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

May – June 2026 Prayer Letter

Dear Friends and Family,

It has been an incredibly busy time here at Efata, with many blessings to share. I am reminded of what the Psalmist said in Psalm 52:1, "...the goodness of God endureth continually." He truly is good to us even when we do not understand or comprehend what He is doing in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Ministry News

In May we celebrated the 49th Anniversary of the church. It was a wonderful time of fellowship and remembrance. We are looking forward to next year's 50th anniversary. That will be a big celebration of what God has done here in Lima, Peru, and beyond over these many years. My family and I have had the privilege of serving in Peru since December of 1999. God has done, and is doing, some amazing things here.

In June we had a very important meeting with a congresswoman who was elected to the new Peruvian Senate. She brought officials from the Ministry of Education to meet with us about our ongoing battle to reopen our high school for the Deaf. We have been working since 2011 to change the government's concept of Deaf education, ever since they shut down dedicated high school programs for the Deaf in favor of an inclusive model. Their model failed miserably, as I told them it would when they started it. A whole generation of deaf children has been left without proper education due to a lack of training and resources.

The meeting was very productive, and I was able to give a passionate defense and reason for the need for proper options in secondary education for the Deaf. I told them clearly that we are not just a social school to teach the Deaf how to read and write, but a Christian school whose ultimate goal is to train them to read and understand the Bible so that they can be saved and learn how to function as Christians in this world. The congresswoman understood and agreed with my position and vowed to help us develop new norms and laws to allow us to reopen our high school. Two weeks later, we had a working round table with Ministry of Education officials to begin the process of doing just that.

I am so grateful to God for making this happen. It breaks my heart to see deaf young people struggle to understand because of a lack of education. This change will help us to have greater influence and access to the Deaf of Peru for the Gospel. Please pray for this.

We also had the privilege of hosting a group from my home church – Emmanuel Baptist Church of Fort Myers, FL. Pastor Bob Ossewaarde and his wife Jodi came with several members of the church for our Missions Conference. Pastor did a wonderful job preaching the conference, and they helped us with a much-needed project at the church.

We were also able to help facilitate the importation of a container of Gospel tracts and books for a fellow missionary in Arequipa through our ministry. It was a blessing to be used in this way to help the propagation of the Gospel here in Peru.

Lisa and I traveled to Andahuaylas, a city in the south-central mountains of Peru, to preach a missions conference for Missionary Markos Lindsey. What a blessing that was! Lisa also taught a ladies' meeting while there. During a meeting in a home, one man surrendered his life to the Lord's work.

By now, most of you know of the earthquakes in Venezuela. Our dear missionary friend Rafael Ramirez, whom we trained years ago to work with the Deaf, has reported that at least four deaf church members have died and about eight are still unaccounted for. In addition, at least 45 hearing church members have died. We are raising support to send to him to help those affected. If you would like to help with this, please send any financial relief to Macedonia with a note: Efata Ministries – Venezuela Relief. We have a way to get the funds to Rafael for their efforts to bring help to their church people in great need.

Family News

We will be returning to the States in August. In June I had to return for my one-year visit with my cardiologist, and that did not go as smoothly as I was hoping. He really wants me to have another heart catheterization, as he suspects that another blockage may have formed due to some recent symptoms. He wanted me to do it right away, but I had to get back to Peru to be with my home church group for the Missions Conference. He adjusted and added to my heart medications and will see me again in August. If I don't have to have another stent, it will be a short stay through September, as I have a missions conference and other meetings scheduled. If I do need the stent, I will have to stay for a minimum of three months for follow-up.

We will also be taking Jessica to college at Pensacola. She wants to study nursing. Please keep her in your prayers.

The kids are doing well. They participated in a couple of contests from our mission board during their Refresh week. Jennifer won third place for her memes of mission life.

Thank you as always for the love, care, prayers and financial support from you, our faithful friends and family. It is greatly appreciated and much needed.

Blessings,

Joe & Lisa
Joel, Jessica, Jennifer

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