

Joseph & Zulema Kotvas



MISSIONARIES TO PERU, SOUTH AMERICA, AND BEYOND
REACHING AND TEACHING DEAF AND HEARING SOULS FOR CHRIST



Prayer Letter – July 2024



From the bottom of my heart, thank you to every one of you who reads these letters, supports us faithfully, and prays for us regularly. I have some difficult news to share, but first I want to report some of the things we have been involved in over the past few months.



In February we so enjoyed putting together the 2024 Deaf camp. Pastor David Peach did a great job challenging our people to be faithful to the Lord. Just after the conference, Pastor Peach began experiencing acute pain, and we ended up taking him in to the emergency room. He had to have emergency surgery. We are thankful he made a quick and full recovery.

Efata hosted a VBS after the conference, and the Fires of Evangelism Conference toward the end of February.



In March, we celebrated with our church-wide Easter fellowship, and in April we hosted a fellowship with many of our Deaf adults.



In May, Pastor Bruce Berry, our South American Director for Macedonia, came to spend time with our family and discuss some difficult issues. We are so thankful for him and for everyone at Macedonia, who have always been so supportive and encouraging over the past 12 years I have been with the Mission. In May we also celebrated the 47th anniversary of Efata Baptist Church.



It has been beautiful to see young Deaf students returning to classes at the Efata Christian School for the Deaf after having been forced to close temporarily during the pandemic. Last year the school re-opened with five students in kindergarten and first grade. This year we have almost 20 students in kinder and elementary, as well as an after-school program that helps junior high and high school Deaf students. Next year Efata plans to open a regular high school for the Deaf.



The Deaf school has always been at the core of Efata's ministry. It's a joy to see these new children learning and growing.

Zulema has a special place in her heart for these little ones, and every afternoon she has opened up the "Quiosco" snack shop and made the sandwiches and other snacks that their parents ask for. She has done a lot of work this year to make the Quiosco a nice place for the congregation to gather before and after services, as well. The proceeds help pay for our missions trips and conferences.

The students in the Bible Institute have done well, and they will be finishing their program of study this December. I have also been teaching research and writing in the Efata Bible College.



The auditorium construction project for the Efata mission church in Chancay, under the leadership of National Pastor Henry Vasquez, is progressing well. They now have the roof and walls up, and they are working on details such as plumbing, electrical, and furnishings. My Dad, Missionary Joe Kotvas, has been raising funds for this project, and I know many of those of you who read this letter have participated in giving. Thank you so much.



This month we have been helping our church prepare for a missions trip to visit and support our missionary Wilder Rojas in the mountain city of Arequipa the first week of August. Thirty people from our congregation have signed up to participate in this trip. Many of them have been saving and raising money for months in order to go.

We have also been laying the groundwork for a special music camp to be held the second week of August. Our budding musicians are so excited for this, and many talented music teachers have volunteered their time to come and teach how to play, sing, lead and coordinate music in church services.

Finally, dear pastors and church families,

I mentioned at the beginning of this letter that I have some difficult news. For personal reasons, I have found it necessary to resign from my role as a pastor and missionary.

I have been serving now for twelve years; first as a single, volunteer missionary teacher, and then as a missionary planting and leading Deaf ministries and working alongside my father, together with Zulema and our three precious children.

Many of you have supported our family from the very beginning of this journey, and I cannot thank you enough for your faithfulness. Some of you have come and visited us on the field. Many have prayed monthly, weekly, and even daily for us. Thank you.

I want you to know that your investment has not been without results. We have poured our lives into this ministry, and we have been able to encourage, strengthen, and teach many. My wife especially has done so much for both the Deaf and the hearing here. We have done what we could while we could.

Now, however, it's time for us to step down. Because of my experience observing similar situations, I feel the need to clarify that this decision is not brought on by immorality or other sin. It is also not because of any marital or interpersonal conflicts, nor is it due to any negative action on the part of the Mission or my sending church or pastor.

Rather it is because of philosophical and doctrinal considerations that I am working through. I have spent many hours in prayer and in conversation with my father (who is my pastor) and other Christian leaders, and with Brother Berry from Macedonia, as I mentioned above.

This will be a difficult time of transition for my family. We are still here in Peru right now, living on campus, and we have served here for many years with generous but limited support. We don't have much set aside to ease our transition.

You have all helped us so much already. If I could impose on you to request once more a helping hand in this time of need, I will be forever grateful.

- First, continued support for the next several months would be invaluable, as would any help designated for the expenses involved in this transition.
- Second, for those of you who love the special ministry of Efata and do not currently support my parents, missionaries Joe and Lisa Kotvas, I invite you to consider sending them your support. They continue to do wonderful work with the Deaf and hearing across Peru and around the world.

Please feel free to write me or call me to talk. My email address is joseph.kotvas@gmail.com, and my phone number is (904) 335-8563.

Sincerely,



The Kotvas Family
Joseph and Zulema Kotvas,
JJ, Esther & Grace