Germany, Slovenia, Netherlands, Sweden,USA, UK, Hungary  
Arrival of Emiliano Santoni for alternative service of one year, remains more  
Environment seminar of Atelier Ambulant d'Architecture AAd'A  
Giuseppe Giammaria "Peppe" hired for maintenance after years of volunteering

Newsletter January 1998

After 13 years the first time Italian dominating in staff meetings

1 998

Falö Debora Spini "Italians and Protestantism - An impossible meeting?" book by G. Tourn  
Ecohut in the fields above and Sustainability Fair in Reggello -  
AAd'A Founding meeting of REFO (Rete evangelica di fede e omosessualità) Demetrio Canale replaces Elke  
First Belarus childrens home group - November-December, 3 weeks, 16 children, 2 adults

Newsletter January 1999

Dan Berkeland's letterhead  
Appeal for "Friends of Casa Cares"  
Request for EU funds for cappella-frantoio  
Ecovillage contact  
Casa Cares in the annual rhythms of land and guest work

1999

Falö Raffaele Volpe "Pluralismo religioso in Italia-Minaccia o ricchezza?"  
Susana DeMattia replaces Demetrio  
25% increase in overnights  
Emiliano takes over the land  
Continuing return of the Matthies, a German family of volunteers

Newsletter beginning 2000

Newsletter notes from Demetrio, Dan, Emiliano, Sandra  
List of groups 1999, with singles over 8000 total  
overnights Rates for 2000

2000

Falö "Giulibleo, Una questione di riposo"  
Austrian/German men's group with USA Franciscan Richard Rohr  
April meeting for friends, supporters in Männedorf CH  
First Sant'Egidio groups  
First of a series of meetings with organization consultant Rainer Schwing, need to move from  
pioneer stage to differentiation

News January 2001

Dan helps in kitchen as second worker there becomes essential  
Rates stay approximately the same from this point through 2007

2001

Dan: photo brochure, t-shirts, prints, website  
First open local monthly meetings of current issues such as globalization, youth, migration Restored terracotta stove

Newsletter January 2002

Thanks to Gianni Rostan, former moderator and member to the comitato Decrease in volunteer offers  
Continuing shift from youth to adult groups  
Uwe Ringleb consulting on environmental care

2002

Falö Davide Pinardi "Gli Italiani sono tutti uguali, ma alcuni sono più uguali di altri?"  
Record overnights - 8462 from over 25 countries  
First attempt for regional funds for chapel  
Mission statement (Schwing) - A meeting center and guesthouse focusing on dialogue and a Christian perspective on environmental care  
Open House, interreligious group from Ramle, Israel  
Don Bosco Gymnasium, Vienna

Newsletter January 2003

Four pages, one of which in newspaper format  
Request for e-mail addresses

2003

Falö Valdo Spini "Democrazia implica voci diverse"  
43 groups, 27 church related - 3D, IROM, 1 USA, 5CH, international  
Association of Community Colleges  
Luca Rasoti employed for land and kitchen  
Plant water filtration system begun  
Fifth year of guests from a Belarus home for children

Newsletter January 2004

April freeze greatly limited olive harvest  
Local meetings on diversity open to the public  
Book reviews: Elogio del Nostro Tempo S.Fausti The Dark Heart of Italy Tobias Jones

2004

Falö Paolo Naso "Medioriente - Paura di guerra, speranza per la pace"  
Indian volunteer Ben, German senior volunteers  
Adriana Papagna replaces Demetrio  
First counseling graduate seminar from the University of New Orleans

Newsletter January 2005

Recognize Dan's contributions Insert descriptive brochure

2005

Falö Valdo Spini "1848 - La libertà religiosa dei valdesi, la libertà religiosa oggi"

52 groups, 87% of overnights: Susuki music, Montessorri school, Zen and yoga seminars,  
midwives, family reunion, motocyclists, special needs groups, photography course  
German/Austrian motocyclists  
Chinese Evangelical Church in Tuscany

#### Newsletter January 2006

Infonn of web monthly up-dates  
Elaborations of our memberships: FCEI, CSD, ECEN EAALCE  
Record productions of honey and oil

#### 2006

Falö Gianna Scicloose, Peter Ciaccio " La chiesa, le chiese di domani"  
Begin fire code up-dates and restoration of 1/6c. of villa roof  
Matthies' ex-Soviet volunteer workcamp  
Chidren/youth summer camps with waiting lists

#### Newsletter January 2007

Presentation "An environment-friendly, Christian Guesthouse" which underlies the three  
facets of Casa Cares identity: hospitality, environmental care, Christian foundation  
CARES - Comitato Assistenza Regazzi e Studenti

#### 2007

Fald Gianna Sciclone "I compiti dei valdesi oggi"  
Note of deaths of Gioele Mongiovetto and Ugo Gastaldi, friends involved in the founding of Casa  
Cares in 1962

#### Newsletter January 2008

Further elaboration of guesthouse, environment-friendly, Christian commitment Italian  
added to the website intended for old friends

#### 2008

After general decline over the years in tourism, the cities of art are booming with tourists Adriana  
Papagna leaves after four years, difficulty in finding a replacement  
120,000 Euro up-grade in fire prevention in the villa thanks to 8/1000 funds of the church  
120,000 Euro from State and Region incentives pennit the installation of solar panels

#### Newsletter January 2009

"Environment and justice from the prospective of faith and science" - title of ecumenical meetings in  
2009-2009 in Rome  
Luca Rasoti goes parttime to concentrate on the farming  
Legambiente lists Casa Cares as dedicated to environmental care  
Importance of groups that faithfully return  
Two documents added: the Legambiente guidelines, summary for guests of day trips

#### 2009

Falö, 3 Tuscan pastors (2 Waldensians, 1 Baptist) reflect on their commitment to ministry  
Return of many groups, important for relationship and income  
Elisa Rubboli hired to replace Adriana as house manager Luca's  
exclusive concentration on the land produces results  
Fotovoltaic begins production in March  
Legambiente award for commitment to environmental issues

#### Newsletter January 2010

Two precious possessions. challenges persist: historic buildings, woods and farm Financial  
problems due to drop in overnights  
Five encouragements: Persons, Past experience, Patrimony, Protestant presence, Potential

Two pages on the history of the chapel, dedicated in 1780 as Oratorio delle stimmate di San Francesco and now being renovated as a chapel and meeting room

2010

Increase in overnights to over 7000, highest in 5 years  
20th year of Gymnasiumchor Weiburg with Michael Glotzbach, director  
20 Rom guests for 2 weeks as Waldensian church helps dozens whose camp was closed  
Others: violin for children, Hungarian church, Albanian reunion, Moody Bible Ins. Chicago

Newsletter January 2011

Newsletters written for a varied public: nationalities, experience as guests and supporters, church affiliation or none  
Not only a guesthouse - focus on dialogue and environmental care, the setting, the historical buildings, the land  
Page on the farm and environment

2011

Meeting of friends to look at the future  
Another reunion of Caresini, children, staff, and supporters of the childrens' home  
Volunteers from Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, Germany, Netherland, USA  
With donations from friends and the church restoration begins on the chapel  
Antoinette retires

Newsletter January 2012

Hospitality. a personally stimulating and rewarding business; a fundament of Christian commitment  
Few persons in the Waldensian and Methodist guesthouses have hotel training  
Significance of a Waldensian presence in a rural Tuscany  
Casa Cares logo - woods of significant local trees (olive, chestnut, cypress) braided together to symbolize importance of interconnectedness and interdependence  
"Slow Food" meals

2012

In March Giordano replaces Luca for the land  
Creation of a second national Waldensian administration, the Commissione Sinodale per la Diaconia (CSD)  
Researcher Rita Romanelli investigates and history of the property  
Full pension typical, four weddings: E.Mundici, G. Trivelli, E.Santoni, L.Parretti

Newsletter January 2013

Constant rethinking of identity and objectives  
Importance of having had the support of Italian but also German and Swiss church  
Thoughts on spirituality  
Casa Cares board and Waldensian leadership discuss future of Casa Cares  
Open House to present the chapel-theater-meeting room

2013

Falö, M.Zoppi, M.Aprile - the importance of public access to areas for common good  
34 groups: 24 returnees, 16 church related, 13 schools or workshops; 80% of overnights Elisa leaves to go to guesthouse in Vallecrosia

Newsletter January 2014

Guests provide income but also confirmation of the validity of the offer and appreciation  
Damage in upper rooms due to hail storm and torrential rain



The guest income, private donations, and careful spending have covered management costs for thirty years; major investments were possible through the Waldensian (including 8per1000) and other churches as well as public funds, such as for the solar panels Importance of contact with the land

2014

Falö, Pavel Gajewski "The value of poverty - confrontation Francis and Valdo"  
6600 overnights, more than each of previous 3 years; tendencies confirmed: shorter stays, fewer youth and family groups, more study groups, growing sense of retreat  
First hosting of asylum seekers: Togo, Senegal, Bangladesh  
Official opening of the chapel-theater after five years of work; thanks to Antonello Piccirillo and Lorenzo Parretti, skilled architects who offered also hours of volunteer time

Newsletter 2015

"Now what?" question in 1983 after the donation to the Waldensians, and a current question Cristina Crocicchio replaces Elisa  
Very unusual infestation of the fruit fly damaging the olive harvest  
Tavola Valdese decides to close and sell, disapproval at church district level of the decision prompts Tavola to ask for detailed project which is entrusted to Mattia Costa

2015

Falö, Letizia Tomassone "Waldensian Women in the Middle Ages"

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Final note: After months of preparation the project developed by Mattia Costa is not accepted by the Tavola Valdese. More opposition to the Tavola's stand pushes the Tavola to the conclusion to ask the Commissione Sinodale per la Diaconia (CSD) to accept the administration and responsibility for Casa Cares. The CSD accepts the challenge and the passage is formally confirmed at the August 2016 annual Synod in Torre Pellice.

CASA CARES-----

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Italia tel. 055  
8652001

24 aprile 1985

Cari amici

Twelve years have passed since I last sat in this office to write a circular letter. Despite numerous changes, it is obvious that our Lord's presence has remained constant in the life of Casa Cares .

Many of you are receiving this letter thanks to a noteworthy research effort through the old files of the children's home. No doubt, as time has passed; many of the names and addresses which were found are now inappropriate. We can only tell this from the response we get through someone's individual effort or through the efficiency of a local post office . It is quite possible that in a church fellowship or in a fami

Iy the person with a special interest in Casa Cares is no longer present. However, for this circular which contains fundamental information, we did not want to risk excluding someone who my still have an interest in an effort of Christians in Italy on behalf of young people.

Times have indeed changed. Casa Cares is no longer a home for needy children. From 1 963 through about 1 975 Casa Cares worked on a foundation laid by Pastor Robert McConnell, his family, and many friends in and outside of Italy. The work continued after the McConnel Is' departure in the late 60 's. After a couple years at the Villa I Graffi, however, it became evident that, due to changes in Italian child care, Casa Cares could no longer continue as a children's home.

Since the mid-70's there has been an on-going search for a new identity and ministry at the I Graffi setting. This is a special gift of our Lord to -His people. Besides the large central villa there are two other buildings with farm rooms and a chapel and about eight acres of woods and seven acres of farmland with a vegetable garden, fruit trees, vine- yard, and olive trees. The facility and its location in the Tuscan hills 35 kilometers southeast of Florence offer many possibilities.

For a few years some old friends of Casa Cares maintained a house where the doors were open to anyone who wished to stay. Many persons exper-• ienced their warm welcome and many contributed in a variety of ways to the maintenance and development of a life and an ideal of Christian shar ing and community.

Approximately three yars ago the pressing need in Italy for services for drug problemed people drew the attention of Casa Cares Possibilities were researched and serious dialogue was established with an organization expert in this field. For a number of reasons, however, especially the need for specialized, experienced staff, the decision was made to not go this route at this time .

Simultaneously the idea developd and came to fruition of donating the property to the Waldensian Church, a fellowship based in an evangelical movement of the 1 2 th century. The donation, finalized in late 1983, was important for two basic reasons . It has tied Casa Cares to a church which is highly respected in Italy for its evangelical witness and for its social services. It has also permitted an initial outlay of monies for urgently needed renovations in the main villa.

Throughout 1984 the directive committee, made up of old friends of Casa Cares and of Waldensian leaders r worked on the future direction of the facility. Once the drug assistance was put aside, the decision was made to further develop a guest center, particularly for Christian youth groups, where one can find the opportunity for study, for an experience of community, and for retreat.

Antoinette and I entered the picture years ago as staff of the children: s home, Antoinette for two years and I for five. We were married In 1 973, a year after leaving Italy. We spent the past 1 2 years in the. United States, working or studying in the fields of education and child care . The desire to be closer to Antoinette's family in Switzerland and to deeped our European experience caught the attention of our friends in Italy: They suggested that we work at Casa Cares in this crucial forma- tive period of its on-going saga. We happily accepted the invitation to collaborate during an 18-month trial period, a trial period, that is,

both for Casa Cares and for our family which includes 6-year-old Luca and 11-year-old Leah.

Since our arrival on March 15th, we have been learning the ropes. This means everything from renewing old contacts and making new ones, working with the Easter holiday guests, keeping the books, planting olive trees and gathering eggs, writing letters, cooking, and, in the midst of all this, finding our own niche with our co-workers--our farmer Gioele and Verena, a volunteer from Berlin. And after one month? We are enthusiastic about an effort dedicated to Christian young people—the need and the potential to speak to that need are both obvious.

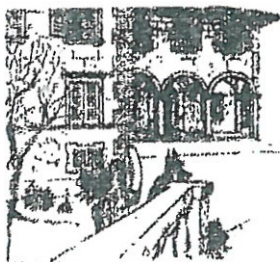
We have spent hours speaking with old and new friends about the future of Casa Cares. The ties which have lain dormant among former children and workers' are being revived. The home is remembered with love and appreciation by many who felt our Lord's hand during their stay, whether that stay lasted days or years. But there is also a willingness to look to the future. To this network of friends the Waldensians bring their unique blessings of people, services, and contacts.

For this year we expect to be full almost non-stop July through October. Most guests are local church groups or Swiss or German student groups. The hope is to utilize the villa at least eight months per year. The 13 guest rooms have a total of 40 beds with conditions similar to a youth hostel: Special challenges at the moment include developing programs ourselves for groups, setting prices which encourage groups but also help with expenses, establishing a broad base of contacts and supporters, and determining the best way to integrate the land into our total program.

God has given us the privilege of participating in an exciting moment in the life of Casa Cares. We hope to be worthy stewards of His riches in this corner of His creation.

Greetings from Casa Cares,

*Paul & Antoinette Krieg*



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Paul and Antoinette Krieg

— 500% REGGELLO (FD)

Lutheran School B and Churches in the  
United States

November 1, 1985

Dear Lutheran friends

Your name on the Casa Cares mailing list dates back to 1968-75 when the children's home had the help of a chain of Lutheran students from Concordia, River Forest. After a few years of inactivity, Casa Cares is now reopening as a Christian guest

h01.1\$e of the Waldenslan Church, to whom t:he property wag given  
in 198.3\* The Waldenglang are pre-Reformatl0n Prot.egtantg who  
spread act0B3 Eruope from the 13th to the 16th centuries, They  
were absorbed Into Protestant bodies except In Italy which lacked  
a Reformation church.

I wag ane OE that chain of Concotdlang years ago, After eight yeat\$  
at Lutheran Social Services in New Orleans t my Swiss wife  
Antoilette and I have returned to Casa Cares at: the invitation  
of the Waldeneiana.

I know that there are many mission opportunities in every local  
community and through our church body, but I wanted to let: old  
friendg know that Casa Cares haB been resurrected, albeit in another  
form. If you would l Ike ug to keep you Informed OE our work? p  
lea:æe let llB know. And if you are In our ~~neck-of-the-woods~~, drop  
in I We are In the Tuacan hills 25 miles southeast of Plorence\* We  
would like to as much ag pogglble nurture contact and understanding  
among Christians of various backgrounds.

May you be richly blessed In you New World ministries E

Brotherly greetings from Casa Caregt



Paul Krieg





7) we could not meet all the requests for July through September, but April through June and October were not full; the weather and our limited heating ability make regular use of the villa impractical in the winter months ;

8) the issue of the land remains without a longterm solution; at 69 Gioele is amazingly strong in body and spirit, so we often enjoyed the produce of his garden, but eventually a plan must be formulated for our 12 acres of farmland and 10 acres of woods; the land can be a drain of resources at times, but is a blessing with great potential.

With the "quiet" 11 months ahead of us we can get about some jobs which had been put on hold. It is a time for overall maintenance—painting, . . . , pairs , work in the fields and woods—and reorganization—office, kitchen, workshop. It is a time, also, when we as a family can catch our breath and spend time together. For the most part now we shall be alone with Gioele, who has become a member of the family. One job on the horizon is developing Casa Cares as a spiritual resource and reference point for Waldensians, Methodists, and others who are in our area and only with difficulty can worship or fellowship with the Florentine congregations .

The major project before our re-opening will be finding a solution to the water problem, a major obstacle to our hospitality at the Villa Graffi. Certainly it has been an extraordinarily dry year in Italy with two or three rainy days in five months in our area. But at the Villa Graffi our problem is more one of means than of substance. There is water to be found in our area but none of our three systems to get water has proven adequate over the years. For this reason our primary focus of attention and funds will be a private well which will cost millions of lire (that is thousands of dollars) . We hope for a solution which permits us in the villa to be freed from the many, many complications which come from not having water . We hope, also, that a well would facilitate our planning for the use of the land.

If we get past that obstacle, we can begin to make other improvements, which, however, are secondary without the water. These improvements include new bathrooms, a recreation room, flooring for an outside terrace, power tools, volleyball court, and shelves and books for our library.

Then . . . It is forward to 1986. In the cold and probably wet tail end of winter our first planned activity is a meeting and bonfire to commemorate the anniversary of freedom for Waldensians in Italy. Soon after, in the middle of March, we have our first week of study for Waldensian-Methodist deacons. The deaconate is a new organization which brought together 2 years ago about 30 workers, many of whom had already for years been working for the church in a variety of non-pastoral ministries. The first meeting of the deaconate this past spring underlined the need for time and opportunity for study and for further communication. With our central location and availability we offered to host these meetings which perhaps will be semi-annual.

Easter will open our regular guest season, which is already filling up with groups and programs similar to those hosted in 1985 . For our part we are organizing again the reunion of Casa Cares friends

(end of April) and the youth camp. To this we are adding two spring weekend studies, one on spiritual and religious education and development and another on a theme yet to be decided, perhaps on ecology from the Christian perspective or on spiritual retreat. Both topics could be springboards for future work. We also plan two week-long work-camps, one in the spring and one in the fall. (Amend we schedule such camps we can devote the full attention which they demand.

October 1985

Dear Friends of Casa Cares,

Seven months have passed since our return to Casa Cares. Our first guest season has provided invaluable experience. It'll now have an idea of the potential and the limitations of the facility and we have an idea of how we as a family can fit in and be of service.

Casa Cares as a Christian guest house is, we believe, a viable ministry. The old Villa Graffi has 13 guest rooms from two to five beds with a capacity of 40 guests. In 1985 our season began at Easter when many West Germans used their spring school vacation to escape the cold and gray of their cities. After sporadic periods of visitors through June, our work began in earnest from the beginning of July and is just concluding at the end of October. A variety of groups, one after another, used the villa as well as many individuals.

A total of over 500 guests stayed an average of eight nights. Eighty percent of the guests were members of groups and 20 persons—Italians, Germans, and Swiss—worked as volunteers. Most of the guests opted for the use of our second kitchen and eating room where they independently prepared and ate their meals.

We had groups with study programs of their own (Apostolic Church in Italy, catechism teachers from a Florentine parish, guitar course from Berlin); school groups on study trips (one Swiss and four German); vacation trips planned by Christian organizations (German YMCA, two German church congregations); and meetings we organized (Casa Cares reunion, youth summer camp). Five times we hosted one-day meetings of the local churches (two times the Sunday School of the Waldensian churches, the Sunday School of the German Lutherans, the Church of the Nazarene, and the monthly meeting of the leaders of the Florentine Protestant and evangelical community).

Some of our conclusions from the 1985 season:

- 1) we have the interest and encouragement of the Florentine congregation, of the local community, of old friends of Casa Cares, and of an excellent directive committee;
- 2) we are trying to attract more church-related groups and activities, but in the meantime other guests have appreciated and cared for the facility and permit us to be of service in a variety of ways;
- 3) the villa's capacity is low but permits us an intimacy which includes personal contact and is in line with the idea of developing a center for retreat and reflection;
- 4) our location 38 kilometers, 50 minutes by car, southeast of Florence is most useful to persons who want to see more of Tuscany than just the city and to those who appreciate the rural, hill country setting;

5) our charges, which we consider donations toward the program, compare favorably to that of Italian youth hostels, which do not offer many of the things we have; this year's hospitality income and other donations permitted us to cover many operating expenses, a good part of which is the salary of Antoinette, our only salaried worker;

6) as much as we need volunteers, our space for them is limited; for 1966 we anticipate the help of a young Swiss woman and a young American, the latter a contact through the American Waldensian Aid Society; they would be support primarily for Antoinette in the kitchen and villa and E or Gioeler our farmer, on the land;

#### Individuals

Through the entire 1986 season approximately 3500 overnights were spent at Casa Cares by group members. More than half again that amount —2000 overnights—were spent by single persons, couples and families who did not come with groups. The movement of so many individual guests makes us feel sometimes like we are just another pension, but what these individuals bring us and receive is immeasurable. Our ability to host individuals permits persons to return on their own after having been here with a group or to perhaps prepare a group visit. It permits individuals to bring friends or family and to hopefully find what they need, be it time for themselves, exchange with other guests, the opportunity to walk, to read, to work outside, to study, to be close to nature . . .

#### Conclusions From 1986

1985 was a good year, and this one was even better. Factors like no water shortage this year made 1986 easier, but primarily now we understand better the work of the house with its possibilities and limitations.

Work continues to improve the physical condition of the villa and to adapt spaces for better use by our guests. This winter will be like the last one, filled with renovation and remodeling.

No solution has yet been found for the future care of the land, but Gioele continues to bless us with the products of his garden. He never hesitates to underline that although he put the seed, God sends the water and sun. We continue to consider possible uses of the land which might complement the work of hospitality. In the meantime we cover the care of the land as best we can with volunteers who come from a week to several months.

Another problem is that of meal preparation, the responsibility for which falls heavily on Antoinette. Our second kitchen which permits the majority of our guests to prepare their own meals is a very positive factor, without which many groups could not come. But our not having a full-time kitchen and our location in the country make finding a capable kitchen helper a difficult task.

Fortunately this year Antoinette had an excellent young Swiss volunteer in the house for most of the season and Gioele had several helpers for the work outside. Next year is still not set with volunteers, but hopefully we shall find some, perhaps with the recommendations of our friends. Know any person who could contribute here and at the same time benefit from the setting?

Financially, ends meet. Our expenses continue to be minimal with Antoinette the only paid worker. The hospitality income covers daily expenses and several kind donations from individuals and from organizations in Switzerland and Germany permit us to improve the property. We do the work we can afford.

Conclusion? We continue to work convinced that God can use this setting to gather and nurture a part of His flock. We look to Him for continuing care and guidance .



As we close our second year we must thank especially two persons for their support and ~~input~~--Marco Jourdan and Giorgio Bouchard. Marco has left Florence for a year's sabbatical in Switzerland after more than 20 years at Istituto Gould and Giorgio has concluded his 7 years as moderator of the Waldensian Methodists. Both contributed considerably to the progress of Casa Cares and for us both are tangible signs of our Lord's presence.

. From Casa Cares,

*Automatic + Paul*

Autumn 1986

The Krieg Family  
Giuseppe Mongiovetto

c a s a c a r e s -- 50066 Reggello(FI) -- Italia 055/8652001

Dear Friends of Casa Cares,

As we conclude the 1986 guest season, we have a chance to review the movement of the past months. Similar to our first season, 1985, the weeks rushed along, full of a variety of activities. Now, after two years, much work has been done and many persons have been able to use the center. A summary of the hospitality at Casa Cares can be divided into four categories: Christian groups with their own programs; programs which we developed and offered; other groups; individual guests

Groups with their own programs

At the moment the center is aimed at and geared for those groups. Certainly others are more than welcome but this is the priority. During 1986 we hosted the following church-related groups: a youth group from the Waldensian Valleys, others from Siblingen (Switzerland), Munster, Heidesheim, and Bonn (West Germany); Istituto Gould, the Waldensian child care center in Florence; two Bible studies in English sponsored by Gruppo Biblico Universitario; Evangelische Jugendwerk from Frankfurt; a family camp from the Lutheran church of Bad Kissingen; a spiritual retreat for single soldiers from the USA army camp close to Pisa; USA Methodists on their way to volunteer services at Casa Materna, the Methodist child care center close to Naples; a Bible study in English for youth from churches in Rome and the Protestant Chapel of Camp Darby.

229 items which we offered:

At times internally and, at times with the help of outsiders we tried to develop meaningful programs -- It was something to try in order to judge how much time and effort such programs take and how much interest there might be. We had to cancel two programs due to lack of enrollment -- a weekend for families with the topic of spiritual/religious training and a spring workcamp of course finding the right dates is not always easy, plus our most immediate target public -- Tuscan Protestant -- is limited in number and, not accustomed to such activities, which actually are quite common in countries like Switzerland and West Germany.

But we were able to realize some programs. Our season began in February with the bonfire with which the Waldensians in their Alpine valleys celebrate religious freedom in Italy. After that we hosted a seminar on nutrition considered from a Christian perspective; day meetings of the Sunday School of the Waldensians, Methodists, and Baptists of Florence; the reunion of former workers and children on the original Casa Cares Children's Home; a workcamp of the Youth Church of Switzerland.

Of major importance was the meeting for non-pastor, workers in the Waldensian and Methodist churches and institutions. These deacons have just recently been organized by the churches and they feel a strong need for exchange, for Biblical training, and for professional in-service. Officially there are less than 30 persons enrolled as deacons, but actually the number is much greater. We tried here to offer the structure to facilitate the desired dialogue and training. The first meeting resulted in 15 enthusiastic participants, so enthusiastic that the second meeting scheduled here in these weeks has over 40 persons enrolled. Some people see Casa Cares as one possible site for training the Waldensian-Methodist deaconate.

#### Other groups

Other groups who use the house bring us valuable experiences, and they also provide considerable income in periods which would otherwise be open. We hope to be useful also to these groups. Certainly, many persons, including Italians, hear for the first time something about the Protestants in Italy. Typical groups are school groups from Italy and West Germany, but we also had seminars (therapy, yoga, art) and two French hiking groups. It would be hard to judge the impact on the individuals in the groups, but many speak enthusiastically about their stay and come again.

ChRbS

March 1987

Dear Friends

At Casa Cares we find ourselves between seasons—between winter and spring, but more significantly between off-season remodeling in the villa and the new season of hospitality. Actually we are in both seasons as the bricklayers are still with us and the first guests have already come and gone.

The remodeling which began in November has continued almost without interruption until now and will continue at least into April. Once the bricklayers, the plumber, and the electricians are out there will be enough loose ends around to keep us busy for some time, especially with painting and clean-up. Two very positive and encouraging points are the fact that we can see the light at the end of the tunnel and the contribution of excellent volunteers.

Through the efforts of last year's guests, old friends, and church connections, we have been able to attack all of the renovation projects we foresaw last fall. Upstairs, 5 of the 13 bedrooms now have private baths and other smaller, but important, improvements have been made, such as a new floor in one room and an enlarged linen closet. Downstairs, the big task of the winter, we have completely redone the area for groups who cook for themselves. What was their eating room is now a badly needed additional staff bedroom. Two other areas which were almost useless before, will soon be the new eating and social areas. The kitchen itself has been redone.

We are happy that many of the people with plans to visit us this year are **returnees--only** they can fully appreciate the transformations. And even they cannot appreciate the changes as well as those of us who were part of the move of the Casa Cares Children's Home to the Villa Gaffi in January, 1971. We can best see what the good will, the gifts and the legions of

volunteers have done for this place over the years of development from an old, semi-abandoned country villa to a very functional Christian guesthouse and meeting center.

Our current group of volunteers certainly ranks among the best. In typical Casa Cares fashion, I write this with humility and thankfulness, this group arrived with very little effort or planning on our part. As is often the case with our volunteers, we wonder what we would have done without them. Inge will be here for about months.

She visited last year with her German church youth group. Lara is here for a couple months; a personal friend of our family from our New Orleans years and now Via Alaska and Scotland. Eliseo also has a varied geographical background--Messina, Wales; London. He has been with us since November and may be a regular off-season volunteer to help us with woodworking needs. He currently is making benches for the new eating area. Samuele is the first conscientious objector to be assigned to us for alternative service. He studies medicine at the university in Florence and is an active member in the local Brethren Assembly. At age 70 Gioele continues to carry his load and then some. We are simply not able to slow him down. The trees he plants will be his legacy for years to come. For us these people are living testimony to our Lord's love and care (An interesting note is that Old Testament names are rarely used in Italy, except among the Brethren, so with our current trio of Eliseo, Samuele, and Gioele--Elisha, Samuel, and Joel--one can quickly spot us as peculiar!)

Our calendar for 1987 is fuller than last year's. Unfortunately we have had to turn back several requests because some periods are very popular. With our youth group orientation one can imagine that these periods include the Easter and summer holiday months. In fact April and June through August are full. In the other periods it is more probable for us to have space for families, couples, small groups, singles, and weekend retreats. Again this year we plan to prepare a few programs: annual reunion of former Casa Cares children and staff (May 2-3); a seminar concerning an ecology theme, this year, refuse (May 17); an open house for the Florentine congregations (May 31); a children's camp (June 21-25); and workcamps (October).

We started the year with the celebration of February 17, the date when Waldensians light bonfires in their Alp valleys to commemorate religious freedom in Italy. About 50 persons joined us for the bonfire which was preceded by a talk by Emidio Campit, a Waldensian pastor serving the Methodist congregation in Florence.

The following is a list of some of the groups who plan to use the center this year:

- congregations - Seulberg, West Germany (D)
- Cantico Nuovo/ Florence
- Rastede (D)
- Wittgenstein (D)
- Bad Kissingen (D)
- Moenchengladbach (D) group
- retreats - YMC: Bonn (D)
- YMCA Frankfurt (p)
- YMCA Gras (Austria)
- Gruppo Biblico Universitario in English
- Gruppo Biblico Universitario in Italian
- Protestant Chapel, USA Army Camp Darby, Livorno course
- for vicars, Herborn (D) . schools Suedhalde Psychiatric Training, Zurich (CH)
- Gymnasium 5 Gladenbach (D)
- Kunstgewerbeschule, Zurich (CH) workcamps
- Junge Kirche Schweiz (CH) confirmants
- , Sibingen (CH)

Of major importance for us will again be the semi-annual meetings for the Waldensian-Methodist deaconate. Our first Meeting last spring drew a

dozen participants but in the fall we had over 140! It is a time for sharing the information, thoughts, problems, and joys unique to our various settings throughout Italy. It is also a time for Bible study, for reflection, for planning, and for just \*getting away for a few days. Our tri-lit meeting is scheduled for the end of this month. We shall consider what the deaconate as a group has to offer its church and also the role of the individual deacons.

. Giorgio Bouchard, who just completed his 7-year term as moderator of the Waldensian-Methodists during one of his visits pointed out that he could find a Bible passage to parallel each of the more than 60 deaconate centers of the church. He was convinced that the Mary-Martha story was most applicable to us. Of course we share his hope that Casa Cares can find the right balance between Mary's listening and Martha's hospitality.

Our greetings from Casa Cares,

Antoinette + Paul

Antoinette and Paul Krieg  
CASA CARES - Via Pietrapiana 56 - 50066 Reggello - Italy (055/8652001)

Dear Friends

December 1987

At Casa Cares we can summarize our 1987 under three headings: renovations, volunteers, and use of the center. It has been a successful year of operation, full of satisfying and useful experiences.

#### Renovations

Our winter months were again dedicated to substantial renovations. The completion of four bathrooms upstairs gave us more flexibility in the use of our thirteen bedrooms. Now five rooms have private bathrooms and the remaining rooms are served well by the three large bathrooms. The major change, however, occurred in our second kitchen and the adjacent eating rooms, those which are used primarily by groups and individuals who cook for themselves. This remodeling gave us more useful space and aiso another bedroom for staff. The benefits were throughout these past months. Now the villa is very plumbing, kitchens, furniture, security, general maintenance. Our goal continues to be the development of a practical, flexible, comfortable facility which can adjust to the various needs of our guests.

#### Volunteers

Casa Cares, like many Waldensian-Methodist centers, could not exist without volunteer help. Three short workcamps (2 Swiss and 1 German) and 18 individual volunteers (from 15 days to 8 months, from Germany, Italy; Switzerland, USA, and Canada) gave us over 1000 days of labor. This is the input of three fulltime workers. Add the effort of our Number One Volunteer Gibe le and one can easily recognize the essential contribution these people make. Farmwork, kitchen chores, and house-cleaning depend almost exclusively on these volunteers. Then we have others with specific **skills--woodworkers, artists, gardeners--who** come for days and exchange work for room and board. Often within hours after arrival a volunteer wonders, "How did they do it without me?" And we wonder also.

Dependency upon volunteers, of course demands much organization and includes special risks and joys. Organization is necessary to direct the enthusiasm and abilities of our volunteers, most ranging from 18-25 years-old and in one of their first formal work experiences. The risk comes in finding enough volunteers, ones who are right for our work, our setting, and our community. The joy comes in seeing that the work does indeed get done, done well by persons who often in the end thank us for having had the opportunity to help!

Antoinette remains only fulltime salaried worker Fortunately this year she has had excellent help with cooking from a friend who is on call when we must cook for groups.

For personnel it is still uncertain what next year will bring, but in the meantime we recognize and are grateful for the helping hands of our volunteers, and we say, "Thank you."

#### Use of Casa Cares 1987

A quick consideration of statistics leads to the conclusion that our work has steadily increased: 3469 overnights in 1985, 4766 in 1986, and 5327 in 1987. A closer consideration of the movement shows that groups are quickly booking the Easter month and summer weeks, which leaves fewer options for singles, families, and small groups of friends. These people are more apt to find space in the in-between months of May, September, and October, which fortunately can be excellent to explore Tuscany, to experience the beauty of our rural surroundings, or to pursue a quiet study. A high number of the groups we host are from German churches or YMCA centers, but the variety is considerable. Intersity Fellowship, the Waldensian children's home in Florence, and local Sunday Schools and churches were among our Italian guests this year.

The programs we help organize form a framework for our effort and for our schedule. We found the time and energy to host the commemorative Waldensian bonfire (February), the reunion of former Casa Cares workers and children (May), an ecology seminar (May), a children's camp (June) and the game night in the Pit, in the Waldensian-Methodist deaconate

This gathering is particularly useful for persons who are involved or wish to become involved in the work of the church. The deaconate here has not benefitted from a systematic opportunity for fellowship, for Bible study and theological preparation, and for discussion and exchange of information. Other than the pastors there are hundreds of persons working in Waldensian-Methodist centers and offices throughout Italy. Professional training and needs vary tremendously but our meetings are aimed rather at 'the deeply felt need for preparation as persons working in and for the church. We are not sure what the future will bring, but in the meantime these meetings seem to be a successful start toward meeting that need. This fall's meeting concentrated on studies of Amos and the reforming movements in Italy as well as on group leadership skills.

#### Winter and the next guest season

This is the third winter since our return to Casa Cares in March, 1985. It is the first one not scheduled full with villa remodeling. We hope that it is one of consolidation and planning. The consolidation means finalization of projects not quite finished and improvements in areas which have been neglected. This includes such things as shutter restoration, purchase of beds and mattresses, various repairs, and cleaning the woods. After going full steam for more than two years; it is time to take our breath and to provide some basic care for the property.

Planning will concentrate on the development of small library, projects for renovation of the building above the villa, program development, and the use of the land. The library is essential for those persons seeking information on church heritage work, the reformation of the church, the historic and artistic of Tuscany, and the care of our natural setting. We have already accumulated some literature in these areas and shall develop on the basis of a gift from the Berne branch of the Swiss Friends of the Waldensians. The upper building renovation instead finds its basis in a donation of the Gustav-Adolf-Werk, a German organization intent on helping minority Protestant churches outside of Germany. Decisions regarding program development and the use of the land will be influenced by a careful assessment of our future personnel and material resources and commitment.

For 1988 we have several group reservations and we plan to repeat those programs which we organized this past year. The majority of groups with reservations have leaders who have already been here, This gives us encouragement by underlining their enthusiasm for Casa Cares which evidently comes from their ability to find here a setting in which their needs are met, whether it be primarily for fellowship, retreat, study, or relaxation.

We look ahead confident in our Lord's continuing care and we hope to clearly see where His guidance leads.

Greetings from Casa Cares,



Antoinette and Paul Krieg

## C A S A C A R E S - 1 9 8 8

### Activity.

The year at Casa Cares can be summarized with "more's" — more guests, more groups, more volunteers, more to do. In this fourth year of operation since our return to Italy, the center has taken another step toward full occupancy during the guest season which runs approximately from Easter to the middle of November. Certain periods such as Easter, Pentecost, and the summer might be booked already a year ahead. Other periods up the season progresses with other groups or with families or single guests. Our target user has always been Christian youth groups and they indeed provide the great majority of our guests. Most groups come from 7 to 11 days; about half cook for themselves, and most have their own programs which combine retreat, Bible study, group activities, physical activity in our rural setting, and tours to the sites of Tuscany. The groups give us a base and direction for our effort, but families and singles also contribute to much of what goes on at Casa Cares. We are happy that a variety of persons can make use of the center.

At this point our own programs have become a habit, hopefully a healthy one! We start the year with the Waldensian bonfire in middle February, an event which we brought to the hills of the Valley of the Arno but one which is a long tradition and of major importance in the Waldensian Valleys outside of Turin for the commemoration of religious freedom in Italy. In March we have days of retreat and exchange for the Waldensian-Methodist deacons. In May is the annual reunion of children and workers from the children's home (1963-76) and a day dedicated to an ecology issue. This year the theme of the latter was acid rain and the care of our forests. The hope is to bring a Christian perspective to such topics of current interest. In September the children's camp for 6- to 12-year-olds had 23 participants mostly from the Waldensian churches of Florence and Pisa. Then we close the year in November with the second of our meetings for the deaconate. This meeting is dedicated to Bible and theological study. Before we close this fall we are particularly pleased to host a weekend of dialogue among leaders of the Italian Brethren, Methodist, and Waldensian churches. These are important forces of Italian Protestantism and mutual understanding is of vital importance for their ministry.

### Facility

During the past winter we did not experience the major remodeling of the previous winters. We did manage, however, to find things to do. The previous remodeling, of course, means that today there is more to maintain. Areas that did not exist now must be kept up, such as

kitchens

the new bathrooms, the new eating and social areas outside the second and the second workshop .

One bit of remodeling we did undertake over the winter, however, was the library which is off to a good start. The foundation books purchased at a great discount from the Claudiana, the Waldensian publishing house. Guests are learning that this is another resource available to them • and they are p on tributing to its ~~development~~ --Italian Chr-@stians who note that we arte mis:sing . something important, the young theology student from Mainz who brings: so.me.th.ing with him on each of his visits, the USA soldier who just 'left. a book of meditations yr it ten .by Martin Luther Kings We' have no desire to poll ect every and any volume but we hope to develop well in the areas of Bible study, theology, history of church reforming movements, the work of the diaconate, and ecology. On the side we are getting. a decent collection of hymn books and books on the places to visit in Tuscany. .

### Staff

I doubt if a circular letter of ours will pass without a mention of our volunteers. This is only r ight, because without them most likely we would not exist. They carry the work l cad and c ontribute much to the flavor of the setting. While we fill every imaginable sleeping corner with short- term • ( months) volunteers during the guest season, our number of lone term volunteers has steadily increased. Gioele was our only companion the first win:teF, the next year another joihed' him, last year they were in • three and this winter there are four Stephan •and Michael frotn the

frankfurt area, and Elizabeth thr•ough the mission •offices Of Thé Dpi s- copal Church/USA. As we acknowledge their essential c 0Qtribution We want to publicly thank th'e.m and to underline that for us they aye concrete exam- ples of our Lord's care and provision..

### The Land

Much of our volunteer effort has been devoted to the land. Most of our guests cherish our rural setting and .are surprised when we say that our 12 acra Of woods and 10 acres of terraced farmland can often . feel like. a . burden and a drain. Gioele has done marvelously over the years with •the grapes, the olive trees, and the vegetable gar.den, but these . are only. the beginning. Now we believe that we are ready to take a step f qrward It seems the right person for the moment has arrived to help us consolidate

.the wealth of our land arid to help develop it as an invaluable resource for the welfare of our guests, both in a sense of retreat setting and of stimgltdtion for the challenging question of Christian responsibility for the riatural resources with which God has entrusted us.

Mitmo Veneziano •is an old friend from the time of the children 's home. At age 43 he . decided he could wait n.o longer to abandon his excellent office job in order to realize his dream of working the land. He joined u.s on a temporary basis at the beginning of this year and together .we developed to the point of formalizing the employment relationship with a contract to begin béfore the end of the year.

This' is a major step for Casa Cares, one which has repercussions on other projects su•ch as hiring a cook and renovation projects, We believe, how- ever, that the need and the opportunity call for this move . F inanc I Iy

we are establishing a fund for the care and development of the land along . alte•rnative lines and ask any friends who might have a particular interest in this p+oject to make a c•ontribution to Mimmo 's support In this way we hope to limit the impact on house finances.

### Renova t i on

More and more the plans materialize for the renovation of the upper empty building as staff housing. 'Our architect 's project guides •us in . our d is- cuss ions and planning. In the next months we expe•ct a gift



through the Gexthan Gustav-Adolf-Werk which will be dedicated to the initial step of shoring up walls and redoing the roof. After that we shall proceed as possible with gifts and work income. We badly need better staff quarters and the realization of this project will free up more sleeping and activity areas..for guests in. the villa.

### This Winter

With several very capable co-workers here for the coming months, the Krieg family has decided it is time to renew contacts with the USA part of its heritage. The plan currently is to visit with Paul's sister in Chicago the first half of December (Norma Peterson, 1500 West Hood Avenue, Chicago; IL 60660) and then move on for an extended stay through January in New Orleans, where Luca and Leah spent their first years (Prince of Peace

Church, 9301 Chef Menteur Highway, New Orleans, LA 70127).

We send our greetings from Casa Cares. May this letter find you doing well. We pray that you also may feel and see the daily care and provision our Lord is offering.

Antoinette and Paul  
20th September 1988

CASA CARES - via Pietrapiana 56 - 50066 Reggello (Firenze) - tel. 055/8652001

### Looking back - 1989

In our 1988 newsletter we emphasized the word "more" - more guests, more groups, more volunteers, more to do. Now one could say, "And still more." The overnights in 1989, especially those of groups, again increased. We review the past months with satisfaction and with thankfulness to our Lord who permits Casa Care's to grow in its ministry as a guesthouse and meeting center.

### The guests

Our primary visitor continues to be the German church youth group. Several visited this year from throughout West Germany. In addition to the wide variety of other groups made use of our facility: Waldensian congregations, the Italian Campus Crusade for Christ, choirs from Switzerland and Germany, USA Brethren Church in Europe, pastors from the United Reformed Church of England, the World Christian Student Federation, French hiking groups, Italian Scout, and various school and therapy groups. To these one must add the many single guests, old friends and new, who enjoy the setting and the chance to "rub elbows" with others in our community-type atmosphere. One of our biggest challenges is to smoothly change gears between the various groups each with its particular needs due to program, size, meal situation, and familiarity with our setting.

### The staff

The same sort of movement is evident among our volunteers, mostly Germans but also Italians, Swiss, and Americans. Our core group of volunteers, including long-termers Gioele Limmo Michael (Germany), and Marc (Switzerland); fluctuated from four to ten to frequently was added the enthusiasm and energy of a number of workcamps. Somehow we always got the job done perhaps loaning at times on the understanding of the guests themselves - you eat with us and you will also wash up with us! We believe our workcamps, besides getting work done for us, gives young persons a chance to become involved and contribute. In all



this adaptation is essential in our setting where the daily chores, the land, maintenance, and building renovation provide enough for willing hands.

### The program

Clearly our primary job is complementing the who bring their own programs. We do not have the strength to initiate and run many programs on our own and on the other hand there are many groups who need a facility to run their own programs. Our job includes cooking, when requested; providing a setting which is conducive to work, study, exchange, fellowship, rest, contact with nature; introducing persons to

the Waldensian situation and that of Protestants in general in Italy; and encouraging contact with the heritage of Tuscany.

The programs we offer have become fixed points on the calendar: Waldensian falò

(bonfire) in February, Casa Cares reunion in May, ecology seminar in May 9 children's

camp in June September, meeting for Waldensian-methodist deacons in March and November. From this basis, as energy and calendar permit, we try to expand to offer other programs to the Italian Protestant and to the local communities. This year, for example, from our ecology seminar came the impetus for neighborhood parents to

meet regularly to discuss our local situation.

### The facility

The central villa with its basic improvements over the past five years is in need primarily of preventive maintenance, such as painting, plumbing repairs, furniture and appliance replacement, and roof work. So while the lower chapel-former frantoio (olive press area) remains practically ignored, we are giving attention now to the above farm building. This summer's workcamp concentrated much of their effort on demolition jobs on this building which is to be converted to three staff apartments.

The hope is to replace the roof and shore up the walls in the next months, although a delay due to the inavailability of our architects and bricklayers asks pushing this initial phase into next summer. Once the shell is in order shall proceed with work on a first apartment as funding through gifts and savings permit.

This is no little job: in a building whose walls in part are probably over 200 years old. It is fascinating to discover under old plaster and stucco the possible adaptations the building experienced over the decades. Fortunately the many surprises we excavate are pleasant surprises which underline the care and skill of the builders over the years, a care and skill which is not always evident in today's buildings. To this old we try to fit systems which are appropriate and ecologically sound today.

Bringirig these two elements together takes some creativity at times. We have a building which adds to the value of Casa Cares and can contribute providing much more adequate housing for staff while also freeing up more guest space in the villa.

We have the impression that this project will be with us for a few years, but that it will be worthwhile.

### The land

The energy not spent in the villa or in rebuilding is in great demand in the woods and fields. We finally have managed to clean a part of the woods to make them more accessible to guests and also to lessen the risk of fire. It is amazing what 15-16-year-old volunteers can accomplish with guidance.

The fields this year responded to an exceptionally mild spring and good rainfall with bumper crops of fruit. We have jars and jars of jam--plum, cherry, pear, apricot,

fig, and wild blackberry. The harvest was 'ta gbod one and for the fi.rgt time . since the freeze of January, 1985 the olive harvest in December should be good. The olive oil and our honey are two items which we are able to easily gell cause of the ever increasing request for genuine natural products of the land. Gioele's vegetable garden has been a real blessing again this year.

Unfortunately we have made no progress on a stabler arrangement for the farming to continue to count on the contribution led by Gioele and Limmo and regret that we do not have the for the investments which we would like to make for a paid farmer and various improvements

### The future

he nev.yegr promise- much of the same, which we think is good. We plan to .r.un: the same . staying with the Felpru'ary 17th bonfire celebrating religious freedom in Italy. Our calendar begins . to 'fill, especially around Easter and the summer months, and the volunteer staff is forming. . Wo move forward confident in our Lord's faithful support.

We send our greetings from Casa Careg,

October 1989

Ah-toirietté

ahd'

d Paul Krieg

Paul Krieg .

Dear Friends

Christmas, 1990

I am writing this letter; sitting under our Christmas tree. And when I look up, I notice first the little wooden streetcar from New Orleans among all the other ornaments from [Switzer]land and Germany, and the handmades . for . and American symbols. The candles are burned down and half the chocolates are eaten. It feels like though the warmth of the candlelight all the Christmas souvenirs of the past years have melted together in one big puzzle. Each memory has its important part, in this pot, none is hanging in vain. And each Christmas we remember and interpret as the source of light and warmth and realize how much it is, a challenge to keep the icicles far away as time passes;

As I sit here the fire is crackling Leah is practicing her piano pieces which she is playing tomorrow at the recital. She will play a piece for four hands together "With her teacher--her hands go still one at a time!" Outside it is rainy and gray and we hope very much for more sun on top of our hills yesterday it was icy up there and enjoyed the sledrides. Now I hear the trumpet in the Eackepound, which means, the morning routine is proceeding according to agreements. It's a vacation with the headworker is not possible so that means after getting up late, homework has to be done and the instrument practiced. Luca has known the centev of Elorete, not the better; and with pizza built for the husband and the train conductor. Leah leaves the house at seven in the morning and gets to school by eight thirty if the train. The school is connected to the neighborhood so he has afternoon music (music theory). For lunch he goes to a friend's to eat. The school is held in some area rather than the usual. We think it is a good choice for Leah because he needs more stimulation than what he has here and he seems especially happy to enjoy the new friends. Leah is grade 7. Ner-teachers are happy with her. She says even if she appears to have her head in the clouds she is getting it all. That dreamy quality becomes obvious in her artwork and originality.

My greatest gift this year has been Iris, the Italian girl who became my cook.

at. the pqjnt now where I don! t knwFanytrore how\* eveh"id .it.  
I ledVe för Paul to .•tell !

'nest

'Aritoi nette

New Years 1991

I am not so' rotr.ahtic in my expression as Antoinette. That most Of you know. ' In fact, I Fecal) a friend saying,  
"Paul , your letférs ape full of neti;s ahd• what you'v . hink, but where .ârq the féél.ings? 't . Funny how we heap  
thdusands of sentences •in a life'time but only• a few stick' with us..qlearly over' the years! So my offer.ihg ..in. this

Letter,3s an attrcpt• to share! kdhe féel .ings.

ITALY When wd returned, for and Ye#ecially for .'Antoinette. the; Move was like returning hörr•e. In part this.  
was '.due •to proximity. •to Switzerland• but certainly..also in pare due to cur and shared a t+,éaningful.  
faun!daVi.on to •cur relationsh.+p 9t?Casa• Cares. Thesé Six yearÅlHaVö :noti that sentiröent. Of<sup>3</sup> horr.e. Natural  
IY the cirgumst9nces different and: the y.éÅrs? ,uss but. the tonå remains. we. reto\$ize that-as foreigners we  
are f:requëntly of this society, and. culture; but •recognitio•n•• :of- that limitation cân. befuSed to expectâtio•s,  
reasonable . Withéut using our .Sîaration as an ex:cuse; to n'Öti" be livol.ved.,o+ committed, •The we experibhces  
whith'iS •pr.i!narily Tuscany, its• rich history, beautiful natühäl setting; and good-climates' is a;stîmuvantage 'one  
handoië •a modem country. •with the various ..aâyantages and disadvantages. that: .b+ångs, 6thér 'hqnd •öné. gets-  
{the' sense of haQi•ng •eäsy 'access to the so-called Certainly this . is; keeause:pyer the past -thirty years Italy has  
gone from being \*Country df• emigrants Ed of 105th .pÉåbåbly. a.:couple mil 1fion guest workers f.roir(  
.underdéväl•oped countries , oné: gets.!a sehSe of hav;ing a windåw to the Third World ciüé •to such ev-erday  
things. as .!ö. {ions• educational. system;' driving 5 bureaucracy, type of; criminality, lack of truSt 'fri public  
institutipns•.- •Thipgs which. one would take for granted in other •industrial ized countries do not  
necessarîly•.work here.

Obviously thesé ahe al-I pérgohal observationé5 but they. Fefiect my relationship to our setting

Cnce in awhile I wonder what' will become of Lucâ• and Leah, whether regarding their integration

into a society or whether regarding their mentalities which naturally at times will be quite

= -tant from that cf their parents. But we continue to feel at home and count Italy as one cf blessings cf cur lives.

DAILY LIFE - The island aspect of our daily lives is often on my mind. Sometimes it just seems toc easy. We  
can sit back, stay put, and enjoy the frUit of the work which has teen done on cur island and I wonder if this is  
all there is to it, or if < t 's correct cr healthy to relax. After all , a gcal cf Casa Cares is to provide a point of  
retreat. Why look for trouble? I guess the reason can think of is the need for stimulation and fulfillment. It is a  
need I feel and also a conscious principle. There are many positive aspects to my daily l ife that I am aware of-  
,freautiful setting, good air and water, no cc,mrr.ute, c. •ppc.rtnuity for phySical fitness, time for the fatnily,  
interesting people. . I would like to live these things as fully as possible.

CASA CARES - . This is a qccd place to be. The challenge is to keep 'it that way and to exploit what it häs. Cc  
pffer.. The setting is very coed, the circle of contacts stimulating and suppertive, one. can seqtFogress, and thäfre  
is Still. idöFk to be döné: It is a good formulas it seems to me. The cultural mixings in our setting are much  
more often blessings than burdens, whidh is somethinci one must work at. In our family the di- potential  
pitfalls in herent in cultural versity have often been close by but goftunately at tirr.es we were too busy  
to be hindered by them and time passed and also at some level we have been committed to working through the  
difficulties; cr. at least livinc with them. At Casa Cares one of the most obvious characteristics of my work is  
very psitive for me hut also ematic--the variety. Here cpe is the example of "Jack of al l trades, master of none. "  
I like to work cn the land, dc some office work, be involved in domëstic chores, croanize programs, be e public  
relation\$erson, work for the church and fortunately at times even call upon all of that past. training and  
experience in social ser .vices. But cne has to enjoy the whale ball of wax because. I find it frustrating when each  
•jcb is done minimally. {4t any rate, for the foreseeable future, we are here and there are things to te done which  
we like to te involved with, for me mest evidently •at the moment the attempt to incorporate •Theol:ogy/Ec01cgy  
in.to our work.

WALDENSIANS - These folks may not he Lutheran, tut it's a good alternative. And sometimes perhaps tetter. I  
feel very much at home with the openness of this church, with the serious intellectual, . theological , and social  
commitment of its members . At times the understandable fortress mental•i.ty of- a church body with 25000  
memfrers in the pope 's backyard is a little heayy, tut these folks are in touch with l ife as I understand it and  
there is plenty of room for. personal growth. Casa Ceres goes sc well with the V.!aldensiens because it was  
always a Grand •Central Station and the Waldensians thrive cn international contact and exchange.

FRIENDS AND YEARS- Féw persons spare me the comments about looking older. which is' sc.mething not easy to hide when one is balding. But overall I t.el ievé we have resisted well •to natural erosiot and that we are aging like good wine. The years have brcught, hopefully, a touch cf common sense, some peace; and many reasons to stay alive and awake. I am not too E,usy cr too fearful , ,however, to recognize the passing of gears and I feel the need to in some way renew a commitment to our family, to cur wrck, tc some ideals tc. give direction tc the years which l ie ahead, God willing. I put "fménds" in this same paragraph because, as Antoinette mentions, we acknowleoe. the networks vie have had over the years and we warmly reminisce. The other side of that coin, cf course, is the sadness about distances and thimited contacts. Comfort comes from knowing that new friends have tdken our plac.es in cur friends' lives and that we also have been blessed with new friends,' but that knowledge does nct fully calm the sense of lost contact. Friends and :family are what I miss most regarding the USA. In this sometimes Il feel helpless and, in a case like Sister Norms in Chicago, useless.

FAMILY - •When I tdke the time, an end-of-year rrocqss .buS• useful anytime, to look back and review the' days, monthS\* arid, years of eur immedia!e quartet; I- am. gratefuT and I feel encouraged. The critical eye •which I ' somehc.y •got at an early age, of mys•e7f, of others, of what: is happening<sup>l</sup> in general , and the professional training: and .expericne I háve With difficult family and growing •situations have contributed' tc. a teridncy between perhaps réalism and pessimism. Being able to imagine the worst, for our fami.ly I also feel rel ievéd% I have nc doubts thät I have not teen ayai.lät'le enough to my famil.y, often the all-tod-éasy•exduse• that I am tusy with-my work--In •Chis Waldensian chuchbhworkérs take no backseat Litheran teachers. I find it •cbmforting to have Antoinette as my. companion arid \_my cc-childcaéer and comforting that' these' two kids'seem tc be doing fine. 'The stÜrce 'of Lucä 's• hardheadedness is' toc easy for me td . imagine, but with support' he respond#, and has V:aFioüS gifts such as a keén •intel ligençe, •a sense• of humor, and an tihe arcune Kim which should get him through many •days. Leah for whatever Yeas6n--hidre 's.üppcht, .a gifl , Seednd child?--seemS Co bé the' most .. tender of our bunch, in the •Sense of scft, •ndt necessarily She- pröVides rel ief and sunshihe. When we .•gi.ve her room. Summary? I am blessed.; I feel it ahd I know it.

C A S A C A R E S - Via Pietrapiana 56 50066 Reggello (Firenze) - tel . 055/8652001

January, 1991

Dear Friends

This edition of our newsletter introduces a change of emphasis. .?reviously we wrote in autumn devoting most attention to the past while secundarily looking at the future. ey writing •at •the start Of the New Year, we shall sumarize and up-date, but primarily we shall •direct our attention to the months ahead.

#### PROGRAM

Our organization, work, and reputation as a meeting center/guesthouse are well estab-

lished. And they should be after six ye rs of effort along this line!.- For the typical tourism period,. approximately Easter through October, the center is kept busy with guests and programs. • We have reached a plateau for this period of the year regarding overnights .of guests, a plateau which perhaps can be raised but which we .already• consider a satis- factory use of the facil ity. .

We can see two possible ways to increase facility use in the future. This increase is desirable in part because it is unfortunate that such a facility is not utilized more fully and in part because, with the increased fees we try to maintain, we shall be able to make certain improvements only when we have the increase in income which comes through more work. One route to increased use of Casa Cares is more guests in the off-season. We are considering various strategies for this with the primary target being Italian groups, also those which have nothing to do with the church. It is a simple business sense but income from such groups means the gifts from friends which we now enjoy can be used for improvements rather than in part devoted to getting us through the "lean" months.

The other road to increased facility use would be the completion of our remodeling project for staff housing. This would open up the current staff housing in the villa for guest usage. Realistically, however, this is an example of endless circle as we proceed very slowly on this project due to limited funds. It looks like it will still be years before this project is completed.

In the New Year our programs are expected to remain the same. At the end of this letter we include the calendar of events. Changes include two children/youth camps rather than one with the obvious reason being the success of past camps and the consequent increase in participation. Pastor Dorcotealer of the Waldensian-Methodist communities in Florence is the driving force behind these camps which are particularly important in bringing together the young people who have little opportunity for fellowship otherwise during the year because of the diaspora nature of our church. Antoinette and I as both church workers and parents, consider these camps important building stones for the future.

### STAFF

Perhaps a ISO in our personnel we have reached a plateau, although there was a major change. At mid-year we took the step of employing another paid worker. Iris Amicc is a young woman from Northern Italy. She has lived in Tuscany for several years. She has very capably taken over kitchen responsibilities as well as provided a support for Antoinette in general with housekeeping. This meant for us a noteworthy financial commitment but one which we did not want to postpone any longer. Iris has been a real help in our work. At this point we therefore have three paid positions: Iris at 30 hours weekly and Antoinette and I each officially half-time.

And where would we be without volunteers? Nowhere. Gioele and Michael have been cornerstones of our staff for years now. Added to them several short-term volunteers, workcamps, and the contribution of three other long-term volunteers and you realize our great dependency on the effort of these persons. Marc, Maja, and Mireille were the three Swiss who were with us for longer periods and we are blessed with the assurance that Mireille will be with us again from March on. We shall also have Blmut from ex-East Germany and, for an undetermined period, Antonio, a young farmer from a Baptist congregation in Puglia.

The workcamps this past year concentrated on farm work, clearing the woods, helping with the remodeling of the old farm building, and general maintenance. The contribution was significant. Over the years we have gotten better at coordinating these efforts of collaboration. Particularly interesting these past months was the participation of young people from churches in former East Germany. Besides their work we appreciated the exchange we could have with them and which they had with our other volunteers: and guests. Highlight was the international workcamp in August with participants from five countries.

1991

Four projects are most evident in the New Year. One is the continuing work with the old

farm time. Fortunately, this, will also, with during us meanwhile the past year due to the expenses, first and but major fortunate intervention we

was made roof, few of 3 qorsi and shred up walls. This basic itself was an encouraging step, one which was very costly but which we consider a good investment. Now we shall progress as far as funds take us this year.

Two other projects have with use of the facility. The Italian groups in the center. First of two need to be appointed, and the churches, especially these of the local; Tuscan Protestant congregations: It is necessary to help them realize how Casa Cares can be useful to their programs of for individual stays. Then a job is to clarify and develop emphasis on ecology. Next Protestant center in Italy, as far as we know, seems able or will intend to devote itself quarterly to environmental issues. We must fill this gap and with this in



mind have invited some persons within our churches and already involved in this area to come for a consultation meeting with us. Where are we at in Italy in general? In our churches? How can one stimulate interest, study, and discussion regarding Christian responsibility for the environment? Can Casa Cares be useful? The Waldensians and Methodists are known for their commitment to peace and justice and this is natural complement.

The last Fr. J. Z. is the provision of a structure for persons or groups who want a more active participation in the life of the center. Several Waldensian and Methodist centers already have such structures from which we can draw ideas. A structure of subscription which of course would include a regular fee, as well as benefits, such as, more frequent information on the center's work, hope to have Casa Cares Friends Association (Amici di Casa Cares) established. If the committee, we know. Please contact us: if you have some suggestions or desire information.

In this letter we have looked at the past and looked at the future. These actions in themselves evidence God's grace. May that awareness be renewed and during the New Year of life which our Lord offers us to be lived fully in His care.

ANTOINETTE AND PAUL KRUEG

COCENDPR - 1991

- Saturday, 16
- annual Waldensian
- Postor Gino Cdnte -
- "Christianity: ahd."
- February - consultation
- 14 April annual ecology
- 21 May annual reunion of
- former children, Casa Cares
- 7 Children's Home -
- (1962/1975)

- nsian bonfire
- and Ecology - Common Ground
- Casa Cares and ecology
- children and staff of
- 975)
- Camp, (ages 12-15)
- es 7-11)

February -  
conference  
  
seminar,

23 June - 2 July - Children's

17-28 August International Workcamp  
7-15 September - Children's Camp (ages 7-11)

15-20 November - annual Course for Church Workers

# CASA CARES

(VILLA I GRAFFI)  
Via Pietrapiana, 56  
I - 50066 REGGELLO (FD)  
(FIRENZE)  
Tel. 055/8652001



Gennaio, 1992

Dear Friends,

In the past couple of years our newsletter has developed into a sort of annual report. There are a couple of simple reasons for this. First of all, the turn of the calendar year is when we can stop and take a look around. Materially and also "spiritually" we have the time to pull out and pull back, something which is often preached more than practiced in our setting. Secondly, this is the moment in the year when we find ourselves on the bridge between the two guest seasons. Now we review the path taken and consider what lies ahead. This is a process which we do for ourselves but which we readily share with you who are interested in the life of Casa Cares,

SEASON SEVEN

Since our return to Casa Cares in March, 1985 thousands of persons, of course, have passed through our doors. Many have come more than once, some returning to give LIS a helping hand and others simply because they found something useful away from their usual surroundings and outside their LIS rhythm of life. Among the characteristics of Casa Cares which did not change in the transition from children's home to meeting center is the sense of Grand Central Station, if I may use an image from Americana. The type of movement has changed, but movement is a constant. It is in fact a typical challenge of our place— appreciate and utilize this richness rather than being overwhelmed by it. This is often a topic when we get together with other Waldensian and Methodist church workers from throughout the country. The days are so full of life; the hope is so positive I live those days without ONLY coming away tired and drained.

During our guest season we certainly are often tired and the traffic seems excessive, but this year we had the feeling that finally we were on top of the movement rather than the movement on top of us. There are several possible explanations for this positive development, but what is important is that the guests benefitted from a setting which must likely be less hectic, more inviting than it was a few years ago. This has to do with the physical aspects of the facility and possibly also with atmosphere.

The season 1991 confirmed that we are at a plateau for overnights stays—6500, about 70% members of groups—due to our limited calendar, which we have come to accept as running from the Easter weeks until the church worker meeting in mid—November. Our number one "client" continues to be a member of a German church youth group although there is a wealth of variety among our guests. This year, for example, we had visitors from Eastern Europe and an increase in referrals from Loppiano, the near-by international center of the Focolarini Catholic lay movement.

We had our usual series of internally planned meetings—the February Valdensian commemorative bonfire, reunion of persons from the children's home, two children's camps, and the course for Valdensian and Methodist deacons. Each has become a set point on the calendar for some participants. We have done the work camps (7—14 days) of volunteers whose good intentions, time, and energy we have gradually gotten better at coordinating,

The dependency on volunteers is in fact another remnant of the earlier Casa Cares, although it puts us in the same boat as many other Waldensian and Methodist centers. We see no alternative, particularly for our center, we consider the amount of work necessary to maintain these Old buildings and the land around them the need to be self-sufficient financially and at the same time keep our fees in the range of church youth groups. Our staff was excellent again this year some of our rooms always seem to get filled. Gioele remains the factor, especially now that Michael has returned to Germany after five years with us.

Five years as a volunteer! Kany folks WOUld have difficulty imagining giving up a couple of weeks. Ve are glad that Michael has the chance to give life in his country another try and that he has a change, but to say we shall not miss hin as a co—worker, as a friend always on hand, would be foolish. As it would be foolish to deny the sense of ICES of }'ianno Veneziano, a friend from the children's home days Who lived on and off With us over the past four years and helped tremendously Pith the land. Hinno, 46 years old, died of a heart attack while with relatives at his home in Liguria. I think fey people in our scriety today have the gift of relationship with Liature that finmo nad, as evidenced particularly in his beekeeping and his care of plants. Ve are graceful that these thro persons we-re part of the Casa Cares community and we appreciate their contributions.

A final glance back reminds us of pork done tnese past months, and we nave ta be satisfied. Ve have learnea that we cannot do everything, but here too we have the feeling, usually, that we know Where we are going. For tne renovations of the upper farn building we realize that due to lack of funds it most liureây will still be a long tine before the staff apartments are ready, but enough progress was made tnat ye feel encouraged, Huch energy was give to tie care of the guests and to maintenance and farning. This year the land gave us mucn fruit for the tables and for jam, a good amount of honey, the many products of Gioele's garden, grapes for a little Fine and 250 Dottles of grape juice (Yichael 's parting gift to us), and a little olive oil (80 kilograms).

#### SEASON EIGHT

Being able to look back With good memories and satisfaction is a Dlessing, Being able to look foyard with enthusiasm is another. A point which invites us into 1992 is the numerous ræervations, which assure us of work and reneyed contacts Hith returning guests. Another high point is certainly the trio of long—term volunteers we expect: Stephan Deiss who passed two seasons with us awhile back, Anne Marie Danz who has participated already in five Swiss workcanps, and Hartina Fries from Bad Kissingen, Germany.

Stimulating events we foresee include then first organized reunion/yorkcanp for up to 15 ex—volunteers (applications now being taken!) from 12—22 April

## C A S A C A R E S

### 1 9 9 2

DATE	GROUP
	<i>i</i> Brethren Church Scandicci(D)
5.01-14, 02 HOUSE CLOSED	
<i>15.02</i>	VALDEffSIA-t(BONFIRE)
14. 02-22, 3 F R E E	
12-21 03	Eun Lay Center Association
22-25. 03	students Dresden (D)
25. 03-3. 04 <i>F R E</i>	
3-12. 04	Gymnasi um Veil burg (D)
12-22. 04	Ex—vol unteer ptrorÉcanp ( <i>D-CH-I-P</i> )
12—26. 04	Youth Group Wassenberg (D)
18-25. 04	Evan. Jugenäwerk Leonberg (D)



## 19. 04 E A S T E R

"Consumption + Ecology?"

22, 04-1. 05 F R E E

1-3. 05 Casa Cares Reunion (I—CH—?)

3-7. 05 *F*

7-10. 05 Schoeb—Koster wedding CCH)

10—15. 05 CTS (D)

17-23. 05 Eidschule (D)

23-28, 05 F R E E

28. 05-5. 06 Universitäts Regensburg (D)

## 7. 06 P E N T E C O S T

9-19. 06 Bildungsstätte Langau (D)

19-30. 06 \*Jaldensian Youth Cant) (I)

1-10. 07 Children's Camp, Ch. Apostolica (I)

10-24. 07 Genein. Evan. Erzieher (D)

24, 07-9. 08 Lippische Jugend *Detmold* (D)

9-21. 08 Kirchengemeinde Hassloch (D)

21. 08-5. 09 Valdensian Children's Camp (I)

23-29. 08 Hannover Youth Group (D)

## 5-15. 09 F R E E

1<sup>2</sup> 5—24. 09 St. Johanniskantorei Aanz (D)

26. 09-1. 10 Schule Beltershausen (D)

2-10. 10 Jugendant Wetzlar (D)

3-11. 10 Junge Kirche Schweiz CCH)

18-24. 10 School for Social \*Zork (D)

1 Waldensian Churchworkers (i)

## 0-6. 1. 93 F R E E

culminating with the Easter (celebration and the following day with an attempt at a bilingual (Italian and German) exchange on "Consumption + Ecology?" Then there are the semi-annual church workers' meetings, at the end of March in Turin and here in November. Also of interest to us is the annual conference of the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Lay Centers, This year's meeting in Malaga is hosted by one of our Southern Europe sister-centers of the Reformed Church of Spain. It will include an ecumenical meeting to reflect on the European movement to the Americas five hundred years ago.

To prepare for the 1992 guest season we are doing some renovating in the villa and we are taking the steps necessary to finalize our official licensing, a process studied by local bureaucracy. We plan to close for six weeks until the mid-February bonfire to work on both of these improvements.

Enclosed you will find our calendar to give you an idea of what lies ahead and also to encourage anyone who has the chance to pay us a visit.

Tanti saluti da Casa Cares,  
Antoinette e Paul Krieg

# CASA CARES.....- 50066 Reggello (F 1).....Italy

Dear Friends

January, 1993

As many of you know, the Waldensian Church has programs throughout Italy, and it is easy to understand why in 1982 its administrators thought twice before accepting the donation of the I Graffi farm from the directive committee of Casa Cares Children's Home. It is the type of gift which elicits the response, "Why me?" Anyone who understands something about the Waldensian and Methodist situation knows that there are many church members who long to be freed of programs and property, rather than to add others. .

Was it wise to accept this donation? This question has accompanied us throughout the eight years of our program responsibility, and probably, hopefully, will always accompany those who are responsible here. As frying as this process can be, to question church programs and the use of church properties is an obligation and an opportunity. It is a form of discipline first of all for those who are directly involved. It is a sad waste of resources--material and human--to maintain sü•uctures which do not serve and do not function. This is fortunately a frequent topic within our church. So, even though the process can be difficult, we appreciate being in a system which is ready and able to critique itself, to scrutinize the past and its results and to program its future, hopefully with faith, intelligence, and vision. In the evaluaüon of the Casa Cares donation, we think it useful to ask the following questions: • If the Tavola Valdese had refused, would the Protestant churches in Italy have been capable in of making use of the offer in some other way? .

- Where would the many guests have gone who in one way or another found here a setting to run their programs, to develop themselves, or to just be together?
- Who would have provided the facility, the programs, and the services the Waldensian Church has been able to offer through this st-ucture?

Certainly, for each of these questions there is a "shadow" question which needs to be asked and answered, somedmes an uncomfortable question which reminds us of our limits and those of any human ation.However, as one can also confirm for many other Waldensian and Methodist centers, it was wise to accept the donation. Casa Cares did and does merit use, support, and development.

## GUEST SEASON 1992

We had movement in the center from the annual Waldensian bonfire celebration in mid-February and then almost without break from Easter through the annual Course for Churchworkers in November. We used pauses to gather our forces and to dedicate ourselves to repairs and to the farm work which always patiently await our attention. Nevertheless, with our type of guests who give us friendship and encouragement as well as work and with our excellent volunteer staff, the workload did not seem as heavy as in previous years and we were not totally exhausted as in some of the previous seasons.

As far as statistics are concemed, there was a drop in single guests but it was well counterbalanced by the increase in group guests. Also, there was an increase in the number of special groups such as those with handicapped members.

The number of volunteers went down this past year, but there was a positive compensation in the length of stay of the volunteers we did have. One can say that life here is really quite simple, but it becomes complex in the variety of responsibilities each worker has, in the constant change of pace due to changing guest needs, and due to the unclear line between work and life style. It is here that one can recognize the value of having "veteran" workers, those who can quickly change from kitchen work to cleaning, from office work to farm work to maintenance, and still be available to help the guests. We really often ask too much, but that does not seem to bother most of our co-workers.

The supporting columns to the work of 1992, other than, of course, Gioele--our monument in the vegetable garden--were the Germans Stefan Deiss, Martina Fries, Oliver Speer, and Eberhard Raithelhuber, the Swiss Annamarie Danz, and the American Jonathan Werner. If to these you add those who come for shorter stays, such

as the ever-returning Michael Kaus, Mirjam Hank, Andreas Koehn, and Uli Koerner, you can understand that once again we were in excellent hands. Naming these individuals provides just a small degree of well-deserved recognition of those who keep this place alive.

### RENOVATIONS

The dream of renovating the adjacent farm building above the villa existed before we returned in 1985. The first huge steps were taken three years ago with a new roof, new floors, and shored up walls. Then, a lack of funds prevented real progress until now, when work has begun to complete the first of the three apartments. With gifts, loans, and savings our directive committee decided we could now take this step towards a noteworthy change. The Krieg Family should be able to move into new quarters by the end of April, and at the same time free up space in the villa for guest use.

The Italians say, "Non ci sono due senza tre," but we figured that we would not even have a two after one, that is, the effort necessary to put together the first apartment would preclude doing a second one for years to come. But, 10 and behold, when we least expected it, a regional German church youth organization contacted us. We knew that they organized volunteer building camps in foreign countries but we did not expect to hear from them now. The result? We can now hope that at this time next year also a second apartment will be completed. It would be the biggest of the three, the one planned for our single volunteers. The organization even raises part of the funds for material so the expense to us will be limited. Certainly such progress would have been unthinkable without this exceptional offer.

In summer 1993 we shall host the three two-week workcamps• of 25 young adults. Each camp will include professionals responsible for the work under the guidance of our architect. We thank the Evangelische Jugendwerk-Wuerttemberg for their offer and look forward to their collaboration in the coming months!

### THE YEAR 1993

To introduce the year which stands ahead of us we enclose our reservations calendar (so you can plan your visit in an open period!). We also add a wish list on which we want to underline our need for volunteers in the coming season. We need persons interested in and capable of doing domestic chores-house cleaning, kitchen help, after-meal clean-up. Know anyone?

For the new season at the moment we can count on "old-timers" Gioele and Stefan, Julian who returns in March, our first German conscientious objector Eberhard, and Antoinette's assistant Iris.

### CONCLUSION

We believe that the work of the center supports a positive response to the question concerning the wisdom of the Waldensian decision to accept the donation of Casa Cares. To maintain that positive response we invite your prayers, ask to be kept in your thoughts, welcome your visits, and -need your ideas and encouragement in the months to come. Help us to be useful to our churches, to the people in our areas, and to the guests with their various needs.

Our greetings from Casa Cares,

Antoinette and Paul Krieg

### WANT TO GIVE US A HELPING HAND?

- Keep us in your prayers, in your thoughts, and share with us ideas and suggestions.
- Send us guests and/or come yourself. A visit might do you good and gives us earnings to carry on the work.
- Send us good volunteers for the period March to November, especially keeping in mind our need in the near future for help with domestic chores.
- Help us organize a program or find others willing to do so. • Financial help:

\*  
gifts or loans for the building fund;

- the acquisition of our piano which we have in rental — about \$2500;
- the acquisition of new chairs for our second eadng room — about \$2000.

12.28-1.3

10.23-31

- 1.11-  
2.13

\*\* \* 11.9<sup>-</sup> 15

\*\*\*\*\* 2.20

## 1993 RESERVATIONS

(\*\*\*\*\* programs coordinated by Casa Cares)

3.7-14

JANUARY

3.25-28

Brethren Assembly, Arezzo (Italy) center

3.26-28

closed

328-4.1

FEBRUARY

annual Waldensian bonfire/ commemoration of religious freedom

4.3-12

MARCH

4.14-24

- \* \* \*

European Association of Retreat Centers

\*

Brethren Assembly Leaders Retreat (Italy)

4.25

Evangelische Jugendwerk Wuerttemberg (Germany) Social

- 4.30—

Work Students (Germany)

5.2

APRIL

Heliand Scouts (Germany)

5.2-8

Herbom Theological Seminar (Germany)

5.8-9

Ecology Day annual Casa Cares Children's

5.12-15

Home reunion

5.15-22

MAY

5.22-29

Bethelhausen School (Germany)

5.29-6.11

European University in Florence

Rueppurr Church Retreat (Germany)

6.11-20

Karlsruhe Hochschule (Germany)

- \*

Kunstschule Mannheim (Germany)

6.20

Bad Kissingen Church Retreat (Germany)

—26

JUNE

\*\*\* \*

7.8

Regensberg University (Germany)

\*\*\*\*\* 7.3\_8.14

Waldensian families camp (Italy)

7.24-8.7

Waldensian childrens camp (Italy)

JULY

8.7-21

EJW Wuerttemberg consffuction camp (Germany)

8.23-9.3

Evangelische Jugendwerk Frankfurt (Germany)

AUGUST

9.25-10.2

Lippische Church Youth Camp (Germany)

Wetzlar Church Youth Camp (Germany)

\*\*\*\*\* 10.2-10

SEPTEMBER music course (Germany)

10.3-10

OCTOBER

10.17-23

Junge Kirche Schweiz workcamp (Switzerland)

Rohrschah  
Church Choir  
(Switzerland)  
Mannheim  
Theological  
Seminar  
(Germany)  
Herborn  
Church Choir  
(Germany)  
NOVEMBER

Waldensian  
Churchworker  
Seminar  
(Italy)



## CASA CARES

50066 *Reggello* CFI > 1 Cal y

January 1994 Saluti da Casa

Cares!

This is the natural time of year • for us to look back and to look forward. The newsletter permits us to share this effort of review and planning with our friends. Before beginning this Dec.,' edition it was useful to reread what was reported a year ago. Did we have a good idea then of the direction we were headed? Were the high points and difficulties noted in 1992 the same as those of 1993? How this past year unique?

First of all, it is worth that being able to write this letter is a blessing and privilege. A year ago there could be no guarantee that another letter would eventually be issued. That sounds exaggerated and too dramatic. But is it not a mistake to take such for granted, even for a small organization which seems to be running smoothly? There is so much turmoil around us in the *world--here* in Italy we have experienced 18 months of political upheaval and this is nothing in respect to the warfare and tremendous suffering which burden our neighbors just a few hundred kilometers to the east. Perhaps the tone for this newsletter is influenced by "advancing age" or by the reliving in review an accident this summer which was close to being a tragedy for one of our guests. Whatever the cause, we look back on this past year with appreciation for the time, health, help, and work we have had. With this spirit we write our newsletters.

Did we foresee correctly? Yes, for the most part.

A year ago our booking calendar looked full and . . . was it ever! We had levelled off at between 6000—6500 overnights per year the last six years. In 1993 we hit 7500! Combined with the increasing tendency of guests to opt for half or full pension rather than independent cooking, there was a noticeable impact on the work in the villa. The increase in overnights is partially explained by the three additional *guestrooms--now 16* with a total of 55 *beds--which* opened up when the Krieg family moved to their new quarters. Three more rooms and -more beds meant also, of course, additional workload.

A year ago we foresaw the completion of two of three apartments for staff. Indeed, the Krieg family moved into theirs in April and the rest of the staff will be inaugurating theirs in these weeks. What we did not foresee was the significant progress on the third apartment, eventually expected for staff but at least for the coming year planned for vacation rental.

A year ago we were getting set for the summer workcamp of the Evangelische Jugendwerk-Vürttemberg. Like a tornado it has come and gone. In fact, this is the primary explanation for the inflated number of overnights. The workcamp was a temporary and event which dominated our summer. Along side the USU's summer youth groups we hosted an average of 25 persons for 3 to 4 weeks—wee! work camps, It was busy around here, and as the dust only now settles a half year later, one can really appreciate the progress made.

A year ago we foresaw organizing our usual programs, and we did—Valdensian bonfire, ecology meeting, Casa Cares reunion, children's camp, and churchworkers' seminar. Our programs are modest in size and scope but each ran successfully and was reason for encouragement. In fact, the children's camp with 50 participants has gotten so big that we have had to turn some away. What we did not foresee, but what was very Melcone, was the increased use of our center by other Italian church groups such as a Nazarene church and •through Brethren assemblies.

1993 was the busiest and fullest year yet for us. Sometimes it felt too busy and too full, but in retrospect we are enthusiastic about the road and distance travelled.

### The Pew)!

We continue, not by design, to depend upon long—term volunteers. With the support of returning "old-timers", rather than upon a series of younger short—termers. Gioele Hon—ovetto turned 77 in November after another season of blessing us with the produce of his garden. Stephan Deiss has been our resident *repair-and-whatever man* for three years straight, now for a total of four years. Our Protestant Volunteer Association coordinator wonders about him! The backbone of our household staff in support of Antoinette and Iris were Sirpa Rainansalo from Finland and Deborah Budach from the USA,

For a little more than three months we had an Italian conscientious objector and returnee Julian Canninger lent a big hand before he started university in Heidelberg. This place would not have laid it out without these folks and several others. Perhaps this is needless to say but we want to openly acknowledge them as God's gifts to our center and to the Valdensian Church.

For 1994 the pieces are still falling into place. We definitely still need household help. Gioele and Stephan carry on and Deborah is taking us into the new season. Another conscientious objector is due in February and several short—termers are scheduled from a variety of *origins—Norway, Sweden, Germany, Hungary, and the USA*. A sign of the passing of time, as if anyone actually needs it, can be found in the volunteer offer of Elizabeth, daughter of Sandy and Carol Anderson who directed Casa Cares Children's Home in 1967—68.

### The Place

After enjoying the concentration of our attention for years, the central villa in 1993 took a back seat to the adjacent farm building. Fortunately at the start of the season we had the *willing* hands of a work-camp to prepare the three new guest rooms. We are not sure what the future holds for the staff bedroom—downstairs now being vacated, but this year most likely they will be substitutes for the chapel "cells" which sometimes served.

Funds did not take care of the outside plastering, but for those who knew it, the renovated farm building must be seen to be believed. The Kriegs are thoroughly enjoying their new quarters. A few meters' distance from the villa traffic such a difference! The rest of the staff has a huge sitting room and kitchen/eating room downstairs and 5 small bedrooms above, plus the emergency *bedrooms* still higher. If people could see the accommodations, we probably would eliminate our volunteer shortage!

For the land there is no particular news. We continue to benefit from the work of the previous years and try to maintain it as far as we can with the time and staff available. Gioele has rough time getting around due to a bad knee, but in addition to his vegetable garden he continues to prune and help with the harvests. The harvests were good in 1993, especially the cherries and apples. In *October* the annual Junge Kirche Schweiz workcamp

helped us build over 330 liters of grape juice. At the beginning of December we finished the olive harvest. Production was down 4 for us as for everyone in the area, but we still obtained about 220 liters of oil.

### The Program

No significant changes are foreseen in the 1994 program you can see from the enclosed calendar one can see that it is going to be another busy year. One noteworthy development for us is the impact from the ETH Zürich churchworkers' training program at Istituto Gould in Florence. After five years the center has established itself as a unique study community for Protestant young adults enrolled in public university—level social service training in the city. The 15 participants from all throughout Italy and various denominations have rejuvenated congregations in Florence and helped us here to do more for youth, such as in our children's camp. The Valdensian bonfire in mid—February which we inaugurate the year will also be a weekend for the regional leadership of the revitalizing Valdensian youth organization.



Along with other facilities in and around Florence, on Pentecost weekend we shall be hosting persons attending the first—ever interdenominational Protestant/Evangelical assembly. This exciting and challenging event will probably draw thousands and is inspired by the German Church's regular Kirchentag. Objectives include getting acquainted and finding common ground for cooperation. You can be certain, we Protestants are few in Italy but plentiful! Just putting this together is an accomplishment for the organizers. !

The Prospects

As busy as 1994 promises to be, we hope that it is a year in which we can recover from and build upon the flurry of the past expansion years. We feel the need to pull loose ends together and devote ourselves to things which perhaps we have neglected. For example, the villa will not patiently pass another year of neglect! We also have much to do to improve our administration, which has expanded due to work load but also due to the arrival of all the operational licenses for which we have struggled for years in the local bureaucracy.

We also must concentrate on sound finances in order to begin to repay the individuals who lent the considerable sums of money which permitted us to accept the workcamp renovation offer of this past summer. The camp saved us a tremendous amount but we also had to contribute a large sum to take advantage of what is a unique offer. Without this commitment it would have taken years and years to realize this improvement.

And finally there is the desire to do our job well. Too often in the past couple of years we were stretched thin doing many things, perhaps not so well. This is a risk in a socially active church of 30,000 members trying to be useful in a country of 55,000,000. As a retreat center in our context we think our calling includes helping church members to slow down and plan for best use of the persons and talents we have.

So we think it is a time to consolidate, to do those things of which we are capable. We count on your continuing friendship and encouragement.

We wish you our Lord's rich blessings in the New Year!

Antoinette and Paul Krieg

C A S A C A R E S  
A L E N D A R - 1 9 9 4

G E N N A I O - F E B B R A I O  
\* \* \* \* closed - 11 gennaio - 11 febbraio \* \* \* \*

[ 9. 02 annual Valdensian fest] val th bonfire

19—20. 02 regional conference of Valdensian/Americanist youth (JO-fun )

M A R Z O

5-6. 03 Brethren Assembly, Scandicci, Florence (18—full )

20—25. 03 spiritual retreat, social work students, Gumnorsbach—D (25—auto)

20. 04 hhttaas—Claudius Gymnasium choir, Weilburg D (bU—full)

A P R I L E

4—9. 04 Church youth group, Vassenbercl) (16—auto)

3 — Easter •

4—9. 04 Versöhnungs Church, Karlsruhe—D (15—half)

5—10. 04 conscientious objectors in church work, Gumnorsbach—D (20—auto)

11—15. 04 sheltered workshop, Bergamo (17—half)

22—25. 04 Family Camp, Brethren Assembly, Scandicci, Florence (40-11.111 )

30. 04—1, 05 annual reunion Casa Cares Chi Idren's Home (40—full)

M A G G I O

2—7. 05 confirmands, Church of Küsnacht—CH (40—auto)  
12—16. 05 Brethren Assembly workers/SMiss supporters (30—full)  
19—23. 05 first ever national meeting of Protestant/Evangel churches; (40)

G L U G N O

3—12. art education students, underschied Regensburg—D (40—half)  
13—18. Eichhald High School, Eichhald—D (35—half)  
24—20. Nazarene Church, Florence (40—full)  
20, 00—9. O' annual Valdian children's camp (bb—full)

L U G L I O

9—14. 0% School of Design, Zurich—CH (16—half)  
10—30. 07 Evangel Youth of Hessen—D (35—untd)

A G O S T O

30. 7-10. 08 Dillkreis YHCA, Dillenburg (40—auto) 10—24.  
08 St. Viti Congregation, Zeven—D (35—auto)

S E P T E M B E R

18—23. 09 Valdian 1<sup>st</sup> District pastors' conference (15—full)

O T T O B E R

1—9. 10 annual workcamp of Junge Kirche Schweiz (10—full)  
2—7. 10 spiritual retreat, social work students, Gununarsbach—D (db—auto)  
11—18. 10 *Elsa-Brandström-Schule*, Hannover—D (2'—auto)  
19—22. 10 annual pre-academic year retreat of Churchworker Training Center (20—full) 22—30. 10  
Heiliger Geist Church, Vetzlar—D (20—half)

N O V E M B E R

3—8. 11 annual churchworkers conference (25—full)

D=Germany, CH=Switzerland auto=kitchen use, half=half pension, full=full pension

Casa Cares

Via Picirapiana 56

50066 Ruggello<sup>FI</sup>

Italy

(tel. 055/8652001)

January 1995

Dear Friends

For Casa Cares the year 1994 can be summarized simply as very good but very slow. In the months following the hectic 1993 we had the chance to catch our breath and to consolidate as we indeed hoped to do at the start of the new year. The problem is that we had too much time to catch our breath and consolidate! Our job right now is to improve our publicity and increase our contacts. The fact that this is a priority in our work is shown by the presentation of this situation at the start of this letter. Enclosed you can find information regarding a stay with us and we would like to ask our friends to spread the word to individuals and organizations who might be able to make use of our facility. On the one hand it is unfortunate not to use the center more fully and on the other hand, of course, without adequate income from the work we feel many limitations to the improvements which we wish to make. Summary? Drum up some business for us! So ends the appeal.

Otherwise, slowing down can be quite positive. In fact, this is one of our themes as a retreat center. Among other benefits, it permits time for catching up, for organization, and for planning. Many corners of the center never looked so good—the fields are in order, the workshops are as they should be, the guest common areas are inviting. Also, for the first time with the assistance of our seven-member Directive Committee, we devoted an entire afternoon to calendar and program planning.

There were no major surprises in our lives over the past months. Although guest overnights were down considerably, the profile of our typical guest remains the same—either a member of a German church youth group or of an Italian Protestant church. In fact, one thing we plan to do is increase contacts with other foreign churches and at the same time to be of more service to secular Italian groups, such as volunteer associations. Our major movement once again came

around Easter, Pentecost, the start of the summer and October. We are pleased with the amount our local churches make use of our facility, which offers the members a chance for retreat and fellowship. The regional Waldensian-Methodist-Baptist youth organization makes use of us as does the interdenominational Churchworkers• Training Center. which is located in Florence.

Volunteers continue to keep our center afloat. In 1994 over 1300 volunteer work days were contributed. Number One Volunteer Gioele just celebrated his 78th birthday and continues to be a presence in his garden reign. Over the months he was joined on the volunteer staff by four German women. MIO Hungarian women, two young men from Spokane, Washington, an Italian conscientious objector, and, for the first time, volunteers from Norway (two men) and Sweden (one woman). In addition, a major helping hand was given by several returnees, "old" volunteers who join us when they can. The most significant contribution was given by Michael Kaus and Mirjam Hank whose service of substitution permitted the Krieg family a worry-free summer vacation in the United States.

Special acknowledgment and thanks are due Deborah Budach from the United States and Stephan Deiss from Germany. Debbie in spring finished a year of service with us and Stefano in summer concluded his third season, after having already served two seasons a few years back. These Wyo were the supporting columns in our 1993 work and got us into the new year.

A major change in the use of the buildings was the movement of the volunteers to the adjacent renovated farm building, where the Krieg family had already been since May, 1993. Finally the staff was freed from their dreary quarters in the villa and chapel. Fortunately many took them as a special challenge and adventure! There have been many adjustments to be made over the months, but now the improvements in the life of the center are obvious.

The "colonica" renovations also completed a third apartment, intended eventually for staff, but which in the past months we rented out. The apartment has a living room/kitchen and two twobed bedrooms. In 1995 it will still be available to our guests.

The land was particularly productive this year with good fruit harvests, including the best olive harvest since the freeze of January 1985. Three other of the "old-timers" mentioned above--Annemarie and Kathrin from Switzerland and Martina from Germany--returned for the grape harvest and bottled about 300 liters of excellent juice.

A change in the office, you may have noticed, can be seen in the form of this letter as we finally begin to use a new computer and program donated to us months ago. It just takes us awhile to get into these things! But the step had to be made because it also involves our accounting system and plugging into a central administration office of the Waldensian Church. Life has gotten complicated and time consuming in the office. But is there any alternative?

Mention, of course, also has to be made of the work of our kitchen where Antoinette continues to rule and Iris continues to provide the helping hands. This sector has seen a transition because of more groups opting for half or full pension rather than cooking for themselves. This reflects the change from fewer youth groups to more adult and family church groups, in part because the organizational support money for youth is decreasing in Germany as they struggle with their economic and social changes.

For 1995 we expect to have the milestones which have guided us through the previous years, such as the February Waldensian bonfire, the ecology day, the Casa Cares Children's Home reunion, the children's camp, and the church workers' meeting. But we do hope, with the help of our friends and with a concerted effort, to also increase the use of our center by offering other programs and by hosting more single guests and groups with their own agenda. The two USA men are staying on and we are working through the bureaucracies with the hope of having a Ukrainian woman join us. Try to imagine with what one has to deal when Italian and Eastern European bureaucracies meet! It will be difficult, but we believe that there is promise for mutually enriching exchanges. However, even if we are successful, these three are certainly not enough help and we hope to have other offers, especially persons capable and interested in the domestic work which is our primary concern. The period in which we need volunteers is March through November.

We should be ready for 1995 and look forward to it. We wish all of our friends a New Year in which our Lord's blessings are many and are evident to you. Saluti da Casa Cares,

Antoinette e Paul Krieg

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*The Waldensian experience, "the mother of the Reformation," began in the twelfth century and is the foundation of churches today in Italy and Latin America. Waldensian and Methodist churches in Italy were federated in 1979, becoming a single synod unit. Internationally, the Waldensian is a Reformed church close to the Presbyterian. In Italy there are 25,000 Waldensians and 5000 Methodists in a population of 55,000,000 of which about 300,000 in various Protestant and Evangelical churches. Collaborating closely with the Italian Baptist Church, Biblical faith, political conscience, and public responsibility embrace one another in discipleship. The Waldensians are known for their struggle for tolerance and their openness and have dedicated themselves to justice and the peace movement. At Casa Cares the integrity of creation is also a theme of special interest. The center's ecumenical perspective and vision are further underlined by the presence of Gioele (Brethren), Antoinette (Swiss Reformed), and Paul (Lutheran).*

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CasaCares, 50066 Reggello (FI), Italy (tel. 0039-55-8652001)=====

Dear Friends of Casa Cares,

#### Our work

Perhaps we have completed a cycle: 1993-the traffic and progress of the renovated farm building for staff quarters; 1994-too much calm after the storm with a significant drop in overnights; 1995-return to normality. Of course, with all the variables in our life here regarding guests, programs, and staff, "normality" does not mean lack of movement and lack of change. Rather, the use of the center has returned to the level and even increased over that of two years ago and our months this year ran their course without major problems or surprises,

Once again we offered programs throughout the year, most of which are fixed points for us and expected of us, such as the Waldensian celebration in February, the children's home reunion, an ecology meeting, the youth camp, the churchworkers' seminar, and the open houses for the Florence Protestant churches. Now Antoinette has added periodic meetings for women, very appreciated by the 15-20 who attend, but not easy to organize because so many have difficulty permitting themselves even a day and a half away from their families and their normal routines.

For groups with their own programs we try to provide support with information regarding the area, introductions to Waldensian history and life today, and contact with our land and rural Tuscany in general. The groups, and also the many single guests, leave their impressions, often contributing in some way to the "geist" of the center. We appreciated particularly the concerts in Reggello and Florence of the Waldensian choir from Uruguay and the Renaissance dance performances of friends from Bad Kissingen, Germany,

Now that the staff is settled in the above building, our Directive Committee and we feel the need to dedicate ourselves to long-term planning for the property. That obviously means the former chapel and olive press building below but also the villa itself and the land. Many improvements have been made in the villa over the years but we realize that more has to be done and that planning is simply proper stewardship of that with which God has entrusted us,

For example, what can or should be done about the situation of our 55 beds being divided among only 16 bedrooms? With youth groups and very flexible adults we are able to fully utilize our capacity. This is not the case with older persons and couples. Which direction should we go? This is a dilemma of which we have been aware for years and certainly one we share with other centers. There are the technical questions. Is it even possible to divide the rooms into doubles or triples only? Can more bathrooms be added? With major interior renovations, what do we do with the roof, which also needs attention?

Some financial implications are obvious. Where does one find the money for such major projects? And, as a center self-supporting except for occasional gifts from churches or Other friends, what consequences do investments have on the prices which logically would rise?

That, in turn, brings us back to the start. What is our purpose and how can we best be of service to our churches, to all the Protestant churches, and to our society in general? Obviously, we must and want to keep in line with safety and hygiene norms, which is already a major expenditure and not always so easy in old facilities and with young, minimum volunteer staff. How much do we want to or must we respond to the expectations of persons who want accommodations comparable to those of today's pensions or hotels? For every guest who suggests that we up-grade, there is at least one other who begs us to not make drastic changes, For some we are too simple and there is not enough service; for Others, the simplicity and the invitation to participate in the care of the facility is just what they want. Which way to go? We share these thoughts with you and genuinely seek your opinions.

#### The co-workers

The most notable change this year was due to Gioele's departure. He was a supporting column of Casa Cares since years before donation of the Fattoria Graff to the the Waldensian Church. Early this year, after leaving for his annual extended visit with family in Piemonte, Gioele did not return. He submitted to two operations on herniated discs and, after a long convalescence and rehabilitation, has been with his sister in Piemonte. Gioele has celebrated his 79th birthday, so for a long time we could foresee losing him, but no real replacement could be prepared. We pray that he is blessed with the peace and good health which we believe he deserves.

The land consequently has suffered, but some slack was taken up by Mari Polastra, who joined us this summer after finishing her university studies in agriculture. She offered to come hoping to be tutored by Gioele but became department head! We shall enjoy the fruits of her garden into the winter. As every year, other volunteers also dedicated days to the care of the land and we have had excellent fruit harvests and have the promise of a bumper crop of olives.

At the moment we have a skeleton staff with only one volunteer, Ursula from Germany; she is joined by our Florentine conscientious objector Federico (who is about to leave), veteran Michael Kaus, and our kitchen helper Iris, Again this year we were often blessed with the helping hands of the "Old" exvolunteers who keep in touch and periodically drop in for a "vacation".

For 1996 we had the hope of making a major step in our work through the fulltime hiring of someone to share the burden of responsibility with us. Now, however, that hope has dimmed as the candidate we had in mind, Michael, has concluded that his obligations in Germany do not permit him to join us. We understand his motivations, but after months of anticipation, to not make this major step forward is a real disappointment. Antoinette and I for some time have realized that the place needs more than just the two of us as base staff. The volunteers, no matter how enthusiastic and hard-working, cannot be expected to share responsibilities in a way which the work now demands. So this means that we return to the drawing board without Gioele, without Michael, and with growing demands upon us. We shall see what volunteer offers we have in the coming months and try to be creative in finding other ways to build staff strength.

Overall our volunteer situation this year was haphazard, with too many unforeseen and gaps. This is what prompted us to write our circular now rather than in January with the hope of better planning for 1996. We are looking for three workers for the March-November season. Ideally these positions would be filled by persons who can stay at least three months. Two persons would be dedicated primarily to housework with occasional work on the land. A third person would be more involved with the land and maintenance and come into the villa as needed. In return? Room, board, and Lire 210000/month (about \$150--not many cappuccino!), plus those intangibles which some seek and in which others have little interest: fresh air, physical movement, access to Tuscany, peace in the hills, international contacts, group living. Contact us for more information.

An idea for the coming year is the reinstatement of short-term volunteer workcamps. We have not used them as much the past years as we did previously, but we recognize their value if well organized. The ones which are already foreseeable would be all or part of mid-January through mid-February for preparation of the villa for the new season and the second half of November for the olive harvest. Also, we would appreciate short-term individual stints of skilled persons in such areas as tree pruning and gardening in general, furniture restoration, and bricklaying. And we would be open for suggestions and offers from groups, but, as always, we have to be careful not to block too many rooms in periods when we have to generate income. Such short-term volunteers receive room and board.

#### Looking ahead

Reservations for the coming year are at a good point for the villa and, judging from these past months, the four-bed apartment will also get its share of use. We count on our usual programs and hope to expand our offerings, particularly with the help of the new coordinator of our Directive Committee Davide Buttitta, a member of our church in Florence involved in various associations. As with the planning for the Riture, here also we invite your thoughts and suggestions.

Confident that our circle of friends and supporters will accompany us into the New Year, we look forward with enthusiasm to 1996.

Saluti fraterni da Casa Cares, Antoinette e Paul Krieg

November 1995/January 1996

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The Waldensian experience, "the mother of the Reformation", began in the twelfth century and is the foundation of churches today in Italy, Uruguay; and Argentina. Waldensian and Methodist churches in Italy were federated in 1979, becoming a single synod unit. Internationally, the Waldensian is a Reformed church close to the Presbyterian. In Italy there are 25,000 Waldensians and 5000 Methodists in a population of 55,000,000 of which about 300,000 in the various Protestant and Evangelical churches. Collaborating closely with the Italian Baptist Church, Biblical faith, political conscience, and public responsibility embrace one another in discipleship. The Waldensians are known for their struggle for tolerance and their openness and have dedicated themselves to the causes of peace and justice. At Casa Cares the integrity of creation is also a theme of special interest. The center's ecumenical perspective and vision are underlined by the presence of an international, inter-denominational staff and membership in the European Ecumenical Association of Centers and Lay Academies,

#### CASA CARES - "CENTRO ECOLOGICO"

This statement regards the development of Casa Cares as a center interested in and committed to the care of creation and to the promotion of that care. It is meant to present the work of Casa Cares to guests and others involved in the life of the center and to give a foundation and direction to future efforts.

#### WHY ECOLOGY

Considerable attention has been given in recent decades to the topics of ecology and environmental care. Persons who have had access to and studied just some of the great amount of what has been said and written can easily begin to understand the dimension of impact which humanity, for the first time in its history, has had on its environment and the importance for an asserted effort to understand and direct that impact.

Environmental care is an issue which demands the urgent attention of both the public and the private sectors. Certainly the Christian churches are called to be sensitive to this issue and to assume a responsibility for what is bequeathed to future generations.

#### WHY CASA CARES

For several reasons Casa Cares might be considered called to dedicate itself in particular to environmental issues. The rural setting of the center implies contact with nature and with food production. The care of five hectares of woods and four hectares of olive-treed terraces requires on-going involvement with the realities of land management and offers a direct relationship with the natural world, an involvement which is lacking for the majority of persons in today's industrialized societies. The separation of people from the land can be considered a contributor to the ignorance and disinterest shown toward environmental issues. Casa Cares has an opportunity to reopen the door for many people to the world of nature and to the care of land.

Casa Cares finds itself in a local setting where there is a growing awareness for environmental issues, but one which at the same time has been unable politically or through private initiative to generate notable attention and resources to this care. Since 1975 there has been a constant growth of population, primarily due to persons intent on escaping from city life at least on the weekends and in the summer. However, this search for "green" has not yet had many obvious implications for the local community outside of the stress due to consumption of resources and to construction.

Nationally there are many persons interested in ecological issues, and fortunately many Italians are not detached from their rural roots, but those deeply committed seem to remain few and are frequently set on the fringe by public opinion as peculiar idealists.

An example of this is found in politics where the green parties are attached to one pole, a situation which does not foster the idea that environmental care is a responsibility of all citizens.

Despite broad appreciation for its investment in many causes, the Waldensian Church has not had clear ideas or a strong voice in what the World Council of Churches and the Council of European Churches regard as the deep interrelationship among Peace, Justice, and the Integrity of Creation. There is need for a contribution.

Another point which supports Casa Cares' dedication to environmental issues is the accumulation of experiences, contacts, and written material since its reopening in the mid-'80s. Guests who feel comfortable in the simplicity of Casa Cares' setting often have a sensitivity to and understanding of environmental issues. Many times they offer to collaborate in some way.

Not to be forgotten is the fact that the physical care of the I Graff property, both the buildings and the land, is in itself care of the environment. This can underline an appreciation for what was entrusted to us through the tremendous effort of hundreds of workers over the centuries.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHOICE

Casa Cares' interest in environmental issues has been obvious to many guests and friends. It is hoped that a clearer declaration of this interest will invite greater attention internally and open doors to broader exchange and cooperation with persons outside the Waldensian community.

The implications of the choice to dedicate the center to ecological issues are many and complex. As with a religious choice, with which many comparisons are possible, lifestyle is called into question. "Simplicity" and "sustainability" are terms which can guide the development of a lifestyle on both personal and institutional levels. The primary work of the house, that of hospitality, offers many practical challenges in an environmental sense, but also many opportunities. Care of the environment is challenging on many levels, and there are many potential conflicts in the operation of a business which must be efficient and, outside of major reconstruction, self-supporting. It is a positive point that the experiences of Casa Cares take place in the "real world" and as such might be applicable in other settings.

The work of the center could take many directions, all of which could involve considerable time and effort. Casa Cares could, for example become a center for documentation, research, model development, encounter and dialogue. However, person power available to the house is limited. Labor on the land, which is not conducive to mechanization, provides a constant reminder of the time and physical effort required by commitment to the environment.

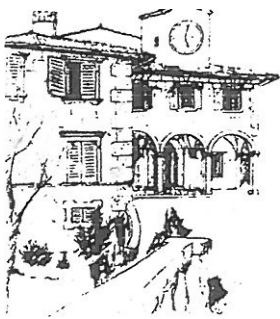
The commitment of which this statement speaks refers to a starting point and process, not a rigid rule. Relevant exchange among personnel, guests, the Directive Committee, and any others involved in Casa Cares' work is essential. The final word is not to be one of disaster, but one of hope. Future generations are the beneficiaries of today's efforts.

Date	Group	Number	Meals
Jan. 3-6	yoga seminar (Milano)	20	full pension
	18-19 women's retreat (Firenze)	15	full pension
Feb. 15	Waldensian Festival		open evening meal
	15-16 Università Europea Firenze	10	full pension
	24-2.03 Vikarseminar Friedberg (D)	15	half pension
Mar. 15-16	women's retreat (Firenze)	15	full pension
	(Firenze) 10 full pension		
	19-26 Gymnasiumchor Weilburg (D)	55	full pension
Apr. 31.03-5	Gymnasiumorchestra Göppingen (D)	55	half pension
	12-13 theology seminar (Church Federation)	25	full pension
	21-26 conflrmand retreat, Künsnacht (C.H)	20	kitchen use
May 31.04-3	Casa Cares reunion	15	full pension
	1-12 Fachhochschule Rheinland-Pfalz (D)	28	kitchen use/evening meal
	4-9 Waldorfschule Benefeld (D)	15	full pension
	12-18 art seminar Eiekhoff (D)	27	half pension
	24-1.06 EJW Bad Cannstatt (D)	32	tüll pension
	31-1.06 women's retreat (Firenze)	15	full pension
June 6-12	Norske Akademiers (N)	35	full pension
	12-21 CVJM Wetzlar (D)	25	full pension
	21-28 Waldensian children's camp	20	full pension
July 28.06-7	ecology seminar (D/CH)	25	full pension
	16-25 Ass.,Jeunesse Evan.Libres (F)	30	half pension
-Aug. 1-12	EJW Bad Cannstatt (D)	15	kitchen use

	12-21	Comunit� Cristiana (Firenze)half pension	45	
	21-23	YMCA T�bingen (D)kitchen use	13	
	23-31	YMCA T�bingen (D)	50	kitchen use
Sept.	31.08-7	Waldensian youth camp	25	full pension
	31.08-7	URC Waldensian Fellowship (GB)	12	kitchen use
Oct.	27.09—4	orchestra Bl�thgen (D) 45 half pension	5-19	church retreat, M�nnedorf (CH) 25 half pension
	10-24	children's choir Dillenburg ( D)	30	half pension
	24-29	Waldensian churchworker seminar	20	full pension
	24-2.11	Evan.Jugend B�uro, Ingelheim (D)	18	kitchen use
	Ct	CASA CARES Via Pietrapiana 56, 50066 REGGELLO (FI), -rel./Fax 055/8562001		



## Reservations 1997



## CASA CARES

Via Pietrapiana, 56 i - 50066  
REGGELLO (Fi)  
Tel/Fax 055/8562001

January 1997

Dear Friends

The bridge between two years; the bridge between two seasons. The rhythms of life permit us many opportunities, including those that come between two periods. At Casa Cares every year at this time we look critically at the past and prepare for the months to come.

These were good months for us. Many groups and individuals were able to make use of our facility. Very few unforeseen complications occurred, and there were no particularly difficult problems to resolve. Our team of co-workers was excellent, although once again it was a team put together more through improvisation than through longterm planning. We were blessed for a month here, a month there by shortterm volunteers: new folks (Italian Serena and Lino, USA Jon, Dutch Jolanda) and old (German Stephan, Michael, and Susanne). Longer sojourners included Christian (Germany), Julianna (Hungary) and Dan and Carolyn (USA) as well as Cristiano and Eke, two who accompanied us almost the entire year.

During the past twelve years, five conscientious objectors have worked here for their alternative service. Cristiano deserves to be recognized as the first who completed the full year with us. It is an accomplishment for a young person from the city--in this case the outskirts of Florence--who had no previous knowledge of Protestant churches to have dedicated a year to the life of a retreat center and guesthouse of the Waldensian Church. We appreciate his hours of work, many spent on the land cutting grass and picking olives.

Elke also needs to be recognized. She provided the third column of resident staff, a need which we have felt for some time. We are encouraged by her having accepted the change from volunteer status to fulltime worker starting this first of March. Elke is German and has lived in Italy for many years, so can contribute her language ability and cultural understanding. She also collaborates beautifully with other staff and is a person sensitive to the life of the church as well as environmental issues. We could not ask for more!

An analysis of the year's statistics reveals trends regarding the users of our center. As always, members of groups provide the overwhelming majority of our overnight guests, about 5500 of the year's total of 6500. Most of the groups came from Italian churches, but, because the duration of stay is longer, foreign groups, particularly from German churches, accounted for the majority of overnights. Outside of the many single guests, various therapy, school, and other groups completed the schedule. Most groups now ask for half or full pension while those who cook for themselves are typically German church or YMCA groups in the summer.

An aspect of which we have been aware for some time has been the need to broaden our source of groups, especially foreign groups. Italian Catholics only occasionally use our center and the Protestant churches are very limited in number. Also, throughout the country there are other centers available. This means that for "our" public in Italy perhaps our energy is best directed at offering specific programs such as weekend seminars or day meetings. Foreign contacts which would seem most promising would be those among Swiss and French churches, for example. While it is gratifying to have groups return which confirms their appreciation for what they find at Casa Cares, the fact that 70% of the 1996 groups were returnees underlines the need to reach out to new users.

Another trend which we have noted in these past years is the consequence of reduced church funding for youth work in Germany. We are still able to fill up the school vacation periods because of the youth groups and families which come--but we need to find other types of guests not tied to these funds and to school vacations. These could be churchworkers, retirees, or other adult groups.

We share such news with our friends to bring you into the life of the center and also to ask that you help us introduce Casa Cares to persons who might make use of our facility. To that end we include here the insert which was prepared very recently through a promotional effort of a local public tourism agency. Please pass it on and know that copies are available as well as the brochure and postcard which we have been using for the past few years.

You can also find our 1997 bookings calendar. It can help with planning for anyone who might want to come. The numbers behind the groups indicate group size and meal arrangement. Prices are available upon request. They definitely remain at bargain level for Italy!

If anyone is bothered by the business aspect of this newsletter, please remember that our work keeps our doors open. This is true for all the Waldensian and Methodist guesthouses and retreat centers. The little money which passes through our central office goes quickly to other needs. For us keeping doors open includes being able to afford the essential employment of Elke and the maintenance and renovation projects on our old buildings. Regarding renovations, we have gradually taken the important step of formulating a building plan for the future. Actually, thanks to the initiative of our architect we have a project in hand. In a backwards process the project has forced us to ask exactly where the Waldensian Church wants to go with this center. And we have come to realize that--such a fundamental, common vision is lacking in our Directive Committee because in the past we have had our "noses to the grindstone". Finally now we can dedicate time in our meetings (eight persons, a representative from the Tavola Valdese, Antoinette, and Paul) to this basic question--where do we want to go?



In part, the building project has been spurred by the realization that certain renovations cannot be postponed indefinitely. The most obvious are the roof of the villa because of urgent need and the chapel/ex-olive press area with an eye on future development. Basic questions in our discussions are the public which we wish to serve and the place of environmental concern in construction and future programming.

Many of us who have lived at the Fattoria I Graff (the original name of the farm) over the past years, workers and guests alike, are aware of the special setting and opportunities for ecological studies and environmental concern. Just how deeply we want to and can commit ourselves in this direction are the questions. Immediate and longterm cost factors, implications in daily living, and the urgency of the church's calling in this field are just a few of the issues. Still another enclosure here is a basic statement which was written to guide discussion in our Committee meetings. We very much want to invite our friends into this discussion. Many of you have already been involved over the years. Now we need to concentrate our efforts to become as informed as possible for the decision making process.

#### NEWS BRIEFS

##### Guests -

We continue to increase programs for our Florence church communities: the February Waldensian bonfire, Antoinette's women's meetings, special meetings in spring and autumn, the youth camp, the children's camp, retreats for the students enrolled in the churchworker training center in Florence, and the Christmas party for Sunday School children.

During the past year we had groups from two countries which were new to Casa Cares. In June in conjunction with the local basketball society in Reggello we enjoyed housing a youth team from Slovenia. Immediately afterwards with the Waldensian community in Florence we hosted a choir from a Reformed Church in Hungary. They had concerts in our church and also at the Romanesque church of Cascia/Reggello. Another country from which we always have several single guests but few groups is the United States. In February we guided a group of teachers from suburban New York City through a taste of Tuscany.

In the new year church groups from two other new countries are booked: Norway and the United Kingdom.

##### Co-workers -

We need help for the coming months. Upon request we can send our description of volunteerism. Ideally volunteers would stay at least two months. Greatest need is between March and mid-December. In November-December we could use more help with the olive harvest. We hope that we shall soon have another good conscientious objector assigned to us, especially for help on the land.

##### The land -

Elke provided some continuity in the garden, where she herself would admit that production is a mere hint of what it was when Gioele was here. We have had a very capable tree pruner and general consultant in Andrea Chiarini, a young member of our church in Florence. There were bumper crops of fruit, especially cherries and plums. The grape harvest was down considerably but we do have some grape juice. The olive harvest lasted about a month with production down about 30% throughout the area. We still were able to harvest 2300 kilograms of olives for about 500 liters of oil.

We thank you for your continuing interest in our welfare and that of Casa Cares. We wish you blessings of health and purpose in the months which lie ahead.

Saluti da Casa Cares,

Antoinette e Paul Krieg

CASA CARES, Via Petropiana 56, 50066 REGGELLO (FL), Tel./Fax 055/8652001



e-mail: [cares@centroin.it](mailto:cares@centroin.it)

January 1998

Dear Friends

From the office window the view over the Amo Valley reveals the contrast between the bare, wet trees and the yellow of the earth. Only occasionally through the clouds can we see a ray of sunlight which lends it color and warmth to the few remaining leaves and to the last persimmons ready for picking. After the recent rains the land already gives signs of the life which lies ahead in the months to come. The warm, sunny weeks of October and November are just memories and the work in the villa is done in layers of warm clothing with periodic visits to the welcoming, lit fireplaces in the adjacent

colonica (staff quarters). The 450 liters of olive oil from the harvest just concluded sit in the cantina and the few volunteers left busy themselves with preparations for the future season of hospitality.

### The season behind us

The guest season which began last February with the Waldensian bonfire went exceptionally well and ran with only a few vacancy gaps into November, after which until New Year most weekends were filled with programs of local churches. Throughout the year Italians and Germans were the primary users of our center, but we always have a number of Swiss and this year enjoyed hosting groups from England, Slovenia, Austria, the USA and Sahawari. Church-related groups dominated the schedule but we again also had study, school, and therapy groups and single guests who assure us of an open atmosphere and a broader exchange.

### The co-workers.

Also from the viewpoint of co-workers we had an exceptional year. The hiring of a fourth person (after Antoinette, Paul, and our cook Iris) finally gave us that extra supporting column which we dreamed about for some time. Elke Hablitzel is German in origin but because of her many years in Italy she brings us many useful experiences and new acquaintances. Two of her gifts with which we are blessed are her ability to work with our young volunteers and her love for the simple country life.

Joining Elke were our volunteers: Dan (USA), Judith and Johanna (Germany), Aniko (Slovenia), Anne (Netherlands), Lisa (Sweden), and Susana (Italia). Perhaps for the first time in 13 years Italian dominated as the work language and with our long-term volunteers (more than 2 months) it was easy and helpful to often critique our volunteer system with its strong and weak points. We realize that the approach of the children's home thirty years ago is still valid today--the center depends on the enthusiasm and energy of these young people, but at the same time offers them an alternative life experience and, for many, opens the door to the work world, group living, and another culture. Other than the long-termers, the Matthies family passed through twice. They spend at least one school vacation a year helping us. Then there were woodworker Karl from England, old-timers Oliver, Kristian, Caroline, Julianna, Susanne, Annemarie, and Elsbeth as well as new-comers Bigi, Beppe, Natascha, Beatrix, Markus, Beppe, Eddie, Simone, Anna, Martina, Alessandro and Daniele. And do not forget Emiliano, who has been a big blessing to us with his sociability, skills, and willingness to pitch in. He came to us from Rome in June for his ten-month stint of alternative service.

### Renovations

A very special volunteer offering was provided by a group of young architects and architecture students, who through a couple seminars helped us to "ecologize" our thinking about future renovations. Besides their seminars they use our place for their university research. We have been truly enriched by their friendship and their input. It is an international group, including some Tuscans, of more than 30, many of whom studied together in France a couple years ago. They have no evident church connections but share with us a desire for a simple life which respects nature and includes concern for social justice. The contacts are continuing into the new year and include an international meeting here in the first days of July.

In the seminars certain aspects of our future building were objects of attention: the roof and changes in the villa, the use and reuse of water, the restructuring of the former chapel/olive press building and lower cantine, and alternative energy. The reality of our financial limits as well as urgency obligate us to concern ourselves at the moment "only" with the redoing of our kitchen, perhaps a year from now, by moving it to the lower level. But all of these areas are of interest to us and we hope to progress in each as our ideas become clearer and financing is found. Any suggestions for either ideas or financing!?

### Programs

Concerning our programs, our standard ones went well: the Waldensian celebration with bonfire, summer camps for youth and children, reunion of people from the children's home, course for churchworkers, days for the Florentine Protestant community. Antoinette is encouraged by the growing

number of participants in her women's meetings and the participation in her first attempt at a New Year family retreat. These are rewards for her perseverance!

In 1998 another new point we shall add besides the architecture/ecology meetings will be the fruit of our participation in the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Lay Centers in Europe. There are more than 90 members from about 20 countries who have an annual conference and have encouraged the work of us 9 small sisters on the Southern rim of Europe: South France, Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Italy. This year within the regional network we hope to organize and participate in meetings concerned with our very special corner of the world, the Mediterranean with its rich cultural diversity and with its special challenges, such as migration of peoples and inter-faith dialogue.

February 14 we begin the year with the Waldensian celebration during which we shall consider the book of Pastor-Theologian Giorgio Tourn. His work is controversial and certainly will stimulate discussion, Italians and Protestantism: An Impossible Meeting?

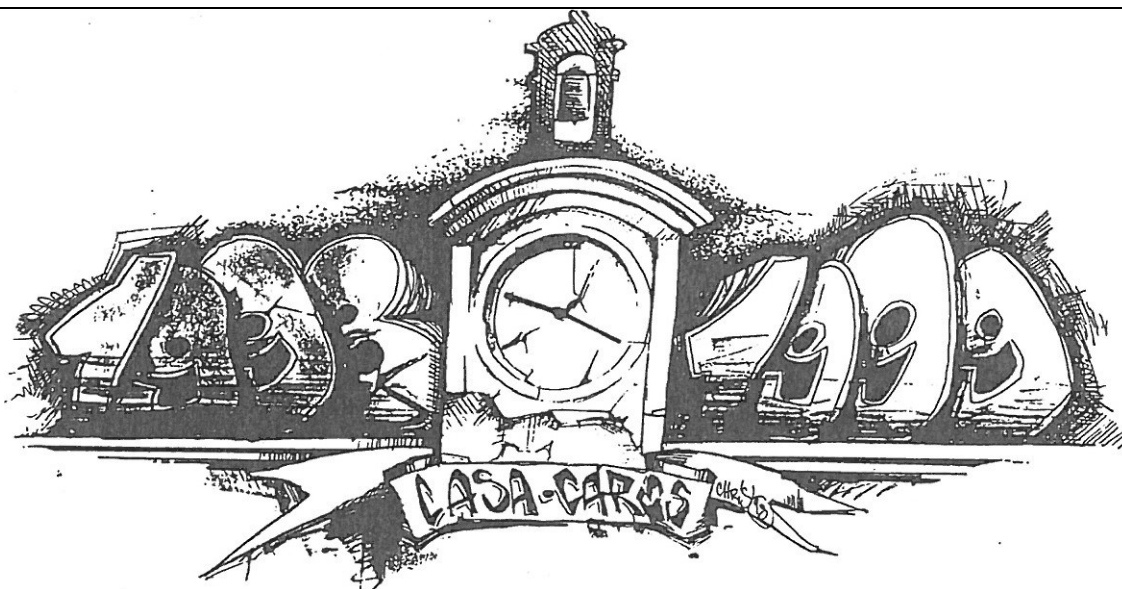
We look forward to 1998 and are thankful we can count on the continuing encouragement of our friends, on your prayers, suggestions, and visits. We wish you a year full of our Lord's blessings.

Saluti da Casa Cares,  
Antoinette and Paul Krieg and our Directive Committee

#### USA Friends

From January 6 for one month I have the good fortune to be the guest of Joel and Karen Berkeland in Santa Clarita (Canyon Country just north of Los Angeles). Leah is spending her junior high school year with them and Dad wants to check things out. If by chance you are in the area during January, please let me know. I count on the Berkelands to forgive me for giving out the following: telephone 805/2899366, e-mail jeb@scv.net.

Paul



Via Pietrapiana 56, 50066 Reggello (FI) Italy tel./FAX \*39-055-  
8652001 e-mail: cares@centroin.it

January 1999

Dear Friends of Casa Cares,

The annual pause between guest seasons permits us to appreciate the meaning of sabbath, of stop and renewal. After months of movement, excitement, change, and unforeseeables, our pace slows so we can catch our breath and get ourselves together for another year. The impact of many guests and programs are history as are the helping hands which got us through 1998. Living in the countryside brings us into touch with rhythms we have learned to recognize and value: the seasons, the phases of the moon, the cycles of the fruit trees with their harvests,

the returning scenes in the vegetable garden, the comings and goings of the wild and domestic animals which share our setting. Each has its moment for pause and rest, restart and activity.

Within the framework of our 1998 season with the regular benchmarks which have been established over the years, we review with you some of the "firsts" which occurred in these months. On the one hand, the foundation of routine provides familiarity and security. On the other hand, new persons and events always broaden our horizons and give us the willingness to move on, the readiness to face the future.

For a series of "firsts" we have to thank our young architect friends of AAd'a (Atelier Ambulant d'architecture) whose contribution to our life began in the spring of 1997. This year they introduced us to eco-villages and the villages' global network. Its European association held its annual meeting here in July and provided the occasion for AAd'a to offer the First Sustainability Fair in Reggello and to build an ecohut in our fields. The hut, complete with solar water heating and electricity, was built with local materials such as chestnut poles and clay and with re-usables such as wine demijohns to heat the water and such as wooden palettes. The hut was intended for the fair and also for the school class visits, which we hosted in October.

Two other elements of our life stimulated by AAd'a were the planning for a new kitchen, a project dear to Antoinette, and the request for European Union funds to begin restoration work on the former chapel/olive press rooms in the adjacent building. The kitchen planning goes on and, without funds, might unfortunately go on for some time. But the question itself has stimulated thought and discussion about the future of Casa Cares and how it can fit in, or maybe cannot, with the plans of the national church.

The European funds project was not accepted this time, but we shall try again. Do you believe that we Italians had our part of the request in order and that our partner organizations in Austria and Germany did not?! Hopefully now that European ties are always stronger those Northerners can learn something about organization skills from us Mediterranean folk!

The collaboration with the Comune di Reggello was never as official and as strong as in the past months with the financial support for the fair and with the hosting of a group from the French Normandy town which is partnered with Reggello.

Some 1998 new groups for us underlined the variety among our guests and our special opportunity to be in touch with different worlds. Dr. Rafat Amari, a Chicagoan emigrated from Jordan, led a small group in intensive prayer and fasting. REFO (Rete evangelica di fede e omosessualità) held its inaugural meeting at Casa Cares and is trying hard to open an important door for more consideration in the Christian community of human sexuality and relations. With a completely different format, but also with a special sensitivity to human development, was the portrait photography workshop led by David Peters, known nationally in the USA for his inspirational speaking. In June we hosted a small international seminar on globalization for persons in the network of centers around the world. Our guests came from Germany, England, South Africa, Argentina, and Indonesia.

And we ended the year, November 23-December 21, with our most unique group--10 small children with teacher and interpreter from a state children's home in Belarus. In the past few years many children from Belarus have been hosted in Italy because it has been shown that the effects of the Chernobyl disaster can be counteracted by a month per year in a healthier climate and with an enriched diet. The experience deserves a report in itself touching such topics as child care, wealth in East and West Europe, the usefulness and limitations of such initiatives, and so forth. In summary, we are convinced that the stay served the children and certainly it was a meaningful experience for us. It was reminiscent of CC Children's Home! Transportation, the major cost, was covered by funds designated to the Waldensians on the national tax for social and solidarity services.

Regarding staff, we have had our first lengthy experience with German alternative service. Christoph Franz from Berlin knew the center only through a short stay with his school, but he was determined to do his service with us despite the 15-month obligation instead of the 13 in his country. He has been a great help, symbolizing the many young persons who gave of themselves for Casa Cares in 1998. Among other qualities, Christoph is a gifted as evidenced by his work at the top of this letter. We had volunteers also from Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, the USA, Hungary, and England.

## A lookforward

. We again expect to start the season officially with the Waldensian falò<sup>1</sup> (bonfire). The meeting we have in mind will consider religious pluralism in Italy, always a value for the Waldensians and other Protestants but now of particular interest due to the growth of the Muslim community and groups such as the Jehovah Witnesses.

In March we shall host the spring meeting of the executive committee of the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centers in Europe, of which we are one of about 80 members. Later in the month we really get going with another visit of the excellent high school choir from Weilburg, Germany.

Interspersed throughout the year we shall have national and regional church workshops, for example, for lay preachers and for Sunday School teachers. The summer camps will assure that it is not boring around here. In

November are scheduled the annual meeting of churchworkers and a seminar on the Mediterranean area. We look forward afterwards in December to hosting the same children, perhaps as many as 16, from Belarus.

To help with all this movement we are...sending off Elke and Antoinette! Elke has been with us for three years and has resigned to dedicate herself to other things. Fortunately, however, she promises that we can call on her in emergencies. Demetrio Canale will replace Elke on 1 March. He brings with him experience in three centers, one in Germany and the two best-known of the Waldensians: Agape in the Waldensian Valleys in Piedmont and Servizio Cristiano i\_n Riesi, Sicily. His knowledge of four languages will be invaluable to us. Where he has worked previously he is remembered for his organizational and social abilities, two qualities we can well use.

Antoinette, instead, will temporarily be gone from the work for a much needed leave to pull back and recharge. Officially absent from March through October approximately the first three months are foreseen in the USA concluding with the high school graduation of Daughter Leah in the Los Angeles area. At the moment stops on the way are set for New York and New Mexico. The hope, besides personal growth, is to VISit centers to get ideas for Casa Cares. She welcomes suggestions and hopes, as we do, that those left behind can make it without her!

For 1999 we have a number of reservations but still a good deal of space for anyone feeling the need and having the time for a Tuscan stay. As always happens, we have several requests for school holiday periods such as Easter, Pentecost and summer. This is due in part to our having worked so much for youth and families. To fill other periods we need to become more known among persons not tied to those times, such as adult church, therapy, and art groups or school classes and associations.

Over the years we have been able to increase and improve our offerings to our church communities and other Protestant organizations, but with 30,000 members in a country of 55 million this public is limited. With other Waldensian and Methodist centers which face the same problem and in other ways we have made attempts to reach out, because to keep this place going with the large overhead of the property and our moderate rates we have to increase our overnights. It is not one of our strengths, but with no financial support or income other than that from our work, we have to be more business smart.

One move we attempted is the search for European funds which we mentioned above. Another is that we have to be more realistic and perhaps creative with our rates. For example, one of the Waldensian centers applies sliding scale based on family pro capita income. Another step we have taken is to write up a grant request for our environmental care, which means hiring a person for working the land and giving him or her the necessary funds to operate. Ideally (and it is quite an ideal!) it would be a person who enjoys and is capable of the physical care of the land while at the same time able to work with our guests to enrich the natural elements of their stay with us. Do you know anyone who might be interested in being a partier in finding this project? Or, for that matter, funding any project, such as a new kitchen? We have documentation available for anyone who might like to help.

We welcome 1999 and look forward to the months to come. To be able to look to the future with enthusiasm is a blessing in itself. So when we say, "Auguri", best wishes, for the New Year it is our prayer that this blessing be extended to all our friends.

From Casa Cares,  
Antoinette and Paul Krieg

One last "first" - note the stamp on the envelope. For the first time the Waldensians have a stamp. It and one which was issued regarding the Jewish community commemorate the granting of civil liberties 150 years ago to the two religious minorities in the Kingdom of Savoy, the predecessor to the modern Italian State.

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### "Friends of Casa Cares" - another fry

A few years back we spoke with several persons about the importance of establishing a network of persons interested in the work of Casa Cares. An attempt was made without much success and was abandoned. Now the conviction has arisen again that such an organization is essential for the development of the center. Eventually, if we do move along this line, we shall need a commitment from at least a certain number of persons to make the initiative work.

Why is some form of a network of friends necessary? For us the following reasons are evident, and we believe there are more:

o many persons express an on-going interest in the life and work of Casa Cares, but the potential of that interest is not realized; o the committee and the staff, certainly Antoinette and Paul, need more partners in developing Casa

Cares' vision and also in the realization of that vision; o Casa Cares has functioned in its present form for about 16 years; the center badly needs a stronger, less precarious foundation, for example in programming, in care of the property, and in financial stability.

What form might a network of friends take? We are working on this and are open for the input of anyone with experience in such matters. We can, for example, imagine working at least at first with the four national groups--Italian, German, Swiss, USA--which have participated most in the life of the center. We believe that it is very important to find an individual or a small group in each country to assure a personal contact which goes beyond what an occasional newsletter can accomplish. It could well be that the organizational nature in each country would differ.

We believe that the network needs a clear purpose summarized in a phrase such as, "Cares...for the future," which reflects a sense of service in our hospitality, underlines the desire to care for what the past has given us in the Fattoria I Graff property, and emphasizes an environmentalist perspective of responsible living today for the benefit of future generations.

We are at the formative level. Anyone willing to join in at least at this point? Thanks.

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# CASA CARES

Via Pietrapiana 56, I-50066 REGGELLO (FI)

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cares@centroin.it

Beginning of 2000

Dear Amici di Casa Cares

For a while we have considered getting our co-workers involved in the newsletter, some fresh voices. Their contribution is on the accompanying sheet. The idea and results are positive, and in a way this exemplifies how we see our job—let the gang do the work and we fill in the gaps!

I want to add some news. It was an extraordinary year due to the 25% increase in overnights, the departures of Elke and Susana, and Antoinette's eight-month leave of absence. The consequence was a full and interesting season!

Antoinette's leave reflected our conclusion after fourteen seasons that we two needed to take some distance to assess our commitment and direction for the coming years. Too often we have been so overwhelmed by the pace of Casa CareS that we have "not seen the forest for the trees". She spent some time away—USA, France, Switzerland—and some time here, also valuable to practice unplugging mentally and emotionally while being present physically. The strategy worked in that we know now that Casa Cares can exist without the two of us always here. As well it gave us the chance to completely immerse Demetrio Canale in the work. Also, it helped us to focus for Antoinette on designated duties, which look toward the future. While using the necessary amount of her time to consult with our staff on menu and guest accommodations, we hope that her energy can be devoted primarily to promotions and remodelling. This new perspective encourages us both to continue our commitment here.

News wise, as mentioned, it was a very busy year, too busy at times for our organization. While the year 2000 does not promise as much business as last year, in 1999 it was clearer than ever that our kitchen needs help and that we must dedicate more attention to daily maintenance. I am thankful for Demetrio's quick orientation and for his enthusiasm. And certainly I am thankful for the help which all of our coworkers gave me in these busy months during Antoinette's absence. The whole group was extraordinary.

Besides the usual Italian and German church, school, therapy and art groups which we have every year, we hosted several very interesting meetings, including that of the Executive Committee of the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe; an international conference on dialogue in the Mediterranean area; and a get together for European volunteers from various Waldensian centres.

This year some periods already are fully booked such as October, but others, despite the Holy Year confusion in Italy, are still open such as July and September. We hope to again host the children from a home in Belarus, something that was not possible last year due to bureaucratic snafus. We plan to open the annual reunion of caresini (29 April-I May) to include friends from the recent years and not only those who were involved with the children's home from 1962-1975.

Very important, we hope that our Directive Committee (a group of 7 nominated by the Waldensian administration) with the help of Antoinette can progress with plans for promotions, including fund raising, and the remodelling of our third building, which housed the chapel (we have learned that before 1630 it was a theatre for the owners!) and olive press. For the promotions the thoughts and organization of Amici di Casa Cares are still crystallizing and we shall keep you in touch. A first step is being made with an evening planned in Männedorf, Switzerland for I April; ask us for details if you can make it.



For the remodelling, big decisions have to be made such as architect and priorities. We have received some funds from the central church administration which will permit the very first interventions on the building below which we see being transformed into kitchen, eating areas, and a much needed meeting area. This major building project touches both elements which we consider to be primary for our identity— a place for dialog and a concern for the environment. Fortunately (!) the money is short so we shall have plenty of time for good planning and design.

I personally am encouraged by the several "old" workers who are with us into the new season: Beppe, Dan, Demetrio, Emiliano, Karl. Sandra is right when she underlines that there is a male dominance around here! You can imagine for yourself what the implications for our work might be. Even with a minimum of those unforeseeable events which are part of our life, I look forward to a great year.

We greet you on behalf of our staff and Directive Committee, Antoinette and Paul Krieg

### Guests in 1999

(D)=Germany (CH)=Switzerland

Fede, speranza, amore community (I) Meeting of German conscientious objectors(D) Waldensian bonfire(l) teachers (USA) Executive Committee EAALCE (International) Women's meeting(l) High school choir Weilburg(D) Federation of Protestant Youth, Tuscany(l) Church retreat Thierachem(CH) Pastors' meeting Sarracino(l) University Freiburg(D) Confrmands Küssnacht(CH) Reunion Caresini(I)CH) Waldorf school Benefeld(D) Youth office Wetzlar(D) University Mainz(D) YMCA Ulm(D) Friends' group Oeffler(D) Religion teachers(D) Therapy group Propato(l) Art group Eickhoff(D) Theological study group Bottazzi(l) Group Agape(l) S.Egidio Community-FI(I) Camp for small children(l) Kreuzkirche Wetzlar(D) Evan.Academy Hofgeismar(D) Evan.Church Sprockhövel(D) S.Egidio Comunity-FI(I) Innocenti social services(l) Study group, Fratelli(l) Fede, Speranza e Amore Community(l) Evan.youth workYoung Life(D/A) Camp for youth(l) reunion Family Campiotti(l) reunion Swiss nurses(CH) Young adults meeting(D) Evan.University Hannover(D) YMCA Ellmendingen(D) Churchwork volunteers(l) Christuskirchengemeinde Kelsterbach(D) Confrmands S.Moritz/Silvaplana(CH) Youth group Männedorf(CH) Family Walt(CH) Womens' group(l) Comunità cristiana Firenze(I) Course for churchworkers(l) Protestant network on homosexuality and faith(l) Seminar: Mother Mediterranean(International) University of Europe, Florence(International), Churchworker training centre(l) Therapy group Rassoti(l) Fede, speranza, amore community (I) End-of-year church camp(l)

### Prices for 2000

A simple but important way for our friends to help in our work is to recommend us to persons for stays with us. Below are our rates for this year. Periods which are very open are the following: until 6 April; May 1-12 and 18-24; June 12-18; July 16-August 27; September 5-15. In other periods there may be a still a room available. Thank you for your support. The new friendships and the income are important for our existence.

CASA CARES - 50066 Reggello (FI) - Tel. +39-055/8652001, FAX: +39-055/8652900 - e-mail: cares@éentroimit

PRICES FOR 2000 person per day)

Groups of 45—55 members

Overnight with independent kitchen use — I-fre 40.000 / Euro 21  
 Half pension (breakfast + main meal) - Lire 55.000/ Euro 29  
 Full pension - Lire 65.000/ Euro 34

Groups under 45 members

Overnight with independent kitchen use — Lire 45.000/ Euro 23  
 Half pension (breakfast + main meal) - Lire 60.000 / Euro 31  
 Full pension - Lire 70.000/ Euro 36

Single guests

Overnight room without bath - Lire 40.000 / Euro 21 room  
 with bath - Lire 45.000 / Euro 23 single  
 room supplement - Lire 10.000 / Euro 6  
 Paid: breakfast - Lire 10.000/Euro 6 main meal  
 — Lire 18.000/Euro 9 independent  
 kitchen use - Lire 4.000/Euro

Bambini da anni gratuito, da 6-14 anni pagano il 70%

# Voices of Casa Cares

Demetrio

How can I help you understand that every person who worked with us at Casa Cares was significant both on a work level and on a personal level? Not an easy job!

I begin by telling you that in the last years I worked as a volunteer in two important Waldensian centers: Servizio Cristiano in Riesi, Sicily and Agape in the Waldensian Valleys. Then as now I found myself working with persons with a variety of cultures, ages and nationalities. Also, at all three sites I have done various jobs.

This past year one of my jobs was to welcome and orient those persons who came to dedicate time and energy to our work. Upon my arrival in February some persons were here already, including volunteers. I already knew Susana DeMattia from our work together at Servizio Cristiano, therefore this was a reunion, although only for a short time. In June Susana left us to work with the elderly in the Waldensian center at San Germano Chisone. Another person who was here already when I arrived was Giuseppe "Beppe" Giammaria. Beppe comes from Rome and has been here for a couple years, first arriving to help "temporarily" with an olive harvest. Christoph Franz was in the midst of his 15-month alternative service through a church office in Germany.

In these past months we also had the helping hands of some returnees, including Swiss Barbara Mosimann (March through July) and Swede Lisa Almen (June-July). Both were great help in the cleanliness in the villa and in work in the kitchen. Emiliano Santoni had been here before, then to complete his alternative service (conscientious objector), as well as Dan Berkeland. Their thoughts you can read in another part of this letter. German Judith Matthies is an old friend of the house who returned this year for a couple stays. Her help in the kitchen was much appreciated and she quickly made her way into the resident group.

Then there were the new arrivals. Indre Doepke from Northern Germany divided her threemonth stay between the garden and the villa. Californian Eric Thompson and German Karl Wagner (alternative service to replace Christoph) dedicated themselves to the park and fields of our property. Karl is still with us and we hope to make use of his professional experience with solar energy while he continues in the vegetable garden. Hungarian Katalin Aros was with us for three of the busiest months; Sandra Wiese from Lübeck, Germany took her place.

To conclude I want to remember a special co-worker, Elke Hablitzel. Elke left Casa Cares after three years of service. I especially appreciated her volunteering to return shortly after my arrival. Thanks, Elke, for those many little Casa•Cares secrets you shared with me!

To all I express my gratitude for your work and the fine moments we spent together.

## Sandra

My name is Sandra Wiese and I come from Lübeck in North Germany. I learned of Casa Cares through Emiliano.

I was here for the first time from October through December working almost exclusively in the villa (cleaning rooms, working in the laundry) but also, of course, helping with the olive harvest. Now I am here for another three months until the end of March. Because my training is in hotel work I find the stay here interesting and enjoyable. Unfortunately I shall not be here in the summer to get an idea of the work at its busiest.

I appreciate here the chance to get to know a variety of people and to learn the languages. Certainly it has been a unique experience to live in the "colonica" with a bunch of men! In summary, it has given me many useful experiences and much satisfaction to help in such a neat house of the Waldensian Church.

## Emi l i ano

In June 1997, thanks to the military administration, I was catapulted from the metropolitan realities of Rome to the countryside realities of the Reggello township. The impact was less hard than foreseen thanks to the great group of co-workers such as the Kriegs, Elke and Susana (and thanks also to a decent local basketball team). From the beginning on my days were spent on the terraces in the midst of the olive trees, the blackberry bushes, and vineyard and old terrace walls— work has never been lacking! After a period with Paul as tutor I was nominated more or less officially to take over the land, although our mythical Gioele (who left three years ago) would be upset to know that his fields and the result of his hard work has been put in the hands of a person so

incompetent! However, excuse me for the paradox, it is this exactly which makes volunteer service at Casa Cares special: often one finds himself or herself doing jobs totally unfamiliar, for which one can only try to do one's best. It is exactly this which makes me, and, I believe, us, proud and grateful to be volunteers, to prepare breakfast and to turn the compost (not at the same time!), to make beds and to harvest the olives. There is nothing more satisfying than to be useful and to have responsibility.

One of the great minds of Casa Cares, in my opinion, my "maestro" during my alternative service, liked to say, "It is not so important how you do a job but that you do it and do your best." Perhaps this is one of the simplest things which Dan Berkeland ever said, but here it is a simple reality. It is a reality which permitted us this year to arrive at over 8000 overnights and an extraordinary amount (900 liters) of olive oil.

Although I was here only shortly in the spring and then returned in September, I feel totally and positively involved in the results of this year, arrived at in part "alla caresina", but strived for and deserved. It seems strange to me—Roman atheist with a Catholic background, grown up in the chaos of Rome and in the womb of Catholicism—that I feel so welcome and at home in a Waldensian center. And here one understands how much Antoinette and Paul are actors in this mix of cultures and realities which in the end create the harmony at Casa Cares. Certainly it is not easy to live with persons you know only briefly and with whom you might not be in agreement, but what is more edifying than harvesting in the cold winter that miserable couple kilos of olive oil knowing that it will become those two or three spoonfuls of precious oil which give "gusto" to today's soup.

## Dan

My parents worked in the Casa Cares children's home in Florence about thirty years ago. Four years back, when my father finally decided to make a trip back to Italy for a visit, he invited me to come along to see the place that had made such an impression on him when he was my age. Casa Cares made an impression on me, as well, and now I am back for the third time since then and I will remain through the next year to give an extra hand to the kitchen. Having grown up in Los Angeles, I find the rhythms of life here in Tuscany new and refreshing and ideal for me to continue painting and playing the guitar. The plans for future restructuring of the villa and the chapel also give me a chance to put my background in architecture to some use. I think Casa Cares gives the impression to a lot of people who come here that there is still at least one place in the world that is safe. It doesn't take long for every new face that passes through to become a familiar face and then, very often, a valuable friend. Personally, I can't imagine passing up the chance to be involved in this network of people and ideas. Thanks to my parents, I've been introduced to something that doesn't come along so often, and I don't want to waste the chance, now, to take from it what I can, and give to it what I have.

(Some of Dan's work can be admired on website: [www.geocities.com/soho:nook](http://www.geocities.com/soho:nook) 1545. Many pieces are set in Tuscany and some have been produced as postcards and posters to sell for Casa Cares' benefit. Contact us if interested. A&P)



## CASA CARES

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January 2001

Cari Amici di Casa Cares

As time passes some things remain, others change spectacularly, still others are transformed significantly but quietly. The past months perhaps fit best into this third category. Of course there is always movement in the work of a retreat and meeting center, but in the year 2000 we seem to have experienced an exceptional amount of transition.

New groups always bring new stimuli: a Florentine volunteer association working with AIDS victims; an ecumenical Austrian men's group with guest Richard Rohr, a well-known USA Franciscan; four choirs; the international leadership for youth volunteer exchange; our first Norwegian group, which came through the Ecumenical Association of Laity Centers in Europe; and the return of the children (16) from a Belarus Children's home.

Over the past years we have seen the evolution from a majority of youth groups to that of adult seminars. In addition to these groups, a highlight of the year was the reunion in MannedorffZurich that brought together Swiss and German friends and included a benefit Renaissance dance performance by a group from Bad Kissingen, Germany.

These groups made for a full season when added to our "habits": church, school, and therapy groups; our churchworker seminar; the children's and youth camps; women's meetings; European University in Florence language weekends; Saint Egidio Community volunteers with the aged and the handicapped. At over 7000 overnights we did not reach the 8000 peak of 1999, but the movement gave us considerable satisfaction and permitted us to cover a good part of our operating costs. Thanks go to our many donors whose gifts permit us to run programs, subsidize disadvantaged guests, and face special maintenance projects.

Fortunately to deal with this movement our staff was strong in number and ability. Six years ago when the adjacent staff housing was completed we thought that we had more than enough space, but this year all of the bedrooms were full--and we definitely needed these workers. The transition here was not only in quantity but also in quality as we have been able to be more specific with roles and responsibilities. Of obvious help, especially after a difficult previous year in the kitchen, was Dan Berkeland. Dan (USA) is our artist-in-residence, websiter, one of the musicians, and Iris' right hand man. The kitchen will always be too small where it is now, but it makes a huge difference to have the necessary personpower.

Demetrio was thoroughly absorbed with increasing duties in the office and with the guests. With Antoi\_nette's help he also has gotten further in the dirt, or rather the cleanliness, of the old Villa I Graffi. This work emphasizes the extra expenditure of time and energy an old and inefficient facility demands. It is fortunate that we now have Beppe's regular contribution to on-going maintenance, which is not an easy task in our setting.

For the kitchen and the housework we were blessed with the dedication of Sandra, Christiane, Raphaela, and Andrea from Germany; Leonie from Switzerland; and Ben and Jenn from the United States. When they found the Mme, all were willing and welcome in the vegetable garden. This is the reign of the German alternative service volunteers. Karl passed the responsibility to Philipp during the summer. Slowly we are moving back to the level of land care that Gioele gave us for years.

If we do make it back to that level it will be to the credit of Emiliano. He talks with a passion about "his" olives and seeks out the wisdom of the local farmers, a species risking extinction. "His" production this year was considerable for plums and apples and notable for olives. As anticipated for the olives, the yield was about two-thirds of that compared to the previous year. We have 500 liters of oil available for our friends.

An invaluable process in these past months and one that will continue into 2001 comes from the consultation of Rianer Schwing. His regular workshops have obligated us to stop and look at where we are and where we think we could go in our work. Rainer brings years of professional training and experience to help us with the transition from a pioneer organization to one which is differentiated, that is, from one in which all details return to one or two persons to one with greater sharing of decision making and responsibility. The future of a center such as ours, and no doubt that of other centers, depends upon sharing the load and defining a vision for the years to come.

Fortunately staff development and an excellent consultant have been accompanied by an active committee. The Casa Cares committee is nominated by the executive of the national church, the Tavola Valdese. The seven members are currently led by Antonella Romani, who has been very active over these busy months and who, true to the Casa Cares spirit, is not Waldensian but comes from the Brethren Church. A recent addition to the committee was Gianna Sciclone, the new pastor of the Florentine Waldensian congregation and the first woman pastor in Italy. She brings many skills and experiences, including those as a member of the Central Committee of the European Council of Churches. The last addition was Gianni Rostan, who just finished his seven-year term as the first non-pastor moderator of the national church. Besides this experience he brings technical skills as a retired engineer. These skills are crucial for our building plans that continue to evolve. Special thanks go to Judy Siegel, faithful member of the committee for many years, whose term has expired.

The building plans, however, remain plans. As can well be understood, this process takes time. Our approach has been that a major responsibility for the committee and the direction of Casa Cares is building for the future and this naturally means investment in facility development. We continue to dedicate time and energy to the consideration of renovations of the lower building and underground cantine. At the same time we must clarify the form and times of work on the especially the roof and central heating.

To some this letter/report might seem very unromantic—staff and buildings, but this is what determines who we are and what service we can offer. As you read between the lines hopefully you can sense the pulse of

Casa Cares. We are thankful for the persons with whom we have been blessed and are challenged to be the best possible stewards of the tools that have been put in our hands.

Antoinette and Paul Krieg

The staff and members of the committee spent hours working with our consultant Rainer Schwing on such questions as these:

- o What is Casa Cares or what could Casa Cares be? • At what point are we in its history and development?
- o What are our strong points; what functions well?
- o What are our difficulties; our limitations? • What means do we have?
- o Where do we want to go?

We considered these and many other questions. One result was an attempt to capture the essence of Casa Cares in a brief statement as possible. This is more difficult than one might think. After the first attempt:

Casa Caro has operated as a guesthouse since 1983 when the property was donated to the Waldensian Church. We hope to be a meeting point for persons from various *backgrounds*. Of particular interest to us is the theme of Integrity of Creation and how it relates to peace and justice in our world. From the start the voluntary spirit of co-workers and guests has sustained the life of Casa Cares.

This letter is sent to 170 friends in Italy, 100 in Germany, 150 in Switzerland, 60 in the United States, and 30 in other countries. It is distributed to guests as well as to other interested persons.

## ----- Casa Cares ----- Groups 2000

Waldensian commemoration — Peduzzi (USA) - Biodance (I) - students ITI-Firenze (I) - Fondazione Pace (I) reunion Famiglia Schmid (I/CH) - Confraternita Toss (CH) — brass choir Trippstatt (D) - reunion

Caresini-I/CH - Waldorfschule Benefeld (D) - Anne-Frank-Schule Linden (D) - women's meeting (I) -

Karlshöhe Diakonieverband (D) - Fachhochschule Mainz (D) - CVJM Ulm (D) Gruppo Propato (I) —

Associazione Speranza Solidarietà Aids (I) - Erich-Hoepner-Oberschule, Berlin (D) - Comunità S.Egidio, Firenze (I) - gruppo meditazione Adriana (I) — childcare workers-Istituto Gould (I) — Children's camp (I) —

Ecumenical men's seminar/Rohr-Candolini (A) - Comunità (I) - Comunità S.Egidio (I) - Gruppo Grossmann (I) - Istituto Gould (I) - Comunità Fede, Speranza, Amore (I) — youth camp (I) — Choir from München (D) - Fachhochschule Hannover (D) — Volunteer service year (NLS,ED) - Norwegian church academies (N) - Wetzlar Domgemeinde (D) - Konfirmanden St.Moritz (CH) - Evan.-Ref.

Kirche in Hamburg (D) - European Diaconal Year Network (S/NIJD/GB/ES/I/D/B) - Chiesa Cristiana, Firenze (I) —

Churchworkers' course (I) Orfanotrofio Radun (BLR) Università Europea-Francese, Firenze - Università Europea-Spagnolo, Firenze — women's meeting (I) Gruppo Propato (I)

## APPOINTMENTS 2001

17 February — Waldensian commemoration — 5pm: conference "Islam fra noi" followed by buffet and bonfire 10-11 March — women's meeting

29 April-1 May — reunion Casa Cares Children's Home

1-8 July — Children's camp

26 August-5 September — Youth camp

31.10-5.11 — Churchworkers' course

CASA CARES - 50066 Reggello (El)

Tel. 055/8652001 FAX 055/8652900 e-mail: cares@centroin.it

Rates 2001 (per person per day)

Overnight with breakfast Euro 25 — Lire 48000

Half pension (breakfast + main meal) — Euro 33 — Lire 63500

Full pension — Euro 39 — Lire 75500

Supplement for single room: Euro 10 — Lire 19000

Supplement for room with bath: Euro 5 — Lire 9500

For groups of 40-55 persons and groups without exclusive need of double rooms Overnight and breakfast -  
Euro 23 — Lire 44500

Half pension (breakfast + main meal) — Euro 31 — Lire 60000

Full pension — Euro 37 — Lire 71600

Children from 0-5 years gratis, from 6-14 years pay 70%



# Casa Cares - 2002

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A review of 2001 seems impossible without mention to the events of 11 September and their consequences. Almost certainly all of us have expressed ourselves in some way regarding our thoughts and emotions. Probably all of us have expressed our emotions and thoughts in some way. "Many things could be said and heard—in dialogue for understanding and growth. Please let it suffice in this newsletter to remember those thousands and thousands around the world who suffered and will continue to suffer as a result. May they be comforted and healed, and, if the occasion occurs, may each of us in some way be involved in that comfort and healing.

In the Romanesque church in Gropino, located on the 2000-year old road which passes below us, visitors meet the gaze of a face sculpted in the time of the Lombards. From this block of stone, unaltered over 12 centuries, the serene and at the same time hopeful smile has looked down on human events. Good or bad years have not changed the smile, because its creator made it eternal. Our wish for you is that in the New Year you may experience this smile of hope even in difficult times.

January 2002

Dear Friends of Casa Cares

Change and renewal can come daily, but the winter weeks offer a special occasion at Casa Cares. This is due simply to our seasonal life. Typically we begin our guest activity with the Waldensian celebration on 17 February and we conclude it around the turn of the year. This opportunity to retreat for a period from life's normal rhythms is something of which some friends are understandably envious. Frequently we hear from persons who feel overwhelmed by the duties, deadlines and movement in their lives. We realize that here, among our other blessings, we are fortunate to have the time to get loose ends together and to try to lay a good foundation for what lies ahead.

Despite a weak summer season, our total overnights for the year again surpassed 7000. This gives us satisfaction: only once (1999) did we exceed 8000. Some trends we saw in the past continue: a predominance of Italian and German guests, a shift from young adult/youth groups to older groups, the majority of groups related in some way to church organizations, always more work for our kitchen with almost a complete elimination of independent meal preparation. Other trends are new and we are challenged to work with them, for example, higher expectations for hotel-like standards (whether by design or due to limitations we probably shall never quite arrive in this regard!) and a greater percentage of individual guests in comparison to groups (almost 25% compared to 10-20% in the past).

As a staff we are maturing\* together. In wine country we like that term! Said in another way, some of us now have been here for years, a noteworthy change from the time when we depended on a series of short term co-workers. Iris in the kitchen, Demetrio with house management, Beppe in maintenance and Emiliano on the laid assure us a valuable stability. To support them in 2001 we had some short-termers (Katia, Michelle, Rebecca): our German in alternative (to military) service, first Phillip and now Stefan; we had our volunteers: Swiss Leonie, German Andrea, Swede Karin, and USA Rabekah and Dan.

With the continuing and much appreciated consultation of Rainer Schwing, we dedicated considerable time to speaking about work roles, duties and supervision. Energy had to be spent also on our life together under one roof, which has a significant impact. Sometimes it is not easy but we think the effort is sending us in the right direction.

Two individuals who have given us new impulse have been Gianni Rostan and Uwe Rirgleb. Gianni, former moderator of our national church, is a welcome addition to our seven-member board. He brings with him, besides his vision as a church leader, his technical and organizational experience as an engineer. He has been particularly helpful in guiding us through the foundation phases of our building plans.

Uwe came through a mutual friend in the European Ecumenical Association of Local Churches as a resource to accompany us in the field of environmental care. Although German, he is responsible for that field in a large Catholic meeting center in South Tyrol, that unusual corner of Northern Italy with its unique blend of Italian and Austrian heritage. Besides some programming, Uwe can also make a contribution to our building plans.

Those plans plod along, but maybe they need to plod. That is, before we jump forward we need to make sure the ground below will support our leap. Our lovely, aging property does need considerable renovation and restoration to ensure its soundness and functionality. In the villa, the huge roof, the facade, the central heating, and several bedrooms need attention. We also hope to transform the former chapel, olive press rooms, and underground cantine below the villa into meeting areas and a new kitchen and eating rooms. Gianni and Uwe, along with our architects, have



helped lay a groundwork that should see some material progress in the coming year. We feel that we need to make some serious progress this year to avoid feeling discouraged about the feasibility of our plans.

Our reservations for the coming months are adequate, not exceptional. We hope not to repeat the weak summer season, and we regret not having the opportunity to host a couple USA groups who just do not have the heart to travel at the moment. We know, however, that we shall keep busy and hope to fill in the booking calendar gaps (see brief below' if interested in coming this way).

Before his return to the United States, our jack-of-all-trades Dan was able with local printers to develop the attractive promotional material enclosed.

We thank our friends for their faithful support. We appreciate your contacts, your encouragement, your visits. We wish you many blessings in 2002 and the ability to recognize them when they come your way.

Saluti da Casa Cares,  
Antoinette & Paul

-----NEWS BRIEFS-----

STAFF: In 2001 our two most evident weak points were too little staff dedicated to daily cleaning and to meal preparation. Our folks did a great job but we look to improve by hiring at least someone for the kitchen and by reorganizing. We need volunteer help from the end of summer to the end of the year. We are not sure on the reason, but we have noticed a falling off of offers compared to previous years. On the other hand we do have to say "no" to some offers which came for periods already covered (short-term summer) or for which we do not have housing available. We regret rejecting helping hands--we appreciate the availability and we all know personally the value of a volunteer experience.

WEBSITE: Many have complimented Dan on his attractive website. We hope in the coming months to be more consistent in updating news and photos.

SALES: We are not the smoothest at marketing, but most of our friends know that we have the following for sale either during a visit or by mail. Dan's prints (viewable at [www.danberkeland.com](http://www.danberkeland.com)), t-shirts, wooden key rings, olive oil and honey.

ULTIMO LUNEDI': A step forward as a meeting center is represented by our monthly meetings "Last Monday of the Month". Organized together with persons representing different political and social local entities, the theme for the year of these monthly evening meetings is liberty. The purpose is to provide a forum for such issues as dissent, migration, youth, free time, incarceration, globalization.

AGENDA 21: Through Uwe Ringleb we have been included with our Reggello Township and townships' from other regions in a request for European funds to develop environmental education programs. In a matter of weeks we should have a response.

RENOVATIONS: With our architects we are crystallizing the plans for renovations in the villa (the north "column" from laundry room up) and on the plant under the villa (ex-chapel/olive press rooms and under-park canteen). The process is time-consuming but 2002 should see some signs of progress. One encouraging aside was the restoration of the 19th century terra cotta wood-burning stove in the villa's central room. Its beauty and utility have been restored. Be sure to check it out during a visit.

BOOKINGS: There are rooms available throughout the year. However, at the moment the following are periods when we are completely booked: March 20-27, April 7-13, May 12-18, June 8-15, June 23-29, July 8-14.

PROGRAMMI:

- 17 February - Waldensian celebration with traditional bonfire: conference on "Italian citizenship and minorities" with author Davide Pinardi
- 8-12 March - annual meeting of the Southern Network of the European Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres
- 6 April - Uwe Ringleb's seminar on the environmentally sound development of guest facilities • 3-5 May - annual reunion of Casa Cares Children's - 40th anniversary of its foundation
- 12 May - Ascension Sunday - open house for the Florentine Protestant churches
- 16-23 June - Uwe Ringleb's seminar on eco-building
- 30 June-7 July - elementary school children's camp • date still to be set — middle school summer youth camp • beginning of November — training course for church workers • mid-November through mid-December - fourth stay of children from a Belarus children's home.



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January 2003

Dear Friends of Casa Cares

This is a newsletter for persons with little time. In fact that seems like just about everyone we talk to, especially those who have family, friends, hobbies, sport, lots of work, obligations in the church, responsibilities in the local community, commitments in associations, problems, and, now, e-mail. No one seems to have time. Does, that make us rich or poor? Whichever, this is a newsletter for those with little time.

Those with really little time perhaps did not even open the letter. I admit that I do that sometimes, so I understand. Those with only enough time to get to the point, you are free to go because the news is pretty much the usual. We hope in 2003 to do a decent job of updating our website, so you might check that occasionally for something interesting.

Those with a little more time are invited to turn this page to (The CASA CARES INEWS, a quickie up-date on what is happening. It will be enough, I hope, to inform you and to provide once again a link to us up here in the Tuscan hills.

If there is anyone left, the subsequent pages provide some details and observations.

Of primary importance is that we thank you all for having been with us throughout the past year and we hope that you will accompany us in 2003. May our Lord bless us richly in these months with opportunities, with enthusiasm, with courage, with wisdom and always with a sensitivity for those who need us. And may we have the time for all of this.

Saluti da Casa Cares,  
Antoinette and Paul Krieg

Some of you are receiving this via regular postal service and others via e-mail. Please inform us if you prefer the alternative, which would mean in some cases that we need your e-mail address. Thank you.

# CASA CARES NEWS

Reggello, Firenze, Italia — Gennaio 2003

## RECORD OVERNIGHTS

After a slight drop in the previous year, in 2002 Casa Cares registered a record number of 8462 guest overnights (previous high in 1999). Group members accounted for about 75% of these. More than 25 countries were represented among the guests, mostly, of course, from Europe with spattering from the other continents. The international combinations, either among single guests, often provide some of the most enriching exchanges and satisfring stays. Among 20-30 nationalities are present. Of course returning guests never find the same combination, but evidently they are satisfied with the alternative they find. Our attractive website does not get up-dating it merits but still manages to bring new contacts. The number one promotional method, however, remains our network of friends.

## PROGRAMS - MIXING OLD AND NEW

The programs again were a mix of our initiative (Waldensian celebration in February, monthly evening meetings for the local community, children's and youth camps, Children's Home

## RENOVATION PLANS PROGRESS

progress is not at first evident but indeed big steps forward have been taken in the renovation plans for the structures below. The addition on our board of Gianni Rost former head of our national church, gave us the technical and overview capabilities we needed to forge ahead. The working relationship with our young architects has planned in a group or by chance solidified, finally resulting in a concrete step forward in the form of a central water filtration system to be installed soon in the new year. And just when that little step forward was taken, we heard of an opportunity for significant frinding through a regional program for the renovation of historical buildings. The deadline was upon us, but by 31 December we had the application in, possible primarily because all the groundwork had been done. In March 2003 we should know the response to our request.

## GIFTS FROM THE LAND

With the person and program movement in the villa we risk forgetting the blessings of our rural setting. We are far from meeting the production potential of our land, for

reunion, environmental workshop) and example, in t  
of that of group leaders (study, from the frui  
spiritual retreat, music, art, therapy). precedence t  
The past seasons have confirmed the ther  
plus  
evolution from large youth groups of terraced farmla  
40-60, perhaps cooking independently, however, of t  
to adult groups of 15-25 vyith half or we do have i  
full pension.

## STAFF EXCELS AGAm

Every newsletter seems to praise our staff...with good reason. The old With the on-going help of Consultant facilities, the variety of guests, the Rainer Schwing our identity has relationship with the land, and the crystallized: a meeting center and staff organization are all examples of guesthouse focusing on dialogue and the juggling act of Casa Cares' work. on a Christian perspective on From short-term volunteers to "old-environmental care. We hope these timer" employees, once again the objectives guide us throughout the pieces fit into place. year.

## IN2U03

For a good number of years now facilities and staff take a deserved break after Epiphany until February, usually beginning with the Waldensian celebration around the I \* of January. This year it will be shortened as the staff did not want to miss out on the privilege of hosting the third and final

of a series of two-week pastoral formation seminars in the first half of February. Already foreseeable 2003 highlights:

- the return of several leaders with new groups: USA teachers, Swiss confraternities, German school groups and church communities, Austrian spiritual retreats; • the renewal of our regular programs; • the return of the children from the state institution in Belarus;
- the annual meetings of persons concerned with Waldensian and Methodist social services and of the international group of young adults serving as volunteers in centers throughout Italy.

Some questions:

- What form will our work on the land take after May if Emiliano leaves to see the world as he foresees?
- Carmen will again provide a valuable partner for Iris in the kitchen until May. Then what?
- What will be the response to our building funds request?

Some dates: • 16 February — Waldensian celebration with speaker

Parliamentarian Valdo Spini •  
1-3 May — Casa Cares reunion  
• 29 June-6 July — youth camp •  
10-20 July — children's camp •  
"First Wednesday" monthly meetings on diversity in society.

Needs:

- supporters for our building project;
- short-term volunteers with skills in such areas as stone masonry, tree pruning, or furniture restoration;
- continued promotion, for example, among potential program leaders and among persons sharing our vision of dialogue and environmental care.

## DETAILS

The first "detail" is to acknowledge those who contributed to a positive 2002 season. The responsibility for Casa Cares legally is on the shoulders of our board. Thanks goes to all six members (we are missing one) and in particular to our president Antonella Romani and to Gianni Rostan for their investment of time and skills. We greatly appreciate the work of our architects with the leadership of Antonello Piccirillo who was ready and able when the funding opportunity appeared at the last minute.

The staff continues to be the foundation of our work. Iris's cooking with Rabekah (USA), Dan (USA) and Carmen (A) at her side is the most frequently complimented aspect of our hospitality. Rightfully so. Just as important but often taken for granted is the domestic work under Demetrio's supervision. He was fortunate to have Jamie (USA), Michelle (USA), Lisa (S), and Irene (D) to cover the everyday chores and to have the addition of the rest of the gang on those tough transition days. I often forget that reality when I fit 30 leaving and 40 coming on the same day!

Beppe has established himself as the maintenance chief and has saved us a considerable amount in costs and headaches. Emiliano has just the same sense of ownership about "his" land. He was fortunate to have the Germans performing their alternative to military service, first Stefan and now Simon. We thank the German State for them! As we can also thank the Italian State which surprised us by again sending their volunteers in alternative service—Stefano and now Andrea have been very pleasant unexpected additions. Antoinette insists Andrea sounds like Roberto Benigni, giving us Tuscan legitimacy.

We cannot forget the contributions of Leah and Dan who tie loose pieces together during their summer stays. Dan cooks, develops the website, sells his prints to contribute to our building fund, and decorates the villa. Part of Leah's contribution is being Daughter. And at the end of the season there was Ben to prove to us that American college students are indeed capable of dishwashing. Thanks to everyone.

The second detail concerns the programs. It is always gratifying at the end of the season to be able to host for five weeks the great group of 14 to 16 children who come from Belarus with their teacher and interpreter. Many local friends and the hosting association in Florence join us in looking forward to these weeks. This year we had a special coincidence with the four-week stay of eight German young adults with their two teachers in gardening. This was part of a training program for unemployed youth funded by the

European Community. These young adults, at first glance prime candidates for right-wing causes, blended well with the Belarus children and provided us with many hours of volunteer service. We are not quite sure how olive picking experience can serve Berlin-area gardeners, but they were certainly a big help to us in that and several other chores.

- . Antoinette gets very involved with the Belarus group as well as with the European volunteer exchange that each year brings about 20 foreigners to Waldensian and Methodist centers. Casa Cares does not have one but hosts their annual orientation each September.

Other groups who enriched our life this year:

- . Open House of Ramle, Israel, working with young Israeli Arabs and Jews, sent 19 youth to spend some of their summer camp with us.
- . The stay of a study group from Grand Canyon University of Phoenix underlined our potential with universities, although locally we knew that from the several stays annually of language groups from the European University in Florence.
- . The Florentine followers of Sant'Egidio, a Rome-based Catholic community, again brought elderly up to get out of the city's oppressive summer heat and humidity.
- . We hosted the annual consultation of the Southern network of the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centers in Europe.
- . We enjoyed the company of the young people from Don Bosco High School close to Vienna. Even their teachers did not realize until I informed them that Don Giovanni Bosco founded the Salesian order in the mid-19th century to combat "foreign" (read "Waldensian and Methodist") influences in Italy. Some things do get better over time!
- . Consultant Rainer Schwing always leads us to insight regarding our organization and purpose. I am convinced that many other church organizations could make use of such a service.
- . Our 2001-2002 series of monthly meetings for the local community with the theme of liberty concluded successfully and we are well into this year's series focusing on diversity in society.

## OBSERVATIONS

Casa Cares in the middle; Casa Cares on the edge. Each of us has his or her own way of conceptualizing. For me it is helpful to "get the picture", making a thought visible in some way. Often at Casa Cares we feel like we are in the center of things—a station, nest or island where people and their activities come and go in rapid succession. There is rarely a dull moment, and if the moment seems slow it is most likely because there is something right around the corner or we have closed ourselves, perhaps in self protection, to the motion and opportunities around us: persons in the form of guests, co-workers, neighbors; nature in the form of the woods, the fields, the fruit of the land; learning in the form of Tuscan culture, our library, the programs that take place here. Being in the midst of so much without being overwhelmed is one of the biggest challenges of our life at Casa Cares.

But another large challenge can be found in the other concept, that of Casa Cares on the edge. We have often related that when Casa Cares arrived in the township of Reggello at the start of 1971 we were the odd ones out. Here we were, children away from their families, several foreigners, a Protestant presence in a rather homogeneous setting with deep cultural roots at that time expressed in two factions: traditional Catholicism and its adversary, Communist political affiliation. Fortunately, early on both of our new neighbors were open to us,

ecumenism on the one side and an interest in civil society on the other. We are glad that the bitter animosity between the two sides has waned—no one really benefits from such polarization. And we are glad that through the years and through the transition from child care to meeting center our easy access to each side has endured.

. Yet we are not now and can never really be "in". Italy is going through major social transition as the sense of Europe develops, birth rate remains extremely low, and immigration grows for various reasons, creating greater diversity in the nation's population. The 20 years of today's Casa Cares—we have been back here for 18—have confirmed our place in the community and we have no doubts about our belonging. Nonetheless, our many foreign guests, our Protestant perspective and our commitment to environmental care take us off the beaten paths.

Just how we live these realities—in the midst, on the edge—determines our life here. When the going gets tough, it is the people around us who carry us through and beyond the moment—the staff, the board, the neighbors, the guests and all the other friends who remind us of their presence in various ways. Almost certainly you too understand the "in the midst/on the edge" experience; may you also be blessed with the friends to bring you through.



For Casa Cares,  
Antoinette and Paul

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January 2004

Cari Amici

Casa Cares constantly evolves as we work to provide a meeting point for persons from various backgrounds, especially those interested in the theme of Integrity of Creation and how it relates to peace and justice in our world. Our year 2003 was very busy and satisf\$ing.

The olive harvest? Lots of work, not much result. An April freeze in the Province of Florence reduced oil production for some farms to as little as 10% of the 2002 level.

The guest season? Lots of work, mixed results. We consider 2003 a good year, even though overnights fell to just under 7000, after a record high of over 8000 the previous year. This decline was in line with a general tendency in Tuscany. The most obvious explanations deal with anxieties about travel and the economic situation. We wonder if Italy and Tuscany in particular have passed their popularity peaks and whether those in the hospitality business have to rethink their approach.

Most of you know that Casa Cares has experienced a transition from a majority of youth groups to adult groups who need more space and comfort. While we have 60 beds in 20 rooms, beds often go unused because many of our visitors request singles and doubles. We believe our bedrooms have become more comfortable and inviting, even though the multiple bed configuration may not be optimal. Fortunately for us, our guests are more attracted by a vision of dialogue and environmental care, a particular welcome, the setting, and the facilities available to them, including the meeting rooms and surrounding land.

Of the 43 groups we hosted in 2003, 27 were church connected (14 Italian groups, five Swiss, five German, one Romanian, one from the United States, one international). Six groups were therapy or school groups; and 10 were other, such as the Belarus children, the Italian Red Cross, a Renaissance music seminar,

the Caresini reunion, and a meeting of the Association of Community Colleges (ACC). The ACC meeting was an exciting experiment in ongoing education in which young adults from 14 countries discussed and learned about human rights in the emerging Europe. Participants came from Macedonia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey, as well as from western European nations.

Many of these groups, such as the ACC and those of Belarus, Romania, and Red Cross, could not have come together without big discounts in our standard rates and donations from friends. While we draw great satisfaction from hosting these groups, the rate reductions inevitably result in a shortfall in funds for maintenance. We count on continuing to host these groups, but we realize that we must find other sources for the funds we need to maintain and improve our facility.

With the help of friends, we have been able to increase our presence and visibility in the local community. Our series of monthly meetings 2002-2003 were built around the theme of diversity. This year instead our focus is on local issues and responsibilities such as water quality, population change, and critical consumption. In mid-February we hosted the annual Waldensian festival, a successful event featuring Parliamentarian Valdo Spini, who spoke on religious freedom in Italy. In summer, our buffet and theatre evening provides another opportunity to welcome our neighbors from Reggello and Pietrapiana.

One of the strengths of our staff is its diversity. We currently have nine residents and two nonresidents, with a mix of volunteer, part-time and full-time workers. Those who moved on after months of valuable service include Simon Fuchs (Germany/D), Carmen Cashin (Austria) and Chiara Falcone, Andrea Gabbrielli and Emiliano Santoni (Italy). At the close of season we bade farewell to Sarah Winzeler (USA), Barbara Moser (Switzerland/CH) and Daniel Tarjan (Hungary) and continue into the new year with KurtUlrich and Anne (Germany) and Demetrio, Beppe, Luca, and Iris, all from Italy. Luca Rasoti has the particularly big task of replacing both Carmen in the kitchen and Emiliano in the garden. He has already proven himself capable in both areas, and we are confident he can overview and balance food production and consumption. We remember also the several others who filled the gaps for periods from two weeks to three months, such as Anna (CH) and, during the summer, Uta (D) and Dan and Leah (USA).

An exciting ongoing project is planning for renovation of the chapel building. We just missed the cutoff for public funding 2003 and now are waiting to hear whether we made it in for 2004. This is funding through the Region of Tuscany for the restoration of historical buildings to be used for the benefit of the local community. Our proposal of renewing the worship area while turning it and the three adjacent spaces into multi-purpose meeting rooms is enthusiastically endorsed by the local authorities as well by the leaders of our regular guest groups. Our national church has pledged funds, but we have to raise a good part ourselves. In fact we have been slowly working on our portion for many months, to the point that we have been able to complete the first fundamental step of installing a water filtration system.

[In the countryside it is a long and arduous process to provide quality water and to control wastewater. Each property owner is responsible, but treatment upgrades are mandatory only when major building is undertaken, new or restorative. The system we have put in was a dream for years and finally we have a major concrete expression of our commitment to caring for the environment. This is an encouraging step forward regardless of the outcome of our request for funding from the Region and our national church.

Our calendar of 2004 group reservations is very encouraging in both numbers and variety, with a healthy and stimulating combination of old and new. We inaugurate the year as usual with the Waldensian festival in mid-February. Returnees include the high school choir of Weilburg, Germany, our children and youth summer camps, the church worker seminar, the Protestant Fachhochschule of Hanover, the Association of Community Colleges, Swiss confirmands, the Belarus children, and the British Waldensian Friends Association. Welcome newcomers are a group from a Swedish folk high school (a unique historical Nordic movement); the high school of Rossdorf, the German town partnered with Reggello; the University of New Orleans; the church academies of Norway; and a Feldenkreis group. Fortunately, we have in place most of the staff we need until the summer.



The traffic here is often intense. Sometimes it seems to be moving at a faster pace than we can maintain. However, our friends let us know that we are not alone. You remind us how blessed we are. The gratitude we express includes that of our co-workers and all those who benefit from our work.

Saluti da Casa Cares,  
Antoinette & Paul Krieg

## CASA CARES - REFLECTIONS

### The Belarus children

This was the fifth year that we hosted children from a Belarus, state-run children's home. They are usually 16 children, plus a teacher and an interpreter. It seems that especially Italy and Germany opened channels of exchange and solidarity after Belarus was heavily hit by the nuclear pollution resulting from the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in neighboring Ukraine. An already disadvantaged area then had to face the stark realities of contamination that persist to this day. A volunteer association, Il Sassolino Bianco, promotes three five-week stays in Italy with public social service tax funds entrusted to the Waldensian Church. The program is based on the concept that such an extended period does much to counteract the bad nutrition and other consequences of the contamination. Our turn to host is in November-December. The governments of the two countries permit such stays only if a local community, in our case, the Reggello township, guarantees the availability of a classroom to assure school continuity.

The whole experience is for us at Casa Cares thought-provoking and rewarding. It makes me think about the rich narrative in chapter 9 of John's gospel. Much more than a journalistic exposition of a unique event, the story of sight given to a man blind since birth is one of personal interaction with various twists. Jesus sets the base at the narrative's beginning when he is asked who is to blame for the man's blindness. Jesus says that this is not the point; what is important is to recognize that he is blind in order to permit the demonstration of divine power.

What we do for these children is a drop in the ocean and not to be confused with divine power, but the community response each year to their arrival is significant and powerful—the teachers in the school that hosts the children, the local friends with their invitations and gifts of fruit and other wholesome food, our staffs enthusiasm, the Association volunteers who accompany on outings, the local bus company's service, various health specialists. The presence of these children has freed many to express the positive in them.

The Dark Heart of Italy: Travels through time and space across Italy by Tobias Jones  
London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2003

Book review is not one of our various Casa Cares responsibilities. We would, however, like to recommend a book to our many friends who are interested and informed about life in Italy. For us it expresses well the thoughts and feelings of a loving outsider. Our occasional sensation of being on the fringe, as we have mentioned in the past, is probably not due only to the fact that several of us are foreigners, but most likely also to our Protestant perspective and to our somewhat alternative life style. We do not want to presumptuously believe that we are better than the mainstream, but certainly the feeling that we are detached is at times quite strong.

Englishman Tobias Jones teaches in Parma. There may be very little new for affezionati and historians of Italy, but he does a good job of putting together facts and feelings for anyone interested in getting in touch with Italy today.

For us at Casa Cares the challenge, as for any outsider, is not to dwell on negative criticism or, on the other hand, romantic visions. Either approach can lead to discouragement and disengagement. This certainly would not be consonant with Waldensian political and social activism that has counteracted a natural tendency of a religious minority to withdraw into a fortress mentality. We consider ourselves at Casa Cares very much committed to and involved in our local community. We often receive positive comments for the programs we offer and for the promotion of exchange and understanding among persons from various backgrounds.



We agree with Tobias Jones and with many others who think that life in Italy, while often challenging and discouraging, is exciting and offers many opportunities and satisfactions.

### Reduce-Reuse-Repair-Recycle

How do we at Casa Cares manifest our commitment to environmental care? When we see others, such as those in the ecovillage movement with which we are associated, we realize that we are doing what might be considered only a minimum. Operating as an entity that serves persons not necessarily committed to caring for the environment can be experienced as a limitation. Or it can be lived as a challenge. This is the type of reframing that can be helpful when we have contact with persons from a variety of backgrounds. In a world struggling to understand how diverse peoples coexist, we have the chance to live the experience. In reality those passing through our doors tend to be not so different from us and from each other, but being on even a small crossroads can be exciting and enriching.

The complexities and contradictions in commitment to environmental care are elements we live daily in our centre. We experience them in a number of ways: a group of persons living together, the farm, meal provision, maintenance, office, business aspects. Sustainability is not a very complex concept, but few persons seem to understand it. Or it at least seems this way when one listens to how the term is so casually used. Maybe it is just too hard in our society to imagine and seriously commit ourselves to sustainability. On a day-to-day basis, perhaps it is more practical to return to the four "R" words highlighted above. Along with the recycling containers in our entrance room, they greet our guests upon arrival. That does not sound very welcoming, but...

### Elogio del Nostro Tempo by Silvano Fausti. Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 1996.

Here is another book: Silvano Fausti's Elogio del Nostro Tempo. We understand that it is not translated into English, but no doubt there are books in this language that say something similar- Hopefully. Fausti, a Jesuit active in Milan, notes that there is a strong tendency to negatively criticize the times in which we live. For decades, probably since the middle of the last century, perhaps because of the threat of atomic war, there seems to be a sense of impending danger, a reason to fear the present and future. The object of the fear for many today usually is expressed in other terms, perhaps environmental disaster or, more recently, terrorism. The author instead underlines how there are opportunities today that humanity never enjoyed. The challenge is to make use of these open doors, to not be blinded and immobilized by our anxieties. As time moves on, however, there are losses along the way (for example, extinct plants and animals) and the possibility that a special moment of opportunity may be passing.

The Christian perspective is one of hope. It means going counter to the winds of today, swimming against the current. In its modest way, Casa Cares tries to go in that direction.



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January 2005

Dear Friends of Casa Cares

Ever receive a gift that surprised you? Something you did not expect and did not think to deserve? Of course this is the message of the Christian Gospel but at Casa we can see examples in everyday life. The most obvious are the volunteers who give us their time, enthusiasm and energy. A special gift over a span of several years has been Dan Berkeland, American artist, skilled musician, excellent cook, computer competent, and just a great colleague. He has contributed to our work in many ways, often filling in at moments of special need.

In our circular we like to recognize all the year's volunteers and thank them. The longer termers 2004 included Swede Caroline; Germans Anne, Kurt-Ulrich, Kerstin, and Fabian; Lydia, Leah and Peggy from the USA; Indian Ben; and

Finn Suvi. Through European funded programs there were also the three "seniors" and ten young adults, all here for a month.

Working with the volunteers is one of our biggest tasks and also one of the most rewarding. Their selection process, informing and integrating them, coordinating them and living together demands a lot of our attention and energy. Of course just the fact that they are volunteers underlines how positively they themselves contribute to this process.

The major change among our employees was the substitution in April of Demetrio Canale by Adriana Papagna in the governance of the villa. She has integrated very well into the work and the community living. 2004 was also the first full year for Luca Rasoti. We benefited from both his cooking and his gardening skills.

The season went well. Our overnights increased by 10% in a year when many Tuscan guest facilities were struggling. Single guest overnights decreased while group member overnights went up considerably. On the accompanying sheet the groups are summarized to give our friends idea of the work that has been done and perhaps stimulate thought about future visits.

A central problem for us remains generating the income to maintain the property and invest in it. We are constantly in the tension of making ends meet despite maintaining modest rates and even offering discounts when requested and possible, especially to social service groups. We need to improve our promotional effort and increase the overnights.

We returned 20 years ago, two years after the Waldensians opened the guesthouse. It seems strange that the church fought twice about accepting this property with its free historical buildings and nine hectares that once formed the nucleus of the Fattoria I Graff, But from the experience these twenty years of caring for the structures and the farmland, we understand the church's hesitancy. Only when we consider the many groups and individuals who express appreciation for their stays and often return can we conclude with satisfaction that the church has made good use of these tools put in its hands. Some of the challenges for 2005:

- reach more persons looking for just the unique accommodations we offer;
- take steps forward on the renovations of the building below for which we are renewing our request for public funding;
- reorganize our office including the growing archives;
- start on the three-year project to bring the villa up to new fire code standards (can you imagine putting several metal doors in 18<sup>th</sup> century villa!?!);
- study our staff organization to find the best possible combination of short- and long-term volunteers and regular employees;
- maintain the return to a very productive vegetable garden and improve the care of the olive and other fruit trees;
- despite our hectic and irregular pace, try to achieve a greater sense of spirituality for the benefit of staff and guests.

Thank you for your continuing interest in our welfare,

Saluti da Casa Cares, Antoinette e Paul Krieg

Casa Cares Groups 2004

Schools The Weilburg, Germany High School choir has come for 14 years for their intensive week of spring practice. The Evangelische Fachhochschule of Hannover also has been here several times, usually for a seminar on the environment and for a work camp. Don Bosco High School from Vienna, the Norwegian Folk High School of Falun and the European University campus of Florence area have also been here previously. The German high school of Rossdorf came to us from the European partner town of Reggello. The graduate seminar of the Counseling and Guidance Department of the University of New Orleans will be repeated in 2005. The Zeichenakademie Hanau is one of the best known goldsmith schools of Germany-

Churches We hosted confirmation groups from Switzerland, Germany and the Waldensian Valleys. We were used for retreat by local churches and for a church district course. For the first time we had the pleasure of hosting a seminar of the women's organization of the Lutheran Church of Italy. A group of USA Methodist ministers reunited here and of course we hosted again the meeting of Waldensian and Methodist churchworkers.

Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe Our active membership in this organization has brought us several volunteers and individual guests over the years and in 2004 groups from the the Norwegian Church Academies and from Sigtuna Folk High School, Sweden.

Social services When we can we are happy to welcome special groups like the 16 children from a Belarus children's home who come annually for five weeks. A group from the Open House project arrived from Ramle, Israel for a staff growth retreat. They work on communication and understanding among Israeli youth from the

Jewish, Arab Muslim and Arab Christian communities. A training center close to Berlin used Casa Cares as its base for intercultural exchange while at the same time offering us a workcamp.

Others For the second year the Association of Community Colleges staged a workshop with us. It is a fascinating exchange among young adults from 14 European nations. We also hosted a Swiss women's dance seminar, an Austrian retreat, two USA tourist groups, our children's and youth camps, and a Feldenkreis seminar.

Casa Cares has operated as a guesthouse since 1983 when the property was donated to the Waldensian Church. We hope to be a meeting point for persons from various backgrounds. Of particular interest to us is the theme of Integrity of Creation and how it relates to peace and justice in our world. From its beginning the voluntary spirit of co-workers and guests has sustained the life of Casa Cares.

The Waldensian experience, "the mother of the Reformation", began in the twelfth century and is the foundation of Churches today in Italy, Uruguay, and Argentina. Waldensian and Methodist , churches in Italy were federated in 1979, meeting in an annual synod whose decisions are entrusted to an elected executive board of 7 members. Internationally the Waldensian Church is close to the Presbyterian. In Italy there are 25,000 Waldensians and 5,000 Methodists in a population of about 58 million. Biblical faith, political conscience, and public responsibility embrace one another in discipleship.



...is situated on a hillside, 500 meters over the Arno River Valley. It is easily accessible from the Incisa exit of the autostrada and also by public transportation from Florence.

...is located in a centuries old farm villa surrounded by ten acres of olive tree terraces, an organic vegetable garden, various fruit trees and twelve acres of woods. The Tuscan countryside inspires contemplation and creativity.

...is a community setting where groups and individual guests often return for their programs. In fact, our purpose is to create a welcoming and encouraging atmosphere.

...is managed by an international staff that strives for professional service while at the same time incorporating volunteers who give the place a special "homey" identity. As possible, the center tries to adapt to guests' needs.

- meeting rooms
- library
- woods
- visit to a Tuscan farm
- information of the Waldensian Italian Protestantism

**Sites of historic, artistic importance**  
reachable for day trips by private transportation:  
Florence, Arezzo, Siena, San Gimignano, Volterra, Pisa, Lucca, Assisi, Carrara, Chianti, Vinci, Cortona,

**In the more immediate area:**

- Museum of Farm Culture, Gaville
- experimental arboretum, Vallombrosa
- Forest preserve of Sant'Antonio
- religious centers: monasteries of Vallombrosa, La Verna, Camaldoli; international center of the Focolari movement; Romanesque churches
- Paleontology Museum, Montevarchi
- local weekly markets
- weekend antique markets
- oil press facilities (in activity November-February)



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## FCEI - CSD - ECEN/GEN - EAALCE

January, 2006

Dear Friends,

Who are we and where are we going? It is a question of belonging. The answer to that question provides the base on which to build a vision for the future. A way to present our Casa Cares foundation is to consider the organizational abbreviations heading this page.

*FCEI* ([www.fcei.it](http://www.fcei.it), [y.rww.chiesavaldese.org](http://y.rww.chiesavaldese.org))

In both a narrow and broad sense of ownership, since 1983 Casa Cares has belonged to the Waldensian Church. Most of the readers of this letter know the Waldensians, but for some the boxed summary at the bottom of page 2 might be useful.

The Waldensians, along with several other Italian churches (Baptist, Lutheran, Salvation Army, and Apostolic), form the national FCEI, the Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia. Even together, this Federation makes up just a tiny minority of perhaps 50,000 in a population of 58 million. These churches assure a Protestant perspective, voice and alternative in a country dominated by its Roman Catholic heritage and culture. The churches welcome many newcomers, as Italy in the past 20 years has become a country of immigrants. Many ethnic Protestant churches (for example, from Eritrea, Nigeria, Ghana, Korea, China, Brazil, Philippines) have associated to varying degrees with the Federation, increasing the diversity of the historical churches and providing new perspectives and impulse.

The responsibility for Casa Cares, today's work and tomorrow's, rests on the shoulders of its seven-member board which responds to the national church administrative board, the Tavola Valdese.

([www.diaconiavaldese.org](http://www.diaconiavaldese.org))

The CSD (Commissione Sinodale per la Diaconia) has been operating for in the past decade as the organ of the Waldensian Church responsible for the administration of its diaconal work. This includes guest facilities and meeting centers, hospitals and other social services for children and senior citizens, for immigrants, and for persons with special needs. Casa Cares is not formally under the Commissione, but we certainly feel that we belong to the constellation of services provided by the church.

Each November Casa Cares hosts the annual national meeting of Waldensian and Methodist churchworkers, a gathering for professional exchange and on-going training. For several years we have participated in the meetings of the ACH Italia, the association of church guest facilities. Together we try to assure quality and meeting regulatory standards while developing and applying a particular vision of hospitality.

*ECEN/GEN* ([www.ecen.org](http://www.ecen.org), [gen.ecovillage.org](http://gen.ecovillage.org))

From its early years in the 1980's we have tried to keep in touch and in tune with issues of environmental care. We have the advantages and sometimes the frustration of trying to convert words to facts in our daily life as a center for hospitality, as an historical property and as a farm. We readily participate in the meetings of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN), which finds its roots in the 1989 Council of European Churches' meeting in Basel on Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation. Many churches in Europe are in the vanguard of understanding and applying environmentally sound principles. In Italy we are certainly not at that point, so we welcome the chance to stimulate our churches, our local community and our guests and each other in this area.

Regarding the Global Ecovillage Network, a network rich in diversity, we are proud to be supporters and co-travellers. Some of the member centers are very large and well known, such as Findhorn in Scotland, while others are small and struggling; some have a clearly spiritual dimension, others a more political one. In all cases these are persons striving in community and in life style to care for the natural world.

## EAALCE ([www.eaalce.de](http://www.eaalce.de))

For years the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe has been for us a source of stimulation and encouragement. The 80 member centres in 20 countries vary greatly, of course reflecting the situations in their churches and in their national settings. We range from small guest centres like Casa Cares in southern Europe to the folk high schools with their rich tradition in the Nordic countries; from large, well-staffed church think tanks in Germany to spiritual retreat centres in the British Isles to emerging facilities in Central and East Europe. The exchange at regional and annual meetings is richly edifying. In the global association of regional centres, OIKOSNET, of course the diversity and exchange become even richer.

As Casa Cares we wholly support the effort of the association members to build inclusive, participatory, just and sustainable societies.

Understanding where Casa Cares belongs is essential to the formulation of a vision for the future. It is a crucial time to work on a vision for the future as the work consolidates and the center faces a transition in management in the coming years. Only God knows the time frame, but we recognize our responsibilities, and one is that of working with our board and the national church board, the Tavola Valdese, on planning for the future.

An assessment of our context and times reveals many signs for the future that are not clear, and some that are evident are not encouraging. One needs only to read the daily paper to know that. Other indications we need to glean from the experiences from the work itself over the past 20 years. A first necessary step is a meeting for our board and staff with a consultant to help distill what is important from our past in order to plot a course for the future.

Hospitality, church work, social services, , environmental care, ecumenical and international exchange—our foundation on which we expect to build our future.

Saluti da Casa Cares,  
Antoinette e Paul Krieg

The Waldensian experience, "the mother of the Reformation", began in the twelfth century and is the foundation of Churches today in Italy, Uruguay, and Argentina. Waldensian and Methodist churches in Italy were federated in 1979, meeting in an annual synod whose decisions are entrusted to an elected executive board of 7 members. Internationally the Waldensian Church is close to the Presbyterian. In Italy there are 25,000 Waldensians and 5,000 Methodists in a

population of about 58 million. Biblical faith, political conscience, and public responsibility embrace one another in discipleship.

## Some news at this point !

### Guests 2005

The total guest overnights in the past year was close to the average over past decade. This is very acceptable considering that many Italian guest facilities have experienced discouraging declines. We again had our satisfying mix of returning groups and individuals and new guests. The challenge will always be getting our information to those persons who might appreciate our particular offer of welcome, accommodations, setting, menu. Personal acquaintance and word of mouth are our most valuable promotional tools, much more useful than the various internet offers that we have tried.

The members of the 52 groups who used Casa Cares in the previous year accounted for about 87% of the total overnights. The majority was church and school groups. Some of the unique visitors: Zen and yoga seminars, Montessori school, Suzuki music instruction, music training for midwives, creativity workshop, family reunion, motorcyclists, special needs groups, photography course. A sign of the times was the two weekends for youth of the Chinese Protestant Church in Tuscany. Their church in Prato has over 700 active members.

Special thanks to Ed Peduzzi, a faithful friend from the time of Casa Cares Children's Home, who again accompanied USA groups for a week in Tuscany. Many groups are very independent, but we get quite involved with the planning for Ed's groups and some others. We are available to help as much as possible. Most enjoy a tour of our 17th-century farm villa and some want very much to know more about the Waldensians and church in Italy. Many need assistance with outings.

Our individual guests often have to adapt to the rhythm of our groups, but they seem to do fine, and many make use of the unforeseeable contacts. One very stimulating and gratifying visit was that of the three Frenchmen—Jewish Yohan, Muslim Mahdi and Christian Richard—on a pilgrimage for peace on foot from Jerusalem to Santiago de Compostela, Portugal.

### Activities

Our summer children's and youth camps have been full for the past few years. The usual autumn four-week stay of children from a Belarus state institution was postponed until February/March, 2006. We hosted two month-long work camps of 12 volunteers from a center close to Berlin for disadvantaged youth. Their contribution left us with many improvements on the land and in building maintenance. With friends in the area we continue to offer monthly evening meetings. During this edition we have taken a look at what the future might hold.

### Staff

We enjoyed stability in our staff with no changes in 2005. Iris is still running the kitchen where Luca substitutes her when necessary. Otherwise he devotes himself to the garden, which was exceptionally productive this year. Giuseppe continues to broaden his skills in the care of our high-maintenance buildings. Adriana has the house management under control. Antoinette continues to fit in anywhere, everywhere, all the time. Paul tries to keep the books balanced and the wood cut.

The volunteer situation was typical with a group taking us through the first months of the year, a shorter-term group bridging over the summer, and a new force in the autumn. All four of the autumn volunteers—Joris and Anne (Germany), Andrina (Switzerland) and Adam (USA)—have agreed to stay on to take us into the new season.

Short notes on In 2005 we had record production of honey (over 400 kilo) and olive oil (700 liters).

- Monthly up-dates (approximately!) are available under "What's new" on our website. Also periodically there are new photos.
- After three years of trying, it seems that the door is definitely closed to public funding through the Region of Tuscany for renovations of the former chapel/olive press area.



- We have begun the expensive three-year process of bringing the villa up to new fire code regulations.

- Our new season begins with the traditional Waldensian celebration. On Saturday afternoon Pastor Gianna Sciclone of the Waldensian Church in Florence and Candidate Pastor Peter Ciaccio of the Waldensian Church in Forano will speak on the future of the church. A buffet and bonfire follow the conference.

- 0 -

We close with the description of a wooden key chain made by a friend according to our design and available to guests.

## Casa Cares - interconnectedness, interdependence

A logo to represent the hope of Casa Cares is found in the simple design of three Tuscan woods braided together. On the one hand, as a center of the Waldensian Church we are interested in dialogue among persons of diverse heritage and perspectives. Only through contact and exchange can we frilly come to appreciate diversity as a gift and not only as a challenge. Dialogue between church and society; among Jews, Christians, and Muslims as well as other religions; among Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Protestants.

The Waldensians also are known for their work for peace and justice. At Casa Cares we think that we can help promote in our churches, among our guests, and in our local community the realization that without a concern for the integrity of creation (environmental issues) there can be no true peace and justice in our society.

In this simple piece of woodwork interrelate:

- the delicate, light wood of the cypress, an evergreen line of beauty that graces our horizons and that has been used for constructing our doors and windows;
- the spectacularly grained wood of the olive tree, a tree blessing us with its fruit and oil, growing slowly for decades and even centuries;
- and the wood, often dark in tone, of the chestnut, a basic for charcoal and whose beams support magnificent homes;

the fruit sustains wild and domesticated animals and has often also sustained humans.



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## An environment-friendly Christian guesthouse

January 2007

Dear Friends

Casa Cares—who knows the origin of this name? Perhaps someone reading this letter can be more precise, but we have always understood that in the difficult days of the birth of the Casa Cares Children's Home in 1962 someone suggested an imaginative way to reflect both the Italian and foreign roots of the home. The children came from various parts of Italy, but the financial support came not only from Italy but also from various countries where the English word "cares" would mean something: in particular, England, Switzerland, and the United States. Five Italian words were found to form a meaningful monogram—Comitato Assistenza Ragazzi e Studenti. (The English translation of this phrase would be Committee for the Assistance of Children and Students.) A creative result to naming the home, but honestly one that also can be a bit unsettling. Any place calling itself a "house of care" assumes an exacting responsibility. There is a big risk of presumption.

This same risk can be found in today's work as "an environment-friendly Christian guesthouse". Each of these three aspects of our identity implies expectations and responsibilities to us and to others. What are we doing for the environment? Does being Christian make a difference in our work? Do our guests feel properly welcomed and cared for?

These questions form the framework for our newsletter 2007.

## Environment-friendly

We sit in an area that produces good wine and prestigious olive oil, among other fruits of the land, both domestic and wild. The physical setting is appealing to visitors from around the globe. It is logical that we are concerned with the natural world. The European churches emphasize the interdependence of peace, justice, and the integrity of creation. In the Waldensian church, already well known for its commitment to issues of peace and justice, Casa Cares seems to lend itself particularly well to a concern for this third dimension of environmental care.

Just how friendly are we toward the environment? This question takes us down the road of humility. Over the years many kind and capable persons have made suggestions and offered to help. Our pace has been slow and deliberate. We think immediately of a lack of funds, but probably the slow pace results also from a lack of vision and courage. The timing did not seem right for certain interventions that would improve our relationship with the land, water, and air around us. They demanded considerable financial and labor commitments. Also the availability in Italy of appropriate technical solutions was limited, for example, in the area of alternative production of heat and electricity. The only major investment was for the plant water filtration system, which now is functioning well to assure the cleaning of our water before returning it to the countryside.

Our efforts have been directed more at the everyday issues of recycling, energy saving, alternative cleaning and maintenance agents, developing the library, the meals we serve, offering information to guests, promoting relevant meetings, and care of the land. Sometimes the commercial dictates of our work require compromise. After all, the bills need to be paid. Also, we cannot expect all our guests to be fully committed to the environmental issues that concern us. But we believe that the direction is correct. In the meantime, we hope that funding can be found to progress in larger, more demanding projects; we work closely with the local authorities to improve the public's commitment in our township; and we hope to encourage our guests and church members in their interest and involvement in protecting our environment for future generations.

## Christian

Christians are convinced that it is important to be bold in sharing their faith in both word and action, but just a little step outside our reality and some sensitivity teach us that miscalculated boldness can distance many from our message. Good intentions are not enough, and imposition risks an opposite effect from what is desired.

"Cares" can one ever care enough? Certainly we cannot assume that we care more than others for guests, nor that we do a better job of serving them. Our identity as a Christian organization is useful primarily in giving us a foundation and direction to our work. It tells our users that we are available to them, whether or not they are church members, to speak about faith issues.

We Waldensians ourselves acknowledge that we are weak in evangelising, but knowing the church's history of persecution, one can understand why the Waldensians hesitate to push themselves

upon others. This is a shortcoming but also a point which attracts many because the Waldensians are known for respect for others' beliefs and have become very capable in dialogue.

## Guesthouse

Many professions in one way or another are service professions, some more obviously so than others. Of course the success of the hospitality industry depends upon the satisfaction of the guests served. What are our professional expectations and standards at Casa Cares? Are we doing the job that we could do? That we should do?

The contact and cooperation among Waldensian guest facilities throughout Italy has increased considerably in the past few years, thanks primarily to the coordination of the central office of the church's Synodical Commission of Churchwork. The exchange has raised standards and increased professionalism overall, hopefully without diminishing our family-style hospitality. This is useful in that many of the facility coordinators, like us at Casa Cares, come to their work from other fields. One of the positive outcomes of the cooperation has been a common site

([vvvvvv.foresterievaldesi.org](http://vvvvvv.foresterievaldesi.org)) and a promotional pamphlet. Both include a verse from the Scriptures that beautifully presents the vision for our work, followed by a thoughtful statement of explanation written by one of our theologians, Paolo Ricca.

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. „Hebrews 13, 2.

The words of this passage underline that hospitality is the highest act of worship of which we are capable. "Foresteria", a word used to describe many of our centres, derives from the Latin "fores " which means outside, beyond the walls. The "forestiero " is a person who comes from outside, without family or a home; the person who unexpectedly arrives and does not belong to your people, your race, your culture, your language. He or she is the person who comes to you unexpectedly, a stranger who suddenly shows up. A forestiero is both stranger and a guest. He or she is a stranger destined to become your guest. How does this change take place? How transforms a stranger to a guest? You, the person or persons involved in a foresteria.

We often remember that the Scriptures emphasized a concern for orphans, widows and strangers.

All three points of our identity—environment-friendly, Christian, guesthouse—guide us as we seek to contribute to an inclusive, just, participatory, and sustainable community. Big words. Again, presumptuous? It is simply a path with a direction.

## 2006 Review

- Our total overnights went down compared to recent years. While in line with the situation overall in Italy, of course this is a point of concern. We continue to look especially for ways of reaching groups that can make use of our unique facility to call home and run their programs. We appeal to our friends to help us with such contacts. In 2006 our groups were predominantly church-related from several countries (Italy, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, USA) but there were others such as Tai Chi, Feldenkrais, and schools.
- We hosted, this time for four weeks in February-March, sixteen children, a teacher and an interpreter from a Belarus State children's home. This was the sixth time and as always it was enjoyed by all.
- Our employed staff was stable during the year. Well... we have all been present: Iris in the kitchen, Adriana supervising domestic work, Luca cooking and farming, Peppe with maintenance and Antoinette and Paul in a bit of everything. Several volunteers gave us long-term commitments. We thank Joris, Anne, Friedrich, Johanna and Katrin from Germany, Swiss Andrina, the Canadians Justin and Melina, and, Adam (USA).
- The first steps on the expensive updating of our fire prevention system were taken. For some the regulations in this historic stone and plaster villa seem exaggerated, but we have no intentions to cut corners. Also a small part of the villa roof, the tower and two rooms, was renovated. This will also be a long, expensive project, one complicated by restrictions from the State Office of Cultural Important Properties. Example? The stone bell brace on the clock tower will cost in itself €1000 to restore and secure. Just take it down for security reasons? No way! The bell is from 1757, the brace from 1824. They stay.

- We are thankful also for the help through a volunteer program of retired Germans. Six were here for a number of weeks. Then we had the special input of families of German heritage from the former Soviet Union. A long time friend Eva Matthies coordinated their work for two weeks. These are persons who took advantage of Germany's offer to facilitate the immigration of persons with German heritage. The problem is often that they are accommodated in areas with little employment opportunity. The 21 persons who came for two weeks in August ranged in age from 15 to 65, mostly unemployed or under-employed but highly skilled persons who long to be useful. And with us, they were: building, cleaning, repairing, cooking. Another dynamic senior citizen group came through the Reformed Church in America They returned the former chapel from a catch-all storage area to an attractive space inviting use. These work camps typically bring us no direct income but the contribution is essential to maintain the property and are rewarding in many other ways.
- Our summer camps for children and youth have waiting lists, which push us to think of going from two to three next summer. The young adult staff has faithfully organized this for many years. • The monthly meetings for the local community continued. The 2005-2006 theme was the future; for 2006-2007 it is realities In our local community.

## 2007 Preview

- o Some of the monthly meetings take place in Reggello, some we host here, including the first of 2007 entitled "The religious orders in our township: history and today's mission". There are five Catholic orders in our area, the most evident being that of the Vallombrosa monastery, the home of an order founded in the I I<sup>th</sup> century. That we Waldensians helped organize the meeting and are hosting it is a sign of a desire for understanding and cooperation.
- o International tensions that s
- o Surround the unfortunate country of Belarus might hinder their children coming to us this year. At least their visit is unlikely at the beginning of the year. Antoinette recently had an opportunity to visit the State facilities in Belarus as part a small group of representatives of the association supporting the work of these homes for the disadvantaged. The simplicity of life in this very poor nation hit her, but at the same time she was very favourably impressed with the quality of the care in the homes and the dedication of the their workers.
- o With work camps we would like to make some progress on the renovations of the exchapel/olive press area, which has been hindered by lack of funding. The public funds we had hoped to receive for historical buildings have dried up, so we must make simple steps on our ovv-n. o We usually close in January through mid-February when we open the year with our Waldensian festivities, but this year we are hosting two unusual groups in this period. First, a theologian, bishop, and seven priests from two Greek sister centers (members also in the Ecumenical Association of Academies in Europe) are visiting at our invitation for an ecumenical experience. In their country, as is also the case here in Italy, church leaders often have little opportunity for contact with persons of other denominations. Immediately following this group we shall be hosting over 4() persons from the worldwide ministry of the Reformed Church of Arnerica.
- o For our February Waldensian celebration of the granting of civil liberties in 1848 we have invited our Florence Pastor Gianna Sciclone to speak on "What is the purpose of the Waldensians today?" Gianna was the first ordained woman in our church. First ever in Italy? She will be retiring in summer.
- o Our booking calendar is fairly full from April through mid-July, but some rooms are available then and many rooms are available in other periods. We look forward to the annual reunions with several groups: school choir from Weilburg, Germany, the USA graduate course in Counseling and Guidance, this year coordinated by Old Dominion University, a Montessori School and church family retreat from Austria. We are happy to welcome newcomers like the handicapped group from The Netherlands and a Christian therapists association from Germany and Switzerland.
- o From 17-21 August we invite all former volunteers from the past 20+ years to join us for a reunion of thanksgiving. Contact us if interested.
- o The reunion of Casa Cares Children's Home volunteers (1962-1975), on the other hand, is planned for April 29-May 1 .
- o The staff and our cornmittee (seven persons nominated by the national Tavola Valdese who have the legal responsibility for Casa Cares) are developing an inventory of our efforts for the environment. We hope that this can guide and measure our effort throughout the year.

- o We count on being able to add a monthly note in English to our website. Please let us know if anyone is willing to regularly translate these brief updates into Italian or German.

We thank our friends for accompanying us,  
Saluti da Casa Cares,

Antoinette e Paul Krieg



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January 2008

Dear Friends

Vantage points. In our last newsletter we presented our three points of identity under the heading of environment-friendly Christian guesthouse. These are three of the Casa Cares world view vantage points. A vantage point is certainly a situation or position of unique opportunity, but it also has its limits in being just one point. In this note we want to share what we see (the world) around us with our old friends and with others who are thinking using Oil & Siliv.

## GUESTHOUSE

The evolution of the Villa I Gralli to its use today as guesthouse covers three phases over 40 years. After centuries as the center of a fairly large farm, with the demise of sharecropping the workforce disappeared to factories and, like many other properties, the Fattoria I Gram was parcelled off and sold. In the early 1970s, Casa Cares Children's Home, having lost its rental space in the city, purchased the villa and surrounding land with the help of its circle of friends. In the ensuing years, that use of the villa came to an end because of major changes in policies regarding child care in Italy. After several years of limited activity, the Waldensian Church accepted the donation of the villa in 1983, although not without some difficulties.

Our friends know this story, perhaps all too well. But it is this story which has conditioned the work as a guesthouse over the last 20+ years. First of all, the purpose of the house is one of serving the church, which, given the open, inclusive nature of the Waldensian Church, means serving the broader society as well as the church's own members. The license through the township of Reggello under which Casa Cares operates is that for a Casa Perfoie, a "home for vacations", a typically Italian category designed for the Catholic church to facilitate the use of many of its properties, certainly including former convents and the like. This in theory means that Casa Cares is not on the open market, or at least that it is not meant to be in direct competition to the local hotel activity. Obviously, income to exist, but on a non-profit basis.

The fact that the Waldensian Church, with all its social service commitments, owns and operates the facility (here a real estate) fills its upkeep and development, and this was a reason for the doubts at the time of the investment. In any case, we have allowed it to guests, "It's like having a Ferrari without the money for the gas!" But with a patchwork combination of guest income, donations from friends, and the contributions of many, many volunteers the place has functioned and even minimally developed.

Part of our success has been the development of a facility that has served as a meeting point for people various backgrounds. Many find that the appealing atmosphere of our facilities is a good meeting

space, family-style hospitality, special history, rural setting in Tuscany, interest in mental care, access to spiritual resources offset the silliness of the accommodation. Today it sets (half and more travel) value these somewhat intangible elements along with the opportunity for rest and/or stimulation.

Although 2007 was another year in which we did not reach the maximum of total overnights experienced at the end of the 1990s, we are satisfied with the number of guests during the year. Church groups—various shades of Protestantism but also Catholic and Orthodox—remain the primary users. We find ourselves particularly appealing to groups wanting a space and atmosphere to call home and to run their programs. And the statistics on overnight visitors do not include day guests for programs such as the summer evening theatre, the Waldensian festivities commemorating the granting of civil liberties, day celebrations such as for weddings and birthdays, and the local monthly meetings we help organize. These are all to some degree community services rather than business propositions.

The cooperation of the various Waldensian guesthouses ([www.christianguesthouses.it](http://www.christianguesthouses.it)) continues to grow despite our diversity (setting, clientele, size, accommodations, focus).

Competition is keen in Italy and costs high, and places like ours lack the financing and business sophistication for resources such as publicity and many guest services. Our houses probably would do best to understand the market while searching for that niche of users, who particularly appreciate what we uniquely have to offer.

At Casa Cares our priority is offering a facility for training and personal development. Our sister centers in Rome, Venice, and Florence are capable of generating income to share with our church's social service centers, but this is unlikely for us, considering our limited season and the special expenditures we have with the historic buildings and the care of the land. Here are a few more observations from our vantage point:

o 'Agriturismo' was the stimulus around the development of rural hospitality, but technically a 10% guest category, which is less realistic. But the agriturismo movement opened the door to a stay on (for many urban dwellers who would otherwise not have access to such facilities). The business has boomed to a saturation point at which many of the facilities are in crisis. o Tuscany remains very popular to the point of extreme overcrowding during peak times, with the result that the best time to visit the most famous sites like Florence and Siena could be from November through February.

o Casa Cares, given the reduced request in the winter and the high heating costs, might do well to work more seasonally. Right now we traditionally close only from January through 15 February.

## OUR CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The Christian identity was at the base of the children's home and the donation to the Waldensians and is the base today. Our vantage point is that of a minority group in a seemingly homogeneous culture. Actually religion in Italy is much more diverse than is often assumed, and the diversity is increasing. Immigrations from two cultures dominated by other religious expressions have grown greatly in the past 10-20 years. First arrived workers from Muslim countries, mostly North Africa, and more recently came those with their Christian Orthodox heritage from Central and Eastern Europe, mostly Romania, forcing the Italians to come to grips with issues of immigration including co-existence with other faiths and cultures. Italian residents from these two groups now number over one million, far more than the number of the Waldensian-Methodists (30,000) and, in fact, of all Protestants together, who number perhaps 400,000. The Waldensians have naturally taken up the cause of the new minorities and their integration, and it is no surprise when one learns that the highly Minister of Social Solidarity in the recent national government was a Waldensian.

Our Christian identity forms the basis for our networking, be it with the other Waldensian guesthouses or in a national working group on globalization and the environment or in our association with church meeting centers around Europe ([www.oikosnet-europe.eu](http://www.oikosnet-europe.eu)).

Sometimes the IValdensians are criticized for being too open, too liberal, but these characteristics give a direction to our work. IVc arc a church setting but one in which people on the fringe. of church or entirely outside can have a contact with the. church. This coordinates well with the Oikosnet-Europe association's vision of working for an inclusive, participatory, just and sustainable society. I Ve regret at times that we cannot meet the request of those looking for a more "churchy" setting. For example, we live with the tension of such simple issues as the organization of regular meditations or before meal prayer or dedicating a space exclusively to worship. Our church is not one for easy answers, but rather one with an emphasis on the individual's struggle with the problems of the world in which we live and his or her search for responses.

Another observato Our national church and we locally have Inany friends and colleagues in the Catholic church.

Bul like tnillions of others, including nmany of those friends and colleagues, we consider the Vatican's cipation in Italian political lift' excessive and often detrimental. ' I 'his invasiveness scorns to l)? growing rather than diminishing. We only hope that Casa Cares in this atmosphere can be a place or mcccLing and dialogue cotnl)at misunderstanding and resentment. Ideally we could be of benefit in some way to all who call this country home.

## ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY

Our Christian base is also our vantage point for our commitment to the environment, what we would call promoting the integrity of creation. Although this promotion is late in coming in many churches, fortunately there has l)cen much written that combines a faith perspective and environmental care and there are always more examples of faith communities putting that care into practice.

In the quiet and beauty of the Tuscan hills 'we cannot escape from the challenges which the degradation of the natural environment has brought to the surface. the contrary, our rural setting makes us sensitive to such issues as care for the land and food production. Just the attempt to appreciate and maintain our local setting is a practice in conservation.

Participation in GliilN, 111? Glol)al Ecovillage Network, has helped us keel) informmcc) about communities around the world, some based on a religious Paith, dedicated to environmental issues. Generally these arc groups svith a strong comllitnwnt 10 a simple, environmentally-responsible lifös(ylc. "I •his vision unites conununities fron) around the glol)C, which serve as laboratories for alternative living. (often there is considerable (loctuncntalion C)fa unique ex)erience and much eflört dedicated to harrnonious li[ö together.

In Europe we have the active organization of ECEN, European Christian Environmental Network. As an organ of the European Council of Churches the meml)ers come from the (Orthodox and Protestant churches but the contact with Catholics is frequent and productive. Despite the limited South Europe participation, this year's ECEN assembl)ly will be held near Milano.

The ECEN coordinating team asked the GLAM Commission ((;lobalizzazione e Ambiente) of the Federation of Protestant Cl)urch in Italy to host the assembl)ly. The Commission, of which Paul is a member, has a on its hands with potentially Inorc than 15() participants at the assenll)ly, l)llt has acct)ted the challenge. The Conunissi011's regular activities include publication or material relevant to glol)alization and the environment, which is l)neant to serve as stimulus and guide for action at the local level of our churches and centers as well as for individuals. (l)bservations Il-onl this vantage point:

o Italy has tremendous challenges in the field of environnwntal care. itnag•es that are

that the government is playing a long overdue gainc orcatch-up in the field of allernative energy despite the abundance of sun and the lack of nuclear poxver plants.

o Casa ( la re.s (0 on (l IO verge 01 a Inajor step li)rxvarcl, I l l is lhank•s (o public liliancing, in (he field al(erllalive energy (he installation of a fi)lovoltaic sy.sl('lll ( lle production of electrical energy. of this project is a slow process, in parl because we have to take the local authorities through a process with which they have no experience.



0 Despite living in the countryside, it is difficult to find, outside of from our own garden, local products to put on the table. A fascinating challenge, growing in promotion and already functioning in at least one German church meeting center, is that of using maximally only the food produced within a 100 mile radius.

- Regarding food production, our own honey and olive oil registered drastic differences in 2007. Honey production collapsed completely after a record 400 kilogram harvest the previous year; olive oil increased almost fourfold. The explanation is a bit more complicated than "climate change", but this seems to be the fundamental reason. Here space is limited, but we certainly are open to elaborating further the issues with friends who might be interested.

## OTHER NOTES

Two very important persons in the history of Casa Cares passed away in 2007. Gioele Mongiovetto and Ugo Gastaldi, both in their nineties, were important contributors to the founding of Casa Cares Children's Home in 1962 and followed our evolution through the decades. Gioele lived at Casa Cares for years, caring for the property and helping to bridge the transition after the closing of the child care services until the development of the Waldensian meeting center. Many of our neighbors in Reggello remember Ugo helped (in)formulate the spiritual foundation of Casa Cares. I will also remember his scholarly work including his two (critical) volumes in Italy on the history of the Waldensians.

Our employee team remains the same with one exception. Antoinette in 2008 is entering partial retirement. That is a rather strange state that remains to be defined precisely. Otherwise carry on Giuseppe in maintenance, Adriana in the governance of the villa, and Iris and Luca in the kitchen, with Luca also overseeing the work on the land. All of these co-workers readily acknowledge the essential contribution of our 3-5 volunteers living here for periods varying from a few to many months and our volunteer work camps, such as that of our "Soviet" German friends coordinated by Eva Matthies from Bad Kissingen.

For those who understand English and are interested in regular updates, we have continued to enter monthly notes under the "What's new" heading on our site. Of course all of our communications are challenged to be balanced to speak to our friends as well as to those who are just being introduced to us. May be this year we can move that note into Italian, a move that would be helped by someone offering to do the translation.

We look forward with enthusiasm to the work of 2008. It will again be a combination of new friends and reunions with group leaders and individuals who return again and again.

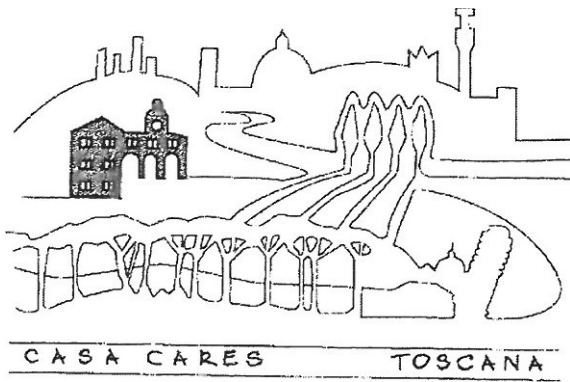
Saluti r la Casa Cares, Antoinette c Paul Krieg

## € 1 for dialogue

Casa Cares is an active member of Oikosnet Europe (Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe), an association of 66 centres and church organizations in 18 countries. To support its work in dialogue in our European society always more multi-cultural, from 1 January 2008 Casa Cares will request a voluntary donation of € 1 from each guest.

The Waldensian experience, "the mother of the Reformation", began in the twelfth century and is the foundation of churches today in Italy, Uruguay, and Argentina. Waldensian and Methodist churches in Italy were integrated in 1979, meeting in an annual synod whose decisions are entrusted to an elected executive board of 7 members. Internationally the Waldensian Church is close to denominations in the Reformed tradition, such as the Presbyterian. In Italy there are 25,000 Waldensians and 5000 Methodists in a population of about 58 million. Biblical faith, political conscience, and public responsibility embrace one another in discipleship.





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**"The time to act is now:  
Environment and justice from the prospective of faith and science"**

January 2009

Cari Amici

The words above form the title for a series of programs proposed in Rome during 2008-2009. The meetings, organized by peace organizations and Catholic-based communities, involve speakers from faith communities and from various fields of science. Two Waldensians are included, Elena Ribet and one of our best known theologians, Paolo Ricca.

A call for action has to do with change, a word often associated in these months with climate. Debate is considerable and often heated about the why, the what and the what to do. Climate change clearly has its consequences, often negative, sometimes subtly in our wealthy societies but often dramatically as in the polar regions and on islands.

Recently now "climate change" in the economical sense has been evident. The wealthier part of the world, in this case, has felt the consequences. Again much energy is dedicated to the why, the what and the what to do. Whatever the answers to those questions might be, whether in reference to the physical climate or to a socio-economic climate, change is in the air and, as the title says, "The time to act is now." Whether we like it or not, whether we are hurt and concerned or somehow benefit, things are changing and we are challenged to respond.

We at Casa Cares like most others have some thoughts about the situation but no easy answers. We consider the horizon and try to determine a good way to react and to go forward.

The question of change is a "red thread" going through our newsletter.

**OUR WORK OF HOSPITALITY** - The overnights in almost all our Waldensian guest facilities from the Waldensian Valleys down to Sicily declined in 2008. At Casa Cares our decline was considerable. A national analysis notes that tourism in Italy was not down overall, but it was concentrated in the most popular cities: Rome, Venice and Florence. In regards to pure tourism, this is problematic for those of our facilities distant from these magnets. The Casa Cares' situation is somewhat particular, not within walking distance but with reasonable accessibility to these points of interest.

Perhaps another dimension to which we might be sensitive is the evolution of tourism, somewhat like fast food, which gives a taste and a quick sense of full but maybe with less attention to digestion and nourishment. Our facilities tend to be ones in which to settle in, to feel at home, to build a base. In fact, at Casa Cares our biggest success comes from group leaders who return again and again to run their programs, whether church related or having to

do with art, music or study. Our promotional challenge, in fact, is to identify and communicate with people who organize such groups and would most appreciate what we have to offer.

One step we have taken in that direction is our presentation in a national educational publication with the hope to serve school groups. Some guest facilities would shudder at that thought, but from our experience we think we can handle the youth and even enjoy them. In fact, Casa Cares is ideal for youth groups because it lends itself to education, with meeting space, access to nature, and organic farming in a beautiful Tuscan setting. We have a considerable amount of informational material including our library with its concentrations on Tuscany, theology and religion, the environment and olive oil. Also, we have easy access to the sights of Tuscany and immediately to the Vallombrosa monastery, surrounded by what is considered by many the most beautiful forest of Italy. Plus, who else can offer from the front door a 4 kilometer walk past a 12<sup>th</sup> century Romanesque church and a farm with active an olive press and 30000 olive trees?

In 2008 we again hosted work camps. These produce little or no income but are essential to the maintenance of the property, especially the farm land. We expect to have some again in 2009.

NEWS - As usual, we were carried through the year by our young volunteers. We do not have many offers from persons able to come for at least three months, our preference, but the offers we do have are typically good ones. We thank them all and in particular Adam Schadler who is leaving us after more than three years and after hours of woodworking projects, dish washing and grass cutting.

Thanks also to Adriana for her contribution. She left us in June after four years in the key position of practical organization of hospitality. Due to the complexity of the competencies required, we were unable to fill that gap during the remainder of the year. With reduced work, we managed, but the position is essential and for the coming season we think we have found an excellent substitute in the person of Elisa Rubboli, an old friend of the center but young enough to have the energy and enthusiasm necessary for the job.

Antoinette's shift to partial retirement was hampered and challenged by our inability to replace Adriana, but we shall work on it again in the months to come.

Big news, with a sense of relief, is the conclusion this winter of the four-year project of upgrading our fire alarm system. Our work's income along with donations and the crucial contribution of our volunteers permit us to cover operational costs, but this up-grade at the cost of 120000 Euro was possible only through the contribution of the national church from the "eight per thousand" funds, tax monies that can be designated by any citizen for social and cultural projects of the Waldensians. It has been a long process due to the fact certain jobs such as this can only be done without guests in the villa.

ENVIRONMENT - The other huge investment, approximately also 120000 Euro, fortunately is being funded by a government loan. "Fortunately" refers to the funds themselves but first of all as a sign that Italy is finally making a move to renewable energy. The project, planned to be complete in the first months of 2009, is that of solar panels for the production of energy to be sold into the national grid. With a guarantee of purchase of the energy we produce, the loan should be paid back in about 12 years, half the period of the system's expected useful life. It is a logical choice for Italy and for us. The structure fits nicely into an angle of our property which seems to have been made for such a system. We are thankful for the national church's encouragement for this project.

Another investment was made possible through carbon compensation funds collected at the international conference, which our national federation of Protestant churches organized

outside of Milan in September. The European Christian Environment Network (ECEN) meets approximately every 18 months and, like other environment-sensitive church organizations, asks meeting participants traveling by plane to contribute an amount calculated through a formula found on one of various websites. Almost Euro 500 was earmarked for us, making it possible to plant new olive trees for the first time in many years.

Luca, who has been with us for five years, is reducing to 20 hours weekly, totally dedicated to the land, primarily the organic vegetable garden and the olive trees. We shall miss him as our second cook but very much appreciate his continuing work outdoors. The farm, like the work camps, is a cost but our commitment is firm. Luca's competencies go beyond the hoe as proven this past autumn when he organized for the local community seven well-attended meetings on environmental issues. Presentations and discussions revolved around, for example, agricultural industry, organic farming, downshifting of life style, and the showing of *Biutiful Cauntri*, a film about toxic waste in Italy.

Since this past year we are on the national listing of Legambiente, the major environmental organization in Italy, as a guest center dedicated to environmental care. It is not easy and we do not pretend to do it all, but we appreciate the guidelines and the recognition.

THE NEW YEAR - The year 2009 promises to be another fascinating year of life, probably with big challenges for all. We wish our Lord's blessings on those who have been suffering and are likely to suffer the most from the changes of this time, blessings of patience, of perseverance and certainly of leaders capable of vision and positive action.

Un caloroso saluto da Casa Cares,

Antoinette e Paul Krieg

We want to share with our friends two documents. One presents guidelines to be followed to receive the Ecolabel from Legambiente Turismo. The other sheet introduces our visitors to the many opportunities for visits using Casa Cares as the home base. The first lists many things which are simple enough, but can be challenges in a meeting center/guesthouse. Reading the second, one appreciates our location.

Like for the newsletter itself, we welcome reactions and suggestions. Grazie.



LEGAMBIENTE  
TURISMO

## I-WASTE

1. Separate waste locally (glass, paper-cardboard, plastic, aluminum, metal, food); support the local recycling service
2. Make available to guests containers for recycling in points visible and accessible
3. Make available to guests containers for used batteries
4. Progressively abolish individual food packaging
5. Progressively abolish individual hygiene products
6. Utilize ecological office paper and toilette paper
7. Encourage the use of local water at the table

8. Offer water in glass bottles at the table
9. Prefer detergent concentrates and refillables

## 2-WATER

10. Sensitize guests and coworkers to water conservation
11. Install in at least 90% of showers and wash basins water saving technology
12. Substitute conventional detergents with natural products
13. Water gardens in the evenings or nights

## 3-ENERGY

14. Install at least two energy saving light bulbs in every room
15. Install in at least 70% of the common areas technology for energy saving
16. Recycle paper to use for internal notes and photocopies

## 4-FOOD

17. Create a corner with organic products for breakfast with useful information
18. Utilize fair trade products
19. Avoid food products with OGM ingredients

## 5-MEALS

20. Offer daily traditional meals using local production and inform the guests
21. Offer daily in the breakfast buffet articles made on site
22. Promote local products indicating their origin

## 6-TRANSPORT

23. Promote public transport with information on services and timetables

## 7-MOVEMENT

24. Make available information about cycle and hiking paths
25. Provide a small area for bike parking and repairs
26. Respect local usage of quiet times

## 9-CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS

27. Promote local cultural and environmental events with informational material
28. Promote the local cultural and environmental heritage with informational material
29. Guaranty the availability of publications and scientific studies through the provision of a reading corner

## 10-GUESTS AND COMUNICATION

30. Offer and distribute informational material such as provided by Legambiente Turismo and local organizations
31. Distribute the informative brochure and the suggestion card
32. Produce and distribute informative material regarding sustainable tourism

*Day* th-Z12A C" 4 a Cah. ea

## Cities:

<b>Florence</b>	Art - Uffizi Gallery (reservation recommended), Pitti Gallery, the Academy, National Museum of Sculpture (Bar ello), Medici Cha els
Car: 1 hour	History - Palazzo Vecchio, Pitti Palace, gargello, Ponte Vecchio
Bus + train: 1 hour	Church - Cathedral, Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce, Santo Spirito, San Lorenzo, San Marco, San Miniato al Monte, Santa Maria del Carmine
<b>Siena</b>	Siena's defeat at the hands of the Florentines, some say, was its good luck in preserving the late medieval city. Its life is dominated by the Palio (July 2, August 16), production of

Car: less than 2 hours; Bus-train-bus: 3 hours circa	its sweets (including the fruit-nut bread panforte), and its bank, the Monte dei Paschi di Siena founded in 1472. The cathedral, municipal palace, and Piazza del Campo are top sites. Saint Catherine was from Siena.
<b>San Gimignano</b>	San Gimignano is known for the medieval tower houses that are still standing today. A visit can be combined with one to Siena or Volterra.
1 hours by bus or car	

<b>Volterra</b>	In Volterra one can see signs of its Etruscan heritage as well as its importance in medieval times. This is a center for working alabaster.
2 hours b car or bus	
<b>Pisa</b>	Pisa contended with Florence, Siena and other Tuscan city-states for the dominance of the region. Once an important seaport, it welcomes millions of visitors yearly to its Piazza dei Miracoli with cathedral, bell tower, baptistry and cemetery. Can be combined well with a visit to Lucca.
2 hours by car or bus Bus-train: 2 hours	
<b>Lucca</b>	Less known than its neighbor Pisa (20 km), many visitors prefer this walled town for its uniqueness and atmosphere. A bike ride on the city wall is enjoyed by many.
2 hours by car or bus Bus-train 2 hours	
<b>Assisi</b>	Probably no other small town in the world has had so much devotion and investment. The basilica and the setting are spectacular. On-the-way attractions are the Lago di Trasimeno, Perugia, ceramic center Deruta and the hill town of Cortona
2 hours b car or bus	
<b>Bologna</b>	This beautiful university town with 40 km of covered sidewalks is tourist-neglected. It is located below the north edge of the Apennines about an hour by train from Florence.
2 hours by car Less then 3 bus-train	
<b>Roma</b>	Everyone knows of Rome with its layers of rich history.
4 hours by car or bus 3 hours b car-train	

## Church sites:

<b>Monasteries</b>	Benedictine monastery of Vallombrosa at 1000 meters altitude is 9 km up the hill. It is surrounded by one of the most beautiful forests of Ital
Vallombrosa - 9 km 2 hours Carnaldoli, La Verna	Saint Francis spent much time in La Verna.
	Man take the walk from the hermitage to the monastery of Camaldoli.
	South of Siena: Monte Oliveto, Sant'Antimo, San Galano
<b>Local churches</b>	Along the 2000-year-old Roman road on which Casa Cares is located there is a series of Romanesque churches (11th-13th centuries). The closest, Sant'Agata, is at one km. The largest is in Cascia/Reggello, the Pieve of San Pietro. It has the first known masterpiece by Masaccio for which reason there is also a nicely done small museum next door. Very admired is the pieve at Gropina by I-oro Ciuffenna.
5 churches in 20 km	
<b>Movimento Focolarini</b>	There are 900 residents in the international center of this very influential Catholic lay movement. They study for two years while working in a variety of small industries before being sent around the world in service to local parishes.
20 minutes b car	

## Other:

<b>Seaside</b>	Viareggio is the first big resort area north of Pisa/Lucca. Further north yet is Cinque Terre. A bit closer is Tirrenia, south of Pisa, and then there are numerous
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2 hours by car, about 30 minutes by public transport	points south of Livorno. Also the spectacular marble hills of Carrara are on the coast.
<b>Chianti</b>	The wine produced on the Reggello farms is Chianti Colle Fiorentine, but the defined Chianti Classico area is behind the hills across the Arno River Valley. Several small towns are interesting to visit. Many farms offer tastings. Excellent small wine museum and testin cantina in Creve, the best town of the area.
30 minutes by car	
<b>Trekking</b>	Many walks are possible from Casa Cares through the farm fields, but serious hikes are typically done up the hill in the area from 1000-1500 meters altitude. In the valley paths are being developed in the ba/ze, the eroded sedimentary hills of the pre-historical lake preceding the Arno River.
<b>Shopping</b>	The towns have weekly markets. Large ones are Tuesday in Figline and Wednesday in Pontassieve. Saturday market in Reggello is small. About 10 km away is The Mall, a collection of high priced discount fashion shops such as Gucci and Armani. Of course in the cities there are many buying opportunities in the shops and open markets

<b>Farm Museum</b>	Located next to a Romanesque church, the farm culture museum is an exceptional collection of tools and memorabilia documenting the rural life of Tuscany. Gaville is about 20 km from Casa Cares close to the town of Figline.
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<b>Hill towns</b>	The endless list begins with Cortona, Montepulciano, Pienza, Montecatini, Montalcino, Vinci, Certaldo.
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In the long shadow of the situation in Haiti, our difficulties and our needs at Casa Cares seem almost trivial. It is nonetheless the time of year when we write to our friends, so we tend to that task. We pray that those suffering from the earthquake, as well as from the many trials that grip this world, find solace and solutions in 2010.



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Reggello, February 2010

**PROBLEMS** are a part of any activity.

Caro Amici

What a way to head a newsletter! Even if considered somewhat positively as challenges and obstacles to overcome, problems are not to be ignored. For example, two ever-present Casa Cares realities with which we must deal are the maintenance of the buildings and the care of the land. Of course buildings and land are precious possessions, but often they are demanding labour and resource intensive. For the past two years, however, and especially in 2009, our real problem has been financial. The organization's financial shortfall results directly from a drop in overnights.

The drop is something experienced in Italian tourism in general with just a few exceptions, such as in the art cities, which practically suffocate under mass fast-tourism. The global financial crisis

seems to be the obvious explanation, but whatever the cause, the problem cannot be ignored. We have to do something. But what?

Cost reduction is one route, but not an easy one. Menu? Cleaning? Maintenance? Improvements? Personnel? We are reluctant to cut, but a chance development has been the diminution of staff hours with the Antoinette's retirement and the reduction, at Luca's own request, to part time farmer. Those who know us well understand what such cuts mean.

Finding new guests is a more logical solution. To start, we plan to work on our website. Also we are doing a promotion among schools, because we think our setting is particularly attractive to youth and conducive to learning and creativity. For this segment of the market we have prepared an introductory sheet, which is available upon request.

Perhaps a positive note can be found in a possible return to travel among persons who understandably were scared by the recent financial crisis. Although many persons have suffered terribly, others might realize now that their lives go on and so can their activities.

We think that fortunately things are going in the right direction and as we thought about the problems other words that start with "P" came to mind, which are cause for encouragement:

- o The PERSONS involved in Casa Cares are many and their network is strong. These range from those who return regularly to the volunteers who continue to donate their time and energy.
- o The PAST experience of the past 27 years, although resting on one's laurels is dangerous. convinces us of the value of the work and the need for it to continue.
- o The PATRIMONY is tremendous: the buildings, the land, and the material and experience accumulated.
- o The Protestant PRESENCE in our community is well established and appreciated.
- o The POTENTIAL of the property and for service is impressive and far from met.

#### SOME NEWS

We are glad that many of our regular groups returned in 2009. When group leaders come back, the integration into the life and rhythms of Casa Cares becomes easier. Also, with all the options available, it is encouraging to know persons want to return to us. These become enjoyable reunions. One school choir has come annually for over 20 years!

An improvement in our staff situation occurred at the start of 2009 when Elisa Rubboli became house manager, a position that had been vacant for months. This was particularly important to facilitate Antoinette's retirement. Now Antoinette, when she sees the need, can provide that extra touch which she does so well. Our volunteer situation was the typical patchwork but again an essential supporting column. In 2010 we seem to be set for the first half of the year but need to find replacements from summer through the end of the year.

Because Luca has been freed of his kitchen responsibilities. he was able to devote himself more to the vegetable garden. It has never been so productive, even now in the winter months with various cabbage, chicory. leek and rucola. Again we had a very good production of olive oil, over 600 liters, almost all of which we sell to guests and friends.

Our photovoltaic solar panels have been producing well since March. This has reduced our electricity costs. especially as we benefit from public financial incentives. A sidelight has been the interest that has been stimulated locally. We of course live in an area where a big discussion is the insertion of panels in the protected landscape. It will be interesting to see what develops in this regard.

We were honoured by Legambiente, a national organization, for our commitment to environmental issues. We are trying to get the public administration and other guest facilities in the area involved in the process of the "greening" of more centres and thus of our township.

In 2010 in cooperation with friends we shall again be offering our summer youth camp but also summer courses in English for children and Italian for adults. To make these work we need to have early, sufficient enrolment, but we think it is worth a try. Information is below.

For our February Waldensian festivities, which inaugurate our season, we asked three of our Tuscan pastors (two Waldensians, a man and a woman. and a Baptist) to speak about their choice of

vocation and about their particular satisfactions and concerns. Pastors can be good at talking, but rarely get to talk about themselves. It was an interesting and appreciated program.

Thanks for continuing to follow Casa Cares.

Tanti saluti, Antoinette and Paul Krieg

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July 2-11 — summer camp for youth 13-17 years old (in Italian)

July 1 1-29 — beginners and intermediate Italian — 15 course days

August 5-21 - beginners and intermediate Italian — 13 course days

Conducted by Angelo Martone, instructor of Italian in Valencia, Spain

27 June - 24 July four weekly (Sunday-Saturday) English language camps for children 8-12 years

Conducted by Rosalba Calo

For any of these camps, contact us at [info@dieasacares.it](mailto:info@dieasacares.it) or by phoning Italy-055-8652001.

## The Chapel

### Time to care for the chapel

Many persons, individuals and groups, have donated generously to our work over the years. Without that support we would not be where we are today. Their help in particular enabled us to reach out to individuals and groups who otherwise could not have stayed here. to run local programs. to increase our commitment to environmental issues, and to improve our accommodations.

Casa Cares. like the other Waldensian guesthouses. each in its particular way, strives to be of service to the church, to our guests. and to the local community. The persons involved are primary. but the tool we have, the property, is essential to our work. Many improvements in the facility have been made over the years: renovations in the villa, development of the building above for staff quarters, care of the land, and now the photovoltaic system producing electrical energy. For years we have dreamed of restoring the chapel, an area that would be very attractive and useful for guests. On the back of this sheet we provide a history of the chapel area.

We first applied over ten years ago for public money for the restoration of the building below the villa, which one time served as chapel and olive mill. Although we are confident that the plans for the project are sound. we were unsuccessful in applications for European funding and then twice in for funding from the Italian State through the Region of Tuscany.

Now we have asked our national church to make a contribution and we are turning to the friends of Casa Cares. We do not expect to make the huge step forward of renovating the entire building and the adjacent cellars as it ideally would be done. Those projects also are also prepared and waiting, but right now we simply want to move forward and bring the former chapel area to a point that it can be used by our guests for worship and meditation and for music and other artistic expression.

We appeal to those who use Casa Cares and to those who are interested in our work. We ask for donations in whichever form and for whatever amount is possible. This might be a monthly commitment of Euro 10 or a group fund-raising project or a single donation. Or?

We consider this renovation a three step process. The first, the technical preparation. is already done. The second, this year, is one of gathering the first contributions and taking the first steps. In 2011 we would hope to bring the project to completion. The fundamental intervention will be on the roof and the floor.



The minimum needed to begin work is Euro 40000 (US\$ 60.000). If we are able to raise more, we will be able to achieve a much more extensive renovation and restoration.

Anyone interested in helping with this project can ask us for technical details and for information on making a donation.

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It is interesting to note that Valdo of Lyon and his friends, albeit a few years earlier, were contemporaries of Francis and his followers in a very tumultuous time. Also Dominic, working for the Vatican, and the Cathars and others in rebellion were active at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The chapel, dedicated to Francis in the 1700s, now is in the hands of the Waldensians. They cross paths again!

### A long way back in time

As early as two thousand years ago the Reggello area was an important area for transport and commerce. This is evidenced by the fact that the road passing the Fattoria I Graffi was of great importance to ancient Rome 2000 years ago. Although difficult to pin-point the dates of the farm itself, the name "I Graffi" appears in documents a thousand years old. The oldest part of the villa is believed to be prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The chapel, named the Oratory of the Stigmata of Saint Francis, was dedicated around the year 1780, but research indicates that the space was a theatre for the owners before that dedication. As a chapel it evidently was a link between the local 12<sup>th</sup> century church dedicated to Saint Agatha and an important chapel on the property, adjacent to one of the sharecropping farms in the network of properties belonging to the Fattoria I Graffi and connected to the villa by a processional way.

Certainly the Saint Francis chapel experienced high and low points depending upon the historical moment and the participation of the owners, who spent very little of their time in residence. They were usually present only in the summer to escape the heat of Florence where they had their palace.

The noble Quaratesi family sold the property at the beginning of the twentieth century. The new owners attempted to bring new life to the farm through significant investments including an addition to the chapel bringing a part of the olive mill out from under the chapel, huge under-park cellars, and improvements and decorations in the villa. The war, the depression, and another war certainly were among the factors that stifled their plans. At mid-century the ownership again changed.

The next owners did little more than break up the property for sale at the end of the 1940s as they realized that the age of sharecropping farming had come to an end. At this point Casa Cares entered the picture.

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During the 1950s — Pastor Robert McConnell is called by the Brethren Assemblies to be director of Istituto Comandi, their boys' home in Florence

Beginning of the 1960s — Pastor McConnell, his family and many supporters found independent Casa Cares Children's Home and move into the Villa Favard on the eastern outskirts of the city.

1965-1970 — Casa Cares moves to the Villa Strozzi, west of the center of the city and stays there until the villa is sold and the work must move again. In 1967 Pastor McConnell leaves Casa Cares.

January, 1971 — With loans and donations of friends Casa Cares, after a long search, buys the central part of the Fattoria I Graffi. The timing coincides perfectly with the break-up of the sharecropping system with the abandonment of rural areas and before Tuscany is hit by inflation and land speculation.

1975 — Due to major improvements in the socio-economic situation of Italy, Casa Cares and hundreds of other child care institutions are no longer necessary and close.

1983 — After years of inactivity, the loose-knit circle of friends of Casa Cares who are legally responsible for the property decide to donate the property to the Waldensian Church

1985 — Antoinette and Paul Krieg are called by the Waldensian Church to help develop a meeting center and guesthouse.

# 'The 2011 Casa Cares News

For this issue we decided to relate events and experiences at Casa Cares in short notes. Our friends can choose what interests them, which is as varied as you are yourselves. Some know us well, others perhaps only visited once or not at all: various nationalities are represented: some were guests. some volunteers: some know our church situation, others do not; some have been here recently while for others it is high time for another visit. Saluti da Casa Cares e buona lettura!

**MORE OVERNIGHTS** A guest house without guests is discouraging! We are happy to report that the past year was, instead, encouraging. With over 7000 overnights, we returned to a level of five years ago. Of course no year is just like another but each year includes returnees and new faces: each year guests come from many nations; each year most overnights are members of groups but there are also many singles guests.

**THE RETURNNEES** A sad note 2010 is the probable last visit of the high school choir from Weilburg, Germany. They were here annually for twenty years but, with changes in school programs. Michael Glotzbach informed us that there will be no reunion in 2011. Fortunately a number of his former students have booked privately a springtime return—a tough habit to break! Those who did return in 2010 and are already booked in 2011 include German and Swiss youth and school groups, graduate counseling seminars from Old Dominion University (USA). and the Waldensian child care center in Florence. Then there are the

Waldensian February festivities and our summer youth camp.



## NEW EXPERIENCES

Last year began in an unusual way as we hosted 20 Romanian Rom ("gypsies") for two weeks. They had been put on the street without proper warning when their encampment in Florence was destroyed by the police. We responded to the request of the Waldensian Church in Florence. Our guests and more than 60 other Rom had already slept in our church building for a week. The congregation felt the need to respond in some way to a mid-winter emergency. This gave time to work with local public administrations for a better resolution, albeit temporary. of the problem. Much could be related about this experience. For us it was a very positive and thoughtprovoking experience. Our guests were very appreciative.

Other new points of 2010 included English and violin summer courses for children, a church group from Hungary, a

reunion of Albanians, and students from Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.

**STAFF EXCELS AGAIN** Every year it is the same story! Fortunately it is true and we want to recognize the work of the staff. As usual it was a combination of the core of employees assisted by excellent volunteers. Iris in the kitchen now for 20 years. Beppe so dependable in maintenance and Elisa in her first full year certainly felt the consequences of Antoinette's retirement, but they came through beautifully. Antoinette, living next door, stills gets pulled in frequently but can choose the moments to apply her time and skills.

Our sources of volunteers have altered somewhat in the years, but remain primarily the German churches, previous visitors, and contacts through friends. Workaway was a new source, an organization that connects volunteers to opportunities.

With employment more difficult even in wealthier countries. maybe fewer young people are willing to give up some security for an adventure in volunteering. But we still managed to put the pieces of the

jigsaw together by finding excellent persons whose contribution to our work is essential.

the  
2011  
Casa  
Cares  
News

of public funding for our photovoltaic electric energy production system.

In 2011 we count on finally taking the first steps in renovation of the ex-chapel building below the villa and thank those who have already responded to our appeal for gifts for this project.

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Newsletter  
written by Paul Krieg  
edited by Patty Delony

Income from hospitality just covers operating costs. We depend upon our friends for financial, material and voluntary work donations. We use gifts to  
o host persons in difficulty or with limited means;  
o improve our accommodations;  
o promote local and cultural initiatives.

A list of needs as well as a receipt valid for tax purposes are available.

## Not only a guesthouse

**FROM 1983 TO A MISSION STATEMENT**  
When the Waldensian church accepted the donation of the Graffi property in 1983, there were some questions about what exactly it was, what to do with it, and who was going to do it. So things were bound to develop through experience. The mission statement that crystallized a few years later is valid still today: "Casa Cares is a meeting center and guesthouse focussing on dialogue and on a Christian perspective on environmental care."

### THE CONTEXT

Casa Cares is located in the township of Reggello, a rural setting that has evolved dramatically in the past few decades from a backwater farm community to a combination of tourist attraction and commuter housing.

The center works closely with the local administration to offer programs of interest to the general public.

We are aware of a responsibility as the only Protestant presence evident in the area and are thankful for the welcome we have always enjoyed despite our uniqueness. part of the roof. Fortunately we also were able to avail ourselves DONATIONS

### THE BUILDINGS

Anyone who is close to Casa Cares knows that only a portion of the effort is dedicated to direct work with guests. A great deal of material resources, also time and energy, go to the upkeep of the buildings. This is a worry and a burden, in many ways beyond our means. But there is the fascination, honor and joy of living in and dealing with historic facilities granted to us by past generations.

It never seems to be enough but there has been a tremendous contribution of volunteers, private donations and investment of the national church. Most recently we completed a very expensive upgrade of our fire safety system but past improvements are obvious in the villa, in the adjacent staff quarters, and on a

### THE LAND

What to do with the land has always been a question. In fact, the church leadership said "no" to a tract of olive tree terraces that could have been involved in the donation.

Thanks to Gioele, Emiliano, Luca and now Giordano assisted by many, many volunteers from a variety of countries, the land is still productive today. This is in contrast to many local fields that have been abandoned.

One thinks first of all of the vegetable garden and the olive trees, but the land is more than these. The 12 acres of woods are home to many animals, a source of firewood and wild fruit, and a place for retreat and meditation. They also give us a green "lung" and a buffer against street noise.

# The 2011 Casa Cares News

## farm & Environment

**LUCA TO GIORDANO** Since September 2003 Luca was a fixture for us. A person who could both hoe and explain, he is an exceptional organic gardener. For several years he also served us as our second cook and offered massage to both staff and guests. The use of the past tense unfortunately is necessary because Luca had to leave us this past year due to back problems. After 30+ years of physical labor, especially his 100% investment in all that he does, he had to admit that he could no longer do the job for us. He is looking for alternative employment while caring for a granddaughter and the property and land that he and Cinzia own.

His farewell gift to us was an introduction to Giordano, a rare young, local fellow both knowledgeable and willing to work the land. He is a

volunteer and gives us less time than Luca did. but Giordano, like Luca. is very capable and is another positive presence on our team.

Luca continues to contribute in the township by organizing evenings on environmental issues and managing a buying cooperative that supports local farm production.

### RECORD OLIVE HARVEST

January 2010 marked the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1986 freeze that destroyed 1 8 of 21 million Tuscan olive trees, including all 600 of ours. Since harvesting began again in 1990 we have fluctuated from a total of 1000 kilograms to 4700 kilograms of olives per harvest. This year we hit 6500 kilograms! Why? No doubt by chance probably due primarily to an unusual flowering period. Great oil can be found around the Mediterranean and always more around the world, but many consider Tuscan oil the top. And ours being naturally organic, a rarity- is no doubt at the top of the top. On our label we recognize the pickers of this record harvest.

Ka Casa Cares  
Olio extra vergine  
Novembre 2010  
Hands from 12 countries:  
Dennis, Beppe, Iris,  
Robert, Beat, Tony,  
VasiCe, friederike,  
Giordano, Susanne,  
Zsófia, Kelly, Steven,  
ECisa, Tietro, Alberto,  
Ethan, Lenaß NicoCas,

*Elisenda, Marcel,  
Anna, Zack, Patrizia,  
Lea, Clara, Raymond,  
(Michael, CB, Marti, Ana,  
A+A & Co., Chris,  
Antoinette, Pab1C*

### SHARECROPPING

Over the past months suggested reading for our coworkers was Pietro's Book. Available in English and Italian, Pietro Pinti tells of his life as a sharecropper in the system that dominated the Tuscan countryside for centuries. In fact. he notes, "My generation had a special experience. We were born in the Middle Ages and now live in the Computer Age." The book enriches the experience of those who work what the sharecroppers left. It could well be required reading for the local middle schools.

### PHOTOVOLTAIC

In March of 2011 it will be two years that we have been producing electrical energy. the major part of which is sold into the national grid. The 2010 production was excellent despite the grey weather in the final weeks of the year.

Reggello Township is making progress along green lines and we like to be part of

the effort. We work at convincing our guests to participate in energy saving and recycling.

## LEGAMBIENTE, WWF

Casa Cares is a member of these environment associations, the largest ones in Italy.

Legambiente recommends Casa Cares as a guest structure committed to environmental care.

For over 20 years Casa Cares has been an active member of the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe. It brings together over 60 centers from 17 countries and is connected to other similar regional associations around the globe. Members are committed to contributing to an inclusive, participatory, sustainable and just society.

## WALDENSIAN

## Casa Cares

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## MONTHLY NEWS

Monthly up-dates on Casa

# the 2011 Casa Cares News

## Various but fundamental

### WALDENSIANS

The Waldensian experience, "mother of the Reformation", began in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and is the foundation of churches today in Italy, Uruguay and Argentina. Waldensian and Methodist churches in Italy were federated in 1979, meeting in an annual synod whose decisions are entrusted to an elected board of 7 members. In Italy there are 25,000

Waldensians and 5,000 Methodists in a population of about 58 million. Biblical faith, political conscience. and public responsibility embrace one another in discipleship.

The Waldensians and Methodists cooperate with Baptists, Lutherans, and the Salvation Army in a national federation of Protestant churches.

### OIKOSNET EUROPE

### GUESTHOUSES

[www.foresterievaldesi.it](http://www.foresterievaldesi.it)

From the introductory pages of the Waldensian guesthouse brochure: "Remember to welcome strangers in your homes. There were some who did that and welcomed angels without knowing it." Hebrew's 13:2 The words of this passage underline that hospitality is the highest act of worship. 'Foresteria', a word used to describe many of our centres, derives from the Latin 'foris' which means outside, beyond the walls.. ..A forestiero is both stranger and a guest. He or she is a stranger destined to become your guest.. Who transforms a stranger to a guest? You, the person or persons spending your time in a foresteria.'

Cares for the past few years are available on [www.caszcares.it](http://www.caszcares.it).

The 2010 entry headings:

- Classroom Italia
- Full moon and gypsies:  
The times have changed
- The marketing of Tuscany
- Self-catering. Various groups, Volunteers - The simple life
- Once a farm, always a farm?
- Chapel renovations - Volunteers for the chapel and for the olives - Fruitful reunions.

Vegetable-full garden

- When things go well....
- Olive adaptation

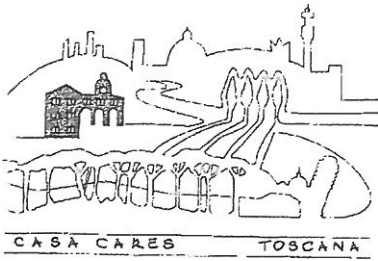
To begin 2011 there are new photos on the site.

**FUTURE WORK** In mid-March 2011 we are hosting a workshop among friends of Casa Cares with the purpose of

looking to the future. What are our strong points?

What challenges must be faced?

What form of service can we provide in the future? In a weekend there is no time to solve daily problems nor to form just one vision for the future, but we consider this an important process.



Casa Cares is a simple guesthouse, as weCCas o a place for exchange and dialogue o an attempt to Cive in an environmentally friendly way o a Protestant voice in the community o apart of the Waldensian socialservices

January 2012

Dear Friends

Hospitality can be a demanding "business", but also stimulating and rewarding. First of all, of course, it is a fundamental act of life and of the Christian faith, that can become a business. One person offers and another accepts. It is persons sharing space, time, themselves. Each person finds his or her own way in hospitality. For some giving and receiving comes more naturally. Casa Cares is proud of its vocation. As in most Waldensian guesthouses, it is curious to note that staff typically arrived without specific professional training. We certainly hope that the on-job experience and accompanying training bring us to a good level. We like to believe that our experiences and training in other fields can enrich what we have to offer as hosts.

But, as underlined by the statement at the top of the page, one which is in our entrance room, at Casa Cares we have also other callings and responsibilities, pach of these in turn, like hospitality, is goal and aspiration. We have no illusion of always being up to the task at hand. For example, as anyone knows who has tried, being "environmentally friendly" in our world today is not easy, certainly not in an enterprise that must have the income to pay the bills. Your imagination can elaborate on this. We do, however, make an effort at it on the various levels of the local community, guests and staff. That a good part of our staff is live-in makes for a particular life style challenge. We are happy to have this emphasis in our center and, while acknowledging our shortcomings, we welcome the fact that we are known locally and in our national church for this part of our identity.

For a Protestant voice in the community, we are typically Waldensian. Most likely the centuries of persecution and imposition have contributed to a timid approach to sharing our faith. We are ready to live our daily lives with certain criteria and to share our thoughts and faith with those who ask, but we are not the type to come knocking on your door. The Waldensians often are criticized for this reticence, maybe rightly so, but this is, so to speak, in our DNA. We do believe strongly that a Protestant presence, just as an atheist or a Jewish or an Islamic or another presence, contributes to a healthier society than one that is dominated in an exclusive way by one voice. Hopefully Reggello has benefitted by our being here, first as a children's home from 1970-1975 and now as a guesthouse since 1983.

The Waldensians work closely with Methodists and Baptists in Italy. The social service nature of our centers comes from the heritage of these church denominations. Often in centers such as ours a certain social sensitivity is evident in the staff. Hospitality in general, even in the most commercial of settings, is a social service. For Casa Cares it means working with groups like some hosted in the past: Belarus State children's home, Rom off the streets of Florence, Florence child care centers, schools. Also we have been able to respond periodically to a church's or the local community's request to temporarily host persons in need.

With all this going on of course a guest facility is potentially a place of exchange and dialogue. We hope that our setting facilitates these basic, positive human experiences.

## THE PEOPLE OF 2011-2012

We write our newsletter in the calm of our winter off-season, appreciating the time to step back to review the traffic of the past months and to plan for that of the months to come. There is no sense to a guesthouse without guests. We have some of the best. We are not for everyone with our simple (but comfortable and unique!) accommodations, with our emphasis on environmental care (not



everyone likes to hear of recycling and energy saving during his or her vacation!) and our rural setting (too slow for some!). Fortunately it is rare when a guests does not feel at home. The coming year promises to be similar to the previous one, which, having been a particularly good one, is fine with us. Several leaders are returning with groups, some new ones are on the way, and individual guests are starting to book.

A major event in 2011 was a large March meeting of friends to discuss the future of Casa Cares. The planning committee organized it to consider whether the objectives of the past decades are still valid or if they need radical change. There was a strong positive response. The points of the mission expressed above are seen as still valid today and deserve on-going and renewed conviction and investment for at least the immediate future.

The Waldensian festivities (buffet, conference, falö) initiates as usual the new season, this year on 19 February. In 2012 also to keep in mind are our youth camp (7-15 July), our young children's camp (2-7 September), and the Casa Cares Children's Home reunion (17-20 August). The reunion will commemorate the founding of the home in 1962 and its ministry on three different sites until its demise in 1975 in Reggello. Also worth a note are two one-week violin courses for children being offered in the second half of July. More information for these events can be had upon request.

We are thankful that offers for volunteers, mostly between 18-30 years old, continue to come because they have always been essential to our work. Because of the labor-intensive care of the land and the historic property and because our rates are low, we could not exist as we do now without our volunteers. In 2012 those who stayed several weeks came from Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, Germany, the Netherlands and the US. In 2012 we have a new national presence with the arrival of Nele from Estonia. An encouraging note of 2011 was the successful collaboration of a few older volunteers, who calmed our questions about their having the stamina and enthusiasm we needed.

## OTHER CARE

People care is primary, but at Casa Cares care for the historical buildings and land are also essential. In many ways these three aspects are entwined. We speak much about and dedicate considerable time and other resources to the buildings and the land. Sometimes they seem like limitations, and they are, but they are also what make the experience here unique. Both the buildings and the land developed over centuries when life was so very different. The Waldensians hesitated in accepting the donation in 1983 because many understood the responsibilities involved. Once the property was accepted, however, it was best to look forward. That is still true today.

Without denying the difficulties, we are challenged to see the potential in the buildings and the land as special complements to hospitality. We have reported the past few years about major interventions: a part of the villa roof, a complete renovation of the fire safety system, and the photovoltaic panels. Now we are pleased to be involved with other important steps forward. Besides the purchase of several new beds and mattresses, we have hired a local artist to restore the painted ceiling in the main meeting room. After 80 years it had deteriorated and significant damage was done when water pipes burst during the extraordinary freeze of January 1985.

Regarding the land, we have been fortunate to find Giordano to do the farming. As a young, skilled person thoroughly committed to the care of the land, he is a rarity in our rural area, sadly one in many "developed" parts of the world. He will be employed part time from March of this year but the production in our vegetable garden which he tended voluntarily for the past few months is evidence that he is a blessing to us in our work. With him we can plan to replace a number of our olive trees and we can make a bigger commitment to garden production for our guests' table.

Many of our guests would remember Luca, our former farmer. He had to leave us due to back problems about two years ago. By the way, he is fine now but cannot farm regularly. He

## THE SLOW FOOD MEALS

Our kitchen gives priority to our setting both in products and in menu. It seems a paradox, but in this farm community there is a lack of variety in the local production due to the dominance of wine and olive oil, certainly of high quality but dictating that most produce comes at least from the distance of the Valdarno.

The wines for sale are almost exclusively Tuscan, often with options from organic or biodynamic farms. The house wine comes from the Bonsi farm 2 km away, which is also the distance our bread travels from the Agnoletti bakery in San Donato in Fronzano. The honey comes from a young, local beekeeper. Some of her hives are visible on a terrace of our land below the parking lot. Fresh milk for breakfast comes from Tuscan farms.

Depending upon the season, our vegetable garden provides a good quantity of what is presented to our guests. The jams for breakfast come from our fruit, predominantly plum with at times an option of cherry or blackberry.

We are ready to meet special dietary needs such as vegetarian, lactic-free, and gluten-free. We are working with the local buyers' cooperative dedicated guided by the Slow Food Movement emphasizing local, organic products.

The meals are family style, which includes the elimination of individual packaging with their considerable environmental impact, for example with butter, jam and sugar. If you are still hungry, check with the neighboring table and the kitchen. Leftovers go either to our cats or to our compost (or even to our volunteers!).

#### DONATIONS

Perhaps you do not know that the income from our work of hospitality is just adequate to cover our operational expenses. To carry on we depend upon the gifts of friends who share our vision of contributing to an inclusive, just, participatory and sustainable society.

We are thankful therefore for all the persons who everyday accompany and encourage us with their financial, material, and voluntary work donations. For example, we use these gifts to host free of charge or at a reduced rate persons in difficulty or with limited means;

- increase and improve our investments in the environment-friendly management of our center;
- promote local and cultural initiatives.

We note that upon request we can issue a receipt valid for tax deduction. Certainly we are available for further clarification. Thank you!

Greetings from Casa Cares

We appreciate your accompanying us into the new year,

For the staff and board, Paul

Krieg

Welcome to those who come

Peace to those who stay awhile

Blessings on those who move on

(from the fagade of a Swiss home)

Via Pietrapiana 56

# Casa Cares

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[www.casacayes.it](http://www.casacayes.it)

helps us now as a good friend in other ways, as a consultant and as coordinators of the local buyers' cooperative that offers local, organic foods.

For an aspect of building care, we are very enthusiastic about the progress made on the restoration of the structure below the villa, the one-time chapel and olive press rooms. Friends and the central church administration responded to our appeal for funds. Progress is evident in the beautiful new chestnut beam roof covered by the terracotta tiles we were able to reuse. In the first quarter of this year we hope to have an unfinished but useable floor. There will remain much, much more to do such as also here using the historical tiles that Beppe so perseveringly removed to finish the floor. We shall go as far as donations and work camps take us, but already when this first step is done, perhaps by April, our guests will have access to a great space for worship, music, art, theatre, meditation, and other gatherings. It has been a responsibility and thrill to work on a building basically untouched in over two centuries, the origins of which go back longer than we have been able to determine.

## NOTES EVERYWHERE

We often say that the Casa Cares life is not complex "vertically", that is, deep and complicated. But it is complex "horizontally" in that there are many elements in the life here: the guests themselves from numerous backgrounds with different needs and programs, an international staff including volunteers coming and going, the many spaces in the historical buildings, land care and production, multiple tasks. It can take months, when it does work, for a new arrival to have a sense of understanding it all.

For that reason the place is full of written guidelines, notes and suggestions. Immediately as one enters the villa this is obvious with newsletters, statements, brochures, guidelines for environmental care, newspaper articles, information on the Waldensians, and welcome notes.

Perhaps it is too much! But the idea is to take what you need to feel comfortable during your stay.

To close this newsletter we share three of the informative notes, on our logo, our meals, and donations. For friends who want to follow us regularly, we try to put a monthly note under "What's new" on our website.

## THE LOGO - INTERCONNECTEDNESS, INTERDEPENDENCE

A logo to represent the hope of Casa Cares is found in the simple design of three Tuscan woods braided together. On the one hand, as a centre of the Waldensian Church we are interested in dialogue among persons of diverse heritage and perspectives. Only through contact and exchange can we truly come to appreciate diversity as a gift and not only as a challenge. Dialogue between church and society; among Jews, Christians, and Muslims as well as other religions; among Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Protestants.

The Waldensians also are known for their work for peace and justice. At Casa Cares we think that we can help promote in our churches, among our guests, and in our local community the realization that without a concern for a third dimension, the integrity of creation (environmental issues), there can be no true peace and justice in our society. In this simple piece of woodwork interrelate:

- the delicate, light wood of the cypress, an evergreen line of beauty that graces our horizons and that has been used for constructing our doors and windows;
- the spectacularly grained wood of the olive tree, a tree blessing us with its fruit and oil, growing slowly for decades and even centuries;
- and the wood, often dark in tone, of the chestnut, a basic for charcoal and whose beams

support magnificent homes: the fruit sustains wild and domesticated animals and has often also sustained humans.

## Casa Cares — [www.casacares.it](http://www.casacares.it) — [info@casacares.it](mailto:info@casacares.it)

● January 2013

Dear Friends

In our fast moving world sometimes we are caught in the movement without knowing where we are headed. Stop, I want to get off! Fortunately at Casa Cares we have not needed a shock stop to get us thinking about our objectives. This task has been constantly with us, although during the normal guest season we barely have time and energy to dedicate to it. This can be done better once the season is finished in the quiet phase when we also prepare our annual newsletter.

What is the identity of Casa Cares? Casa Cares in its post-children's home life was born with identity questions, not exactly a crisis. The Waldensians accepted somewhat reluctantly the donation of the Graffi property because they recognized the responsibility of caring for land and historical buildings as much as they envisioned a purpose for them. At least one proposal was discarded as impractical, but the times were ripe for the evolution into the work of a meeting center/guesthouse. The meeting center was a natural for a church that values training and life-long learning. The guesthouse element was a natural as well in the 1980's as tourism developed into one of the major industries in a world of travellers.

The historical contacts of the Waldensians with the German and Swiss churches were a blessing that nourished both aspects, training and tourism. The Germans and Swiss in their churches as well as in their civil societies had already considerable experience with adult education. They brought their ideas and their programs, permitting Casa Cares to take its place alongside the other Waldensian and Methodist "foresterie" (guesthouses) already active from Sicily to the Alps.

An important moment for direction in our work came when the national church decided to delegate the coordination of its social ministries to a new administrative organ, the Commissione Sinodale per la Diaconia. The various institutions from hospitals to child care to guest facilities had to decide in which category they belonged. Our board at that point recognized Casa Cares' work as a guest facility but emphasized our priority as a meeting and training center. This remains our mission today.

What identities do we bring to this mission? Below we touch on the different aspects that give us direction.

### CULTURE

We have not prominently emphasized this over the years but our guests have. Sometimes we have been able to share what they have to offer with the local community, but more often the musicians, artists, and researchers have worked among themselves with the realization of their programs. There have been many times, however, when we ourselves have been able to offer something to our own church members or to the general public. The mid-February Waldensian festivities with a conference open to all has become a tradition. There have also been other afternoons or evenings for presentations and discussion. On a recent Sunday the Reggello township architect shared her 25 years of experience presenting thoughts on how good territorial management by the public administration contributes to the quality of life in the community.

Culture is a facet particularly evident to us at this time as we hope in the coming months to complete the restorations in our historical theater/chapel. A friend, the researcher Rita Romanelli, has been able to investigate further the history of the property, thus confirming the evolution of the structure below the villa. Begun as a farm building at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the 1750's it became a theater for a number of decades before being transformed into the chapel that remained its function until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Theater in the countryside! Strange but true. Hopefully in 2013 Rita will be able to explain how this happened when she publishes and presents her results. In the meantime Casa Cares will greatly enhance what we have to offer guests interested in a small (capacity 100) performance hall for music, meditation, theatre and art as well as a space for meetings.

## SPIRITUALITY

Tough subject, perhaps because not many speak comfortably about it and probably because the definition is so unclear. This is one of those terms thrown about loosely by many but probably few could agree on what it means. Try approaching some definition from just one of these starting points: oriental religions. Islam, Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Pentecostalism, Anthroposophy, or some non-religious "faith". Tough subject.

Casa Cares is a church facility, but what is Waldensian spirituality? Certainly it comes from the Protestant Reformed tradition but it is also understandably conditioned by its unique centuries-long and Italian heritage. Perhaps the identifying point most evident is an openness, not necessarily in our formal, typically Reformed worship, but in our view of diversity. With its history of persecution the church could have easily closed and turned in on itself. But instead the Waldensians become a paladin for respect and appreciation for others.

The work of the center is where it is now thanks to many workers, including dozens of volunteers, who had no connection nor often even an understanding of the Waldensians when they arrived. Some came looking for a more "religious" experience, others were pleased by the lack of form. This openness granted us survival and is an integral part of our identity.

Most of our groups come through some church connection, and much of our library is built around Christian theology and faith. Also in this sector we are happy that the

improvements in the building below the villa will encourage moments of common worship and quiet meditation.

## HOSPITALITY

This aspect of our identity is of course the foundation of the others. We are a simple guesthouse. "Simple" refers to our accommodations but they must be more than welcoming or otherwise the group leaders would not be continuously returning. Simple also means not complicated, not sophisticated, a direct approach to service. We may fare poorly in some ways compared to modern hotels, but the chance to retreat to a historical, country facility surrounded the natural world, to a place to call home. is just what many persons look for today. Hospitality is our job and the other parts of our life aim to complement it.

## ENVIRONMENT

Anyone who has followed the life of Casa Cares over the years understands that care for the environment is essential for us. Actually we do little more than what many persons do today in their homes and private lives, little more than to what many church congregations and guest facilities aspire, but we like to think that our organization was ahead of the current trend of increasing concern for the environment. Could it be otherwise when one is involved with food production, care for an historical property, and immersed in the green and terraces bequeathed us by the efforts of much hard labor over the centuries? A challenge is to accompany staff, guests, neighbors, local community, and churches to grow with us in appreciation of and care for creation.

## LOOKING BACK TO 2012

The past months were busy ones that would have been very difficult without the support of an excellent group of volunteers. We felt the traffic of full pension for the majority of our groups as well as the movement of four weddings. The latter were all joyous events but we felt at the limit of our organizational abilities. We accepted the challenge only because in each case persons were involved who had a particular attachment to Casa Cares: Elena Mundici, Giacomo Trivelli, Emiliano Santoni. and Lorenzo Parretti. All with family and friends pitched in to build great moments.

The disappointment of a second consecutive poor olive harvest due to drought was counterbalanced by the development and spectacular production of Giordano's organic garden.

Learning more about the history of the theater/chapel and seeing significant progress in the renovations were particularly encouraging.

## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2013

Group reservations are going well with the usual mix of returnees and new faces. This year we shall begin earlier than usual, already in January, because we have agreed to host the mid-year training of volunteers involved in our various church centers throughout the country. One of our own volunteers will participate.

Regarding the volunteer group, our needs seem to be covered until the summer after which we shall need other helping hands.

On February 17<sup>th</sup> the guest speaker at our annual Waldensian festivities will be Mariella Zoppi of the University of Florence. She will talk about the importance of freedom of access to public space for the common good. Baptist Pastor Massimo Aprile will share observations from a theological perspective. This is a freedom that reflects a society's sense of civic responsibility.

## BEYOND 2013

After 28 years of the Krieg administration it is high time to plan for what is to follow. Antoinette, still often called into service, retired two years ago and my retirement is foreseen for no later than mid-2015. The Casa Cares board and the national church administration (Tavola Valdese) are collaborating to develop a job description, to clarify long-term planning, to develop a time line and to proceed with the search for new management for Casa Cares.

## DONATIONS

Three large projects have our attention at the moment.

- o The theater/chapel should be ready for use but enhancement of the new "tool" includes technical and artistic support.
- o One part of the large cellars under the park is in urgent need of repair.
- o We would really like to give an impulse to the further development of our organic farm, expanding the vegetable garden, improving the care of the olive trees, and adding necessary equipment.

As always, we welcome your contributions. Details and bank information are available for anyone interested in these projects.

Warm-I greetings from Casa Cares,  
Paul Krieg with our staff and our board

Monthly up-dates and a photo album can be found on VI <a href="http://ipw.casacares.it">ipw.casacares.it</a>
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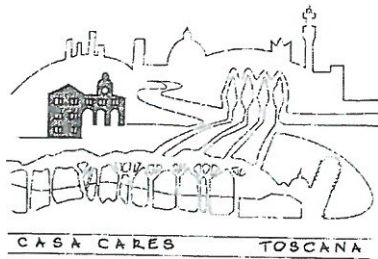
# Grou s 2006- 2012

Italy
Ass.Genit016 SIDS
Università europea. Firenze
Seminario Enniatipi
Seminario yoga
Coro Valdelsa
Corso violino per giovani
Scuola Suzuki Milano/Firenze
Scuola Gaiamusica
Scuola ostetriche Marsupio, Firenze
Scuola Montessori
Parrocchia cattolica. Tavarnuzze
Campagna die Nove
Corso acquarelle, Firenze
Chiesa evangelica cinese. Prato
Chiesa metodista. Firenze
Chiesa valdese- Firenze
Chiesa valdese. Bologna
Chiesa valdese. San Secondo
Chiesa valdese. Napoli
Chiesa valdese, Roma
Chiesa valdese, Perrero
Chiesa apostolica, Prato
Chiesa metodista coreana, Toscana
Comunità Cristiana
Gruppo Sofia
Falun dafa
Coro Onde Sonore
Unione donne. Chiese luterane
Cappella protestante. Camp Darby
Coordinamento Foresterie Valdesi
Unione Predicatori Locali
St.James Episcopal Church. Firenze
Ospedale evangelica, Genova
Comunità Sant'Egidio, Firenze
Rete evangelica fede e omosessu
Parrocchia Cattolica. Mestre
Par. SS Gervasio & Protasio, Firenze
Gruppo Theta Healing
Internazional
CISV-Peace canv
Oikosnet Euro e
Germany

Dekanat Heenheim
Switzerland
Catecumeni. Töss
Corso Feldenkrais
Catecumeni, Muhen
Catecumeni. Riehen
Catecumeni. Birmensdorf
Catecumeni, Sankt Moritz
Catecumeni. Netstal
Steinerschule. Basilea
Catecumeni. Riehen
Schule und Beruf, Basilea
United States
Chiesa Riformata. Washington DC
University of New Orleans
Old Dominion University. Virginia
University of Richmond, Virginia
Moody Bible Institute, Chicago
Atlee High School, Virginia
Moody Institute. Chicago
COMPASS Chapels Yoga
on 1--lioh. Ohio
United Kinodom
Waldensian Society. Scotland
Albania
Riunione albanesi all'estero
Bielorussia
Orfanitrofio di Radun
Norwav
Seminario TaiChi
Fana Folkhogskule
Church Academies
Austria
Christusgemeinde Salzburg
Scuola Montessori, Innsbruck
Herzogsäuhemühle
Sweden
Ansgarsliden Folkhogskule, Sigtuna
Sigtuna Stiftelsen
Greece
Monastero ortodosso Pendeli. Atene
The Netherlands
Stichting Ichthus
Hungary
Chiesa Riformata, Sopron
Choral Institute Nirez haza
Romania
Gruppo Rom. Sesto Fiorentino
France
Ecole del la Neuville

Gymnasiumchor Weilburg  
Fachhochschule Hannover  
Praxis für Lebenskunst. Hanau  
Kirchgemeinde Stiepel  
Posaunenchor Almersbach  
tbz Berlin  
Religionslehrer, Mainz  
Gemeindenfreizeit Wetzlar-Erfurt  
Kunst Akademie Nürnberg  
Evangelische Erzieher Baden





## Casa Cares

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In 2014 we expect to use Facebook more and to continue putting information on our site.

January 2014

Dear Friends

Nothing better for a guesthouse than guests. Of course it is a question of survival but also one of satisfaction that comes from hospitality. Guests confirm the validity of our offer and appreciation for it. At Casa Cares, as is typical in so many guest facilities, we have our season of constant movement and our season of pause. Our off-season arrives after the olive harvest, which is a unique coda to our particular hospitality. We use the pause to review the road travelled and to prepare for the trip that lies ahead.

### THE ROAD TRAVELLED

In 2013 the guest work began earlier than usual. Our traditional inauguration is the Waldensian mid-February festivities. Groups typically begin to arrive shortly after, certainly by mid-March. But we could not say no to a request to host at the end of January the mid-year training of the international group of volunteers placed in our church's centers throughout the country. It is one of several groups in the course of the year that barely covers cost, especially when heating is necessary, but this is a core part of our service within the church.

Our 6300 overnights were more than the totals of four of the five previous seasons and with that we are satisfied. We are also satisfied that the 35 groups confirmed our role as a meeting and training center. Sixteen were church related and thirteen were schools or workshops. Twenty-four were returnees. This last statistic underlines satisfaction, means enjoyable reunions, and implies that our big job is to get group leaders here in the first place. Once guests have experienced our hospitality, they typically return. Over 80% of the total overnights were members of groups.

We enjoyed exceptional regularity in our work force with a core of long-term volunteers shouldering much of the responsibility along with our employees. Giordano is a fixture on the land, growing wonderful vegetables and fruits and caring for the olive trees. Iris and Antonia continue to delight our guests with the produce of our gardens and orchards. Beppe by now knows every technical issue of the property. Elisa was again spectacularly welcoming and available to our guests.

An important accomplishment during the year was slow but steady progress on the restoration of the historical theater/chapel. Though not yet complete, this lovely space was used by a youth orchestra and a music school and for morning Bible readings in the summer. In October we invited the public to an open house, primarily to show the work in a particularly interesting phase. With the help of French restoration volunteers who uncovered previous wall paintings, one can "read" the layers of history, confirming the transition from farm building to theater (circa 1730) to chapel (1780) to renewed chapel at the staff of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Giordano was very pleased with the many helping hands he had with the farm work and we are all happy with a good olive harvest. Recently fruit trees were planted. These are unique, antique local varieties to replace the natural loss of trees over the years. Early vegetable garden plantings were destroyed by a violent hail storm, but determination to start again and hard work still assured us of an excellent harvest.

That same hail storm stunned us by causing damage on all the ceilings of the upper floor of the villa. Hail accumulated on the roof and the following torrential rain backed up, going under the tiles of the old roof. The church knew already over thirty years ago when it accepted the donation of the property that the villa roof badly needed attention. After years of risky roof walking and patching up, now there is no doubt.

### THE MOMENT

Despite set-backs such as the hail, we entered the off-season content with the road traveled thinking to have time and energy to tranquilly plan for 2014. Then lightning struck on a sunny day. The board of our national social ministries offered Elisa, who has been central to our work for five years, a position of responsibility she felt she could not decline. We shall experience that loss materially beginning 1 February, when she moves with her boys to our sister guest facility in Vallecrosia on the coast near the border with France. She will be a needed blessing there as she has been for us. We have to work at congratulating our sibling center on their good fortune!

So we scramble to adapt. Because the primary task of the coming months was finding a replacement in the management of Casa Cares, in anticipation of my retirement, our board has decided to look for a temporary replacement for Elisa for the coming guest season. A notice has gone out for a person to substitute Elisa in her core and essential task of housekeeping. Many of those reading this circular letter know that Elisa did that and much, much more. But the basics of cleanliness and hygiene are essential. Afterwards, once a new manager is found in mid-2014, a search will begin to find another person to join and complement the rest of the team as Elisa has faithfully done for five years.

A project for the current weeks is the formulation of a long-term strategy for Casa Cares. The board has decided that this will be an elaboration of the mission that has evolved over the years and that has been repeatedly confirmed. The foundation of Casa Cares' work will remain hospitality with particular emphasis on social ministry, volunteerism, and environmental care.

One basic chore will be to improve our visibility in order to inform potential guests, especially group leaders, of our unique offer. Typical portals of publicity are not adequate. Our site, although improvable, is still appreciated while word of mouth remains our main promotional tool, but we need to revamp our approach and reach more persons, especially group leaders who would appreciate our unique offering. We are currently exploring the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, which have become increasingly important marketing tools in today's world.

## THE TRIP AHEAD

The big task of the months ahead is obviously the renewal of the team, starting with a new coordinator. The search is due to begin publicly in April. Once a new coordinator is found, the plan is that I will work alongside the new person, sharing experience and responsibilities, until summer 2015.

In the meantime we expect to remain busy as usual. Typical periods of high request such as spring holidays and then mid-May through July, are considerably booked, while very attractive space in late summer is still available. A high point will certainly be an attempt again at a reunion of persons from the time of Casa Cares Children's Home, 1962-1975. After a series of such meetings in the 1980s-1990s more recently we have been unsuccessful but we have set aside the period 1-4 May for one more try.

We hope also to again offer meetings for the public on local issues. Such meetings can contribute to our community while also build local awareness of our facility. We are working with the mayor of Reggello to present up-dates on the township's building plans, water quality, and waste management. These are all sectors crucial to quality of life that naturally, in our case as a guest facility, impact our work.

We count on the inauguration of our theater, which should be very valuable in attracting new groups, especially those involved with art, music, meditation, and worship. Thanks go to Giuseppe, our maintenance man, and to volunteers, including work camps, for the energy they have given to the project, saving us the considerable expense of employing persons from the outside.

A huge task this summer, also primarily on the shoulders of volunteers, will be an intervention on the cellars under the park. The immediate purpose to remedy a point of potentially dangerous instability, but at the same time we are investigating the nature of the cellars constructed approximately a century ago. The significant volume of the cellars has tremendous potential for the future and already has been proposed as future kitchen and dining area. But that is a distant, very distant project. In the meantime it is valuable storage space.

## FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

We want to inform friends that there has been a substantial change in our financial situation in very recent years. After the donation of the property in 1983 to the Waldensians, the church invested to bring the facility to the point of being able to start its work of hospitality. Over the following decades many improvements were made thanks to normal guest income, savings, the staff, work camps and donations of friends, in particular Swiss and German church organizations. The value of the property has increased tremendously as well, with a variety of new spaces available. With these improvements and additions has come a significant increase in the task of maintaining the facility.

In these years, often with the help of donations, the income from the guest work has generally covered operating costs. The national church has been spared from having to contribute. That has changed recently with investments in major improvements.

The church's contributions have been possible due to funds available through the program of Otto per Mille (Eight per thousand), in which all Italian taxpayers have the chance to entrust to religious organizations a part of the tax they pay for social and cultural purposes. The benefit to the church has gone far beyond what the Waldensians expected because a staggering number of non-Waldensians have dedicated their funds to them. This means many others approve of the social and cultural work of the church and trust the Waldensian administration. That trust is humbling and demands transparency. For the funds administered by our church, many requests come from organizations outside our walls, including a significant number from developing countries.

Some of that money has arrived at Casa Cares, first being used to bring the facility up to modern fire safety standards. Then came contributions for the restoration of the theater and most recently for the security of the cellars and improvements on the farm.

It is a special moment and opportunity for our church and a huge responsibility. Casa Cares is certainly one beneficiary, along with many others of our centers with social and cultural programs. So while our day-to-day financial situation remains precarious, we are now able to deal with badly needed improvements on the property.

## APPROACH

In facing the future perhaps one of the most important things to remember is that property is a tool. Having property, however, does not assure that the tool is useful for an obvious reason — you need skilled and dedicated persons ready to work with the tool. The Casa Cares property is a huge instrument, so huge that it is easy to understand why the administration of our little "insignificant" church at first did not accept it as a gift. For thirty years what was left of the Fattoria I Graffi, the historical farm chopped up in the 1980s, has been used intensively. We are always asking whether it has been used well, but many persons have assured us of the benefit: the guests, the church, and the local community.

It is fair to think that what happens in the future will depend not so much on the tool as on the users. Those of us interested in the work of Casa Cares hope and pray that the right persons will be found not only to maintain the tool but to improve its use. This is a challenge to the national church board (the Tavola Valdese), the church district administration to whom Casa Cares responds, the board, the staff, friends and the users.

## VARIOUS (LOOSE ENDS)

Olives — After two disappointing years, it is encouraging to again have a decent harvest. What is not encouraging is to see so many trees in the area whose olives, right there for the picking, are being abandoned. Olive oil rightfully enjoys a place of prestige in Europe and North America kitchens, but the fact that many olives are not picked is a statement on the cost of farming and perhaps an indication of the lack of interest in genuine farm products. Certainly one could also mention the cherries, pears, blackberries or persimmons that are not harvested.

In touch with the land — Many persons are too busy or for some other reason unable to understand the importance of contact with the land. There are many practical explanations for this but it can only be detrimental when individuals do not understand the importance as well as the trials of feeding this world, not to say the importance of contact with the natural world and all the awe it can generate. One

fortunate consequence of the unfortunate youth unemployment in Italy is that some young persons are turning to the land and evaluating its potential for their future.

Adaptability — Working with guests from various countries and with varying needs demands flexibility. It can be a tough challenge but also a pleasure. A mundane example of the usefulness of flexibility is in this year's jam. For the first time in decades, due to cold and rain in the flowering period, we had no cherries or plums. Therefore next year's guests will be able to enjoy our raspberry and our persimmon jams.

Otto per Mille — The number of Italians who entrusted a part of their tax monies to the Waldensian Church is remarkable. The church of 25,000 members has been selected for contributions by over a half million tax payers, confirming their trust in the organization. Humbling food for thought, and perhaps a bit frightening. Our church in accepting the "Eight per Thousand" tax monies insisted that they not be used for the spiritual ministry of our churches, such as the salaries of our pastors or the upkeep of our worship facilities. Casa Cares benefits for special investments, but for everyday needs we have the income of our work and we welcome donations from friends. Examples, for those interested, would be support of a volunteer during his or her stay (about Euro 400 monthly); contributions to facilitate stays for persons in need, such as the elderly (a variable cost difficult to estimate in the course of a year); offering one-day conferences (about Euro 200 for organization and expenses of outside speakers and guests); the publication of a history of the farm over the centuries to today's ministry (estimate Euro 6000).

Annual February Waldensian Festivities - Sunday, 16 February is the date in 2014 for this annual event with buffet, conference, and bonfire to commemorate the 1848 granting of civil liberties in pre-unified Italy. Pastor Pawel Gajewski of our church in Florence will lead the discussion on "The value of poverty from medieval to post-modern times: A confrontation between the followers of Waldo and Francis."

Waldensian witness — The Waldensians can be timid about witnessing. Perhaps we are conditioned by the history of inquisition and imposition. Do not push yourselves on others! But the reality is that our churches and also our centers are points of witness to our faith, our values, and our involvement in society. It can be like living in a glass house, but it is an opportunity. This is particularly true for Casa Cares, churches and other programs in locations in the country where there has been and still is today no Protestant voice. We recognize this responsibility but do not shy away from it.

On behalf of our board and staff, I thank you for your interest in our work.

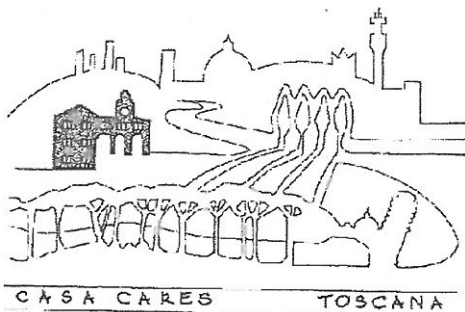
Saluti da Casa Cares, Paul

Krieg

Casa Cares is a simple guesthouse, as well as

- a place for exchange and dialogue
- an attempt to live in an environmentally friendly way
- a Protestant voice in the community • apart of the Waldensian social services

Casa Cares



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January 2015

Cari Amici, Care Amiche

Years after the children's home closed, the I Graffi villa and surrounding property were offered in donation to the Waldensian Church. In 1983, with some reluctance, the Waldensians accepted the donation asking "Now what?" The answer has been a guesthouse and meeting center with an emphasis on environmental care and social service. Now, after over 30 years, the question returns, "Now what?" More on that later after recalling 2014 and taking a look at the coming months.

2014

As we review 2014, we can conclude that things were typically regular and positive. The overnights reached 6600, more than each of the previous three years. The tendencies of the last ten years were again confirmed: shorter stays, fewer youth and family groups, more study groups, growing appreciation for retreat and contact with nature.

Groups continue to give us the majority of our overnights. They find here an excellent venue for their programs, some of which make use of outings to the many Tuscan sights reachable on day trips. Half of the groups were church-related coming from Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and the United States. About a quarter were schools or groups involved in training and the final quarter reunions of families or friends.

We accompanied some groups, usually American, on their outings. This means more involvement and consequently more income and is something appreciated by many as an introduction to Tuscany and often to the church in Italy. Other collaboration with groups include the tour of the historical property and an introduction by Giordano to organic farming.

While the volunteers, usually four or five in residence, again made their essential contribution, among the employees a couple adjustments had to be made. In January Elisa accepted the opportunity to take responsibility at another of our guesthouses, the Casa Valdese in Vallecrosia, Liguria. Losing a key team member was a blow, but in typical Casa Cares fashion we "landed on our feet" by immediately finding Cristina with her many skills and work experience. At about the same time Antonia announced that she also would not be returning and again we chanced on a solution. In this case, Eugenio was suggested to us as a volunteer by our pastor in Palermo. Upon his arrival we were pleased to discover that he is an experienced cook who was able to replace Antonia.

Also unexpected was a terrible lighting strike in July. The damage was significant, not only for us but also for our neighbors. Climate change? It seems that way. Such never happened before and we were reminded of the unique event and damage caused by a hail storm the previous year.

Climate also influenced the farm production, most notably the olives, because the warm winter followed by the wet spring and summer facilitated the infestation of the fruit fly. In most parts of the world olives need to be treated to combat the infestation of the fly which causes early maturation and spoilage. Casa Cares is, or was, a happy island, because the fly usually does not come to the 500 meters altitude of our part of in Tuscany. This means our production is organic without treatment. This year, we along with most of Tuscany, were affected. Therefore no oil, a problem for us, a huge problem for many others.

New this year was our hosting of asylum seekers from Togo, Senegal, and Bangladesh, first four, then three. They were with us from May through November. Planned with the authorities beforehand, this was part of a program to redistribute around Italy some of the over 100,000 who arrived clandestinely in Southern Italy in just the first half of 2014. Obviously, many thoughts and much can be said. For us it was a fascinating experience, also a challenge because it meant full room and board for six months and some attempt at integration. When

we closed at the start of December Moussiliou, Quioby, and Ratan were transferred to a large Catholic center in Florence.

A major step forward in 2014 was the reopening of our historic theater. Friends have heard of this project for years, because, well, it took years. Finally, with private and church donations and contributions through funds of the national tax for culture (Otto per Mille), the project started to move forward seriously about five years ago. Although there are a number of jobs to complete and funds to find, the space was inaugurated very successfully in autumn for a series of Sunday lectures and musical performances. A hundred persons fit comfortably into the hall, and the musicians, ranging from lyric to folk song to jazz piano, gave high marks to the acoustics. The theater becomes still another attraction for guests.

Significant meetings of 2014 were those between our board and the national church board (Tavola Valdese) in March and that of the III District (of four) of the church. Decisions were made that accompany us into the new year.

2015

We have a good number of group reservations for the year. As usual May-June filled up quickly, related primarily to the academic years. Now July through beginning of August promises to be busy to the point that we have to search for an alternative period for our own children's and youth camps.

As usual we shall open the new season in February with the commemoration of the granting of civil liberties to Waldensians and Jews in 1848. They were the only religious minorities in the Savoy kingdom. On Saturday, the 14<sup>th</sup>, after a buffet and before the traditional bonfire, Letizia Tomassone, our pastor in Florence, will speak on Waldensian women in the Middle Ages.

Some of the groups booked will definitely be using the theater. Those who reserve in advance through February will be offered the theater without extra charge but eventually we shall apply some surcharge. The heating system is based on our photovoltaic energy panels. When it is necessary to use, probably from October to through April, being on the north side of the building, a surcharge will also be necessary for that.

Although I am moving off-campus this winter in anticipation of my retirement the end of July, I am willing to cover in the meantime when needed. I look forward to continuing to accompany study groups on their Tuscan excursions. This seems useful to Casa Cares and certainly interesting and stimulating to me even after retiring.

With Cristina in supervision of hospitality and Eugenio returning to work with Iris (cooking since 1990), Giuseppe (maintenance, 1997), and Giordano (farming, 2012), our employed staff is almost complete and certainly strong. The volunteer situation seems good into spring with three Germans and one American, although at times we could use another. A periodical work camp in which we make some arrangement with a small group for a part or all of a stay in exchange for work could be useful. They were very helpful in the past but we have not had offers recently.

"Now what?"

The board of Casa Cares originally planned to begin the search for my replacement in March 2014, with the idea that I would accompany him or her for six months to a year until my retirement in July 2015. However, when the national church leadership expressed serious concern about lack of resources to support the continuing development of Casa Cares, the search was suspended. It was a tough awakening for our board, our staff and many friends. In the end, however, the concern is understandable.

Our board and staff have lived with the limits and potential of Casa Cares for years.

For that reason we put together a presentation for the Tavola Valdese meeting in March. The Tavola's concerns were evidently strongly felt already before the March meeting and the presentation did not calm the concerns.

Central to the discussion is the property, a high-maintenance jewel. How often I have said to guests, "It's like having a luxury car without the money for gas!" When assessing resources one typically thinks of finances, but it is very useful to investigate other dimensions such as person power, time, energy, commitment, and vision.

The Tavola's evaluation and our board's response were conveyed at the annual conference of the church's Central Italy III District of the national church. The conference brings together the churches of Tuscany, Lazio and surrounding regions and is the organ responsible for the supervision of Casa Cares. The District did not share the pessimism of the national board and called for the formation of a workgroup to study the situation regarding Casa Cares' limits and potential. The District's proposal was accepted in August at the annual synod of the national church.

Because of his knowledge of our church centers and their mission and because of his work experience, Mattia Costa was chosen to coordinate the workgroup for eight months. He will be joined by a member of the Tavola, a representative from the District, and a consultant from the Synodical Commission for Social Services. Conclusions are to be presented at a preliminary meeting in April in order to prepare a document for the next District meeting in June.

The issues are many and complex. Some friends may have found the time to follow developments as reported on our website. The tendency seems to be to confirm the actual mission combining hospitality, social services, ecology, and training as a valid, proven base on which to build. Whatever the conclusion, the following discussion will go around resources, what is available to the church and what is the church leadership willing to invest in Casa Cares.

Back to 2015

So, now what? We have plenty of work for this year. The day-to-day work continues as usual taking reservations and using the off season to recharge and to prepare the facility for the coming months. It is hard to imagine any drastic change even through 2016. In simplest of terms, can Casa Cares elaborate a convincing vision and can it generate the funding of that vision?

My intention is to go ahead as planned and retire at the end of July. Obviously something must be done to respond to that development, but it is important that I get out of the way to facilitate the renewal of Casa Cares. There needs to be room for fresh energy, new vision and persons with the skills essential in today's work of hospitality, -assuming that hospitality will be in some way central to tomorrow's mission.

A thought goes to our staff, especially Iris, Giuseppe and Giordano who have been here for years. Despite the questions about the future, their enthusiasm and dedication are evident and to be appreciated by all who benefit from the work of Casa Cares.

Thanks for accompanying us into 2015,  
For the board of Casa Cares,  
Antoinette & Paul

Some odds and ends

We have mentioned in the past that the time will arrive when we use only electronic means of information, for example, for this newsletter. The time has arrived. Please share this circular with anyone who you think might be interested and possibly does not receive it. Give us an e-mail address, if you can.

We shall try to be regular in our updates with short notes on Facebook and longer ones on our [www.casacares.it](http://www.casacares.it).

Available upon request is more information about joining or even organizing a Tuscan study group. Good periods are still available in May, September and October. There are many options of course on destinations for day trips but also lecturers or emphasis such as the Medici family, the church in Italy, Italian politics, and our organic farming.