

THE KOTVAS FAMILY

Missionaries to the Deaf and Hearing — Peru, South America & Beyond

Sending Church: Emmanuel Baptist Church — 1819 Hill Ave. Ft. Myers, FL 33901 — (239) 936-4252 — Pastor Bob Ossewaarde



November — December 2020

Dear Friends and Family,

Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. - Psalms 106:1

Like most of you, we are still dealing with the effects of the COVID issues here in Peru. It has changed so much of our lives and ministries. However, one thing that cannot change is God's perfect plan for the ages, which we are witnessing unfold before our very eyes.

It is vital for us to be thankful to the Lord for His care over us and recognize that He truly is in control no matter what is happening. This strengthens us spiritually. We should be thankful despite politics or pandemics of the day. As the verse above teaches, we must be thankful for God's enduring mercies and goodness.

Ministry News

School is out now. We did not have any high school graduates from our Deaf school this year, but several hearing students in our English home school group graduated. This included three of our children. Joy graduated from high school, and Jessica and Joel from middle school.



Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, issues with the Peruvian Ministry of Education, and the reduction of students and teachers, we are suspending our deaf school after 50 years of service here in Peru. We are suspending in the hopes of reopening again within two years. This is not a given. First, we must wait for the elections this year and see if we can get a meeting with the new Minister of Education and convince him or her to allow us to reopen under a special pilot program that will allow us to continue to successfully teach deaf children.

Peru changed to an inclusion program that mixes the Deaf in with the hearing but without the qualified interpreters and teachers necessary for success. Thus, they closed our high school and have been moving to close our primary grades as well. They are creating a new generation of Deaf students with a tragically low literacy rate all in the name of inclusion and self-esteem — a one-size-fits-all education system that has failed the Deaf. Pray that we can be successful in advocating for our methodology and school. This school has been the gateway for the Gospel for thousands of Deaf here in Peru. The government also closed our orphanage/home program, forbidding us to take in new children. We still have six deaf children and young adults for whom we are caring.

Regarding the battle with the city over our tax situation, we have exhausted all avenues of appeal. Fortunately, the new person in charge of this area has been extremely helpful. The final determination is that we need to pay about \$20,000 in back taxes (down from \$65,000) for the school and church property. We began to

pay this down this month and were able to pay about \$3800.00, so we now owe about \$16,200.00. Our people in the church are giving what they can, and we are thankful that they are stepping up, but this is not in their power to pay off. We would be grateful for any assistance in this need.

When we made our first payment, they saw that as a good faith effort and exonerated the 2012-2014 taxes which lowered the debt by about \$1300.00. What a blessing and help from the Lord! Once the tax debt is cleared, we will keep things current as we had been doing until they wildly increased the taxes without proper notification or consideration.

In November, we hosted the first International Baptist Deaf video conference. It was a great blessing, Deaf from all over the world tuned in and there were several good results from the meeting. Around twenty Deaf and hearing leaders in Deaf ministry preached from four different countries.

Services opened up again in November. Although some who are at higher risk are still staying home, our outdoor services have been full. We are so blessed to have new Christians being discipled. We had a tremendous Christmas service the 27th with the Lord's Supper as well as a live nativity scene. We had 299 present.

Thank you to those who have sent offerings for food provisions. This has been a great ministry help and hundreds were comforted and helped. We are still seeing fruit from this in new visitors, salvation decisions and baptisms.

Family News

The family is well. As I mentioned before, Joy graduated from high school and is preparing for college in the Fall.



I will be returning to the States in January for physical therapy for my lower back and further care and analysis for my upper spine issue, as well as my normal yearly check-up at the VA. Please pray the doctors have wisdom and I can get the help I need right away in order to get back as soon as possible to Peru.

Prayers and Thanks

Thank you so much to all the churches and friends who sent Christmas blessings! We are so thankful for all of you and your support during this unforgettable year.

Blessings,

Bro. Joe & Lisa,
Joy, John, Joel, Jessica, and Jennifer



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