

Pullin' Weeds Plantin' Seeds

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TEMPLE LADIES NEWSLETTER

2026 MISSIONS EDITION

Laura Briceno

MIAMI, FL

2020 was an interesting year for many people and I was not the exception. Not only was it COVID year, but it was also the year the Lord had prepared for us to make the move to Miami to embark on a new adventure He had laid out for us – to plant Life Baptist Church. We were about to uproot our family from the familiar, well-known, and all too comfortable community to a place that felt too far from home all during a time when the world was going through great uncertainty. See, I grew up in Miami, but the Lord had allowed us to build a life that in our flesh was very comfortable, and I no longer saw Miami as home – Spring Hill was the place I now called home. Truth be told, I didn't want to go to Miami. I remember thinking, in my finite mind, that maybe COVID would put a stop to the move, but nothing was going to stop the work the Lord was doing in my life. After much prayer and Godly counsel, my husband made the decision that not even COVID was going to hinder the move. The Lord had called my husband to start a work in Miami, and He called me to be obedient to His Word and to follow my husband where ever He had called him.

I had very much a “type A” personality (and some would argue that I still do) so I felt like I had some work to do if this was going to happen. How dare I think the Lord hadn't already worked out the details? I recall going online to look for a rental place and after much prayer and many closed doors, the Lord led me to the place where we would call home for the next five years. The Lord knew exactly the place He had prepared for us. Not long after opening the doors of Life Baptist Church, my husband received a phone call from a missionary friend in Venezuela. He told him of a sister in Christ who was living

in Miami and looking for a church. That's like saying someone is looking for a church in the United States! You need to be a little bit more specific.

Well, she was quite literally in our back yard – just two minutes from our home – in Miami! This sister has been a blessing to me. We have been able to minister to her in a unique way and have seen how the Lord has worked in her life over the years. This is just one example of how the Lord worked in all the details, even of where we were going to live. Now six years into this journey, the Lord continues to work in my heart. He has built us a community of believers where we have been able to start planting new roots and where we can call Miami home again. 🌱



All for the Gospel's Sake
Missions
CONFERENCE 2026
OCTOBER 14-18

WED-FRI, OCTOBER 14-16
7:00 PM Evening Services

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17
12:00 PM Fellowship Lunch @ 4H Building
See Sign-up Sheets at Hall Table

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18
9:30 AM Missionaries in SS Classes
2027 Faith Promise Received
6:00 PM Evening Service

Kristin Catalan

PHILIPPINES

Hebrews 13:5 — “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

This has been one of the verses the Lord has given me throughout our first five years on the mission field. It has been a great comfort and encouragement to me through many trials, challenges, and times of opposition.

About a year and a half ago, I went through a particularly difficult season of loneliness. Being a missionary myself, I never realized just how tangible loneliness could be. I remember one day when I deeply longed to have my dear friends and family nearby. I longed for a friendship with someone I could personally connect with—someone I could relate to and simply spend time with.

I knew I could pray and ask God for that, and I trusted that He would answer in His own way and in His own time.

As I prayed, God began giving me verses that brought comfort and encouragement to my heart. One of the first was Hebrews 13:5: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

The Lord gently reminded me that He had always been with me. He was with me in that very moment of loneliness. He knew the thoughts, emotions, and words that I could not even express out loud. He knew my heart completely.

As the Holy Spirit brought that verse to my mind, I was reminded again that God’s presence is more than enough.

Another verse He gave me was Psalm 86:15: “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering...”

What a comfort it was to remember that God already knew what my struggles would be before He ever called me to the mission field. He knew the difficult seasons I would face, the moments when I would feel lonely, and the things I would long for. And He also knew exactly how He would help me through them.

As I look back now, I can see how God has answered my prayer for friendship—but He has answered it in ways that have also taught me to depend on Him.

Sometimes, God gives. And sometimes, God takes away.

About three years ago, God brought a friend into my life. She was an expat, which meant that she and her family were only living in the Philippines temporarily. In the back of my mind, I knew that eventually they would have to leave.

She was a believer, and I treasured our occasional coffee dates and meaningful conversations. I enjoyed having someone I could talk to, laugh with, and simply spend time with like “normal.”

Eventually, their family’s three-year contract ended, and they had to move back to the United States. Of course, I was



deeply sad. I had enjoyed having that friendship, and I missed having someone nearby whom I could connect with in that way.

But as I look back, I believe God used that experience to teach me something important.

Friendships are good. Friendships are a blessing. God uses people to encourage us, strengthen us, and walk alongside us.

But even the best friendships cannot take the place of God.

Sometimes, God allows us to experience the loss of something we love so that we can learn to depend on Him more deeply—to find our contentment not in people, but in Him alone.

That phrase continued to come back to my mind: “God’s presence is more than enough.”

I am so thankful for God’s patience with me. I believe loneliness may always be something a missionary will experience from time to time, because missionaries are human too. We miss our families. We miss our friends. We long for familiar faces and meaningful connections.

But God has also been so good to me.

He has given me young ladies in our church whom I can disciple and serve alongside. He has given me opportunities to build meaningful relationships and invest in their lives. And through these relationships, He has reminded me again and again that He knows exactly what I need.

I am so thankful for the privilege of serving God on the mission field. There have been difficult days, but through every season, God has continued to prove Himself faithful.

He has reminded me that He is not only enough when everything is going well.

God’s presence is enough when I feel alone. God’s presence is enough when I miss the people I love. God’s presence is enough when things do not go the way I hoped. And God’s presence is enough when I have nothing else to hold on to.

“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” 🌱



Flora

I wiped the wooden floor furiously with a towel as my two-year-old stood nearby. The amount of mess didn't require the force I used; it was just a milk spill. But in frustration, as I wrung the towel dry over the sink, I muttered under my breath that I was done. Done with messes, done with tantrums — just done.

As a mom of three, I had gone through the "terrific twos" three times over. Despite the extremely sweet moments, two was hands-down my least favorite age. So when my husband came to me about an opportunity to teach English to 50 two-year-olds at the church preschool when we arrive in 2027, I laughed at the prospect — I could barely handle my own toddlers.

Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, my immigrant parents drilled a clear roadmap into me: study hard, attend a top-tier university, find a high-paying job, and ultimately secure a successful life. These goals stemmed from a desire for me to have a better life than they had. So, I followed the plan. After graduating from UC Berkeley, I spent 14 years working in marketing at Google. I thought I had achieved my dream career.

What my parents didn't know was that under the surface, God had been working on my heart since my youth. After trusting Christ as a bus kid at age seven and growing in the Lord as a teenager, God gave me a desire to serve Him with all that I had — even if it meant full-time ministry

or missions. As a result, when my husband shared a desire to attend Bible college and pursue missions, I happily supported our life pivot, even though I was 32 and pregnant with our third child.

Later on, God spoke to me through preaching to be a stay-at-home mom. Leaving my career was a step of faith as I worried that I was unqualified to be a successful stay-at-home mom. Yet, as I surrendered that fear, God grew my love for motherhood and my family.

Then came another unexpected door. When I was asked to teach a college English composition and rhetoric class at Heartland Baptist Bible College, I felt unqualified yet again. But as I taught for that one year, God equipped me, and even reminded me of the childhood dream I had of being a teacher—a dream I had forgotten years ago that He now fulfilled.

God showed me firsthand that His plans for my life were so much better than the ladder I had spent climbing.

Now, Lord willing, I find myself facing another role that scares me — both as a missionary and possibly managing a classroom of two-year olds. But if the last few years have taught me anything, it's that my initial fear is no match for God's grace and help. He helped me move from fearing staying at home to loving it, and from feeling unqualified to teach college to finding joy in the classroom. I am learning to trust Him with this next season, too. God has proven that anytime He leads me to a new role, He provides the strength to step into it, and arranges far greater outcomes than of those I could ever dream. 🌱



SEPTEMBER 14, 2026 10:10 PM
8 LBS 13 OZ 20.5 INCHES

Carter Daniel Long

PROUD PARENTS: JOSHUA & BRIANNA
ELATED OLDER SIBLINGS: WESTON, KAILEY
GLEEFUL GRANDS: CRAIG & CAROL LONG



SEPTEMBER 19, 2026 1:18 AM
7 LBS 12 OZ 19.5 INCHES

Lincoln Alan Ratcliff

PROUD PARENTS: CHAZ & LEAH
GLEEFUL GRANDS: MARC & CRYSTAL RATCLIFF
GIDDY GREATS: DARELENE MELUGIN, CAROLYN RATCLIFF



Jeanette Tunnell

HAVEN OF HOPE

My childhood was unique. I guess everybody's is for that matter. But even as a young adult, I found myself looking back and thinking, "God's writing a unique story here." I was in and out of state foster care as a young child. I was also a bus kid...a mess of a bus kid. One Sunday night, when I was nine-years-old, there was a knock on our door. Little did I know that night would change the trajectory of my life. Members and staff from the church where I rode the bus came to take me and my sibling and place my mom in a rehab center. What was supposed to be a 30-day stay with the family who took me in, turned in to nine years. I stayed with them until adulthood.

So, the first half of my childhood was spent in a rather dysfunctional environment, and the second half was spent in a structured, godly environment. As a child, there were times my story seemed defined by what was missing. I remember struggling with confused emotions..."Why couldn't I have just been born in a 'normal' family like so many others?" But as I matured into adulthood, I began to see God's plan unfolding. And today, I have an even clearer view of the incredible purpose God had in it all.

Before I explain that in detail, I want to mention the correlation I feel with Joseph from the Bible. There was no way Joseph, when he was betrayed by his brothers and thrown into a pit, could have known it was the beginning of a much bigger plan that God had for his life. I love where he eventually tells his brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good." God repurposed the bad events of Joseph's life. The foster system, the uncertainty, and the ache of my childhood were meant by the enemy to leave me broken, bitter, and hopeless, but God hijacked those exact experiences and repurposed them into empathy, wisdom and authority in my life—the same as He did with Joseph.

Fast forward to today: I serve as a pastor's wife and run a children's home alongside my husband. Just as God transformed Joseph's pain into a rescue mission for others, I survived the system as a child so that I could stand at the door of Our Home today and tell the children in our care, "I know where you are sitting, I know how you feel, and I am proof that God has a future for you." Pain



only makes sense when we look backward through the lens of God's sovereignty. Joseph couldn't see the full picture when he was at the bottom of the pit, just as I couldn't see my future when I was a child in foster care. The dark valleys, for me and Joseph, were actually leading to a place of purpose.

God wasn't absent in my hard years; He was building the exact character traits I would need to minister to the children in our care who are facing those same trials today. The enemy may have intended for my hardships to break my spirit, but God intercepted those intentions and re-authored my narrative.



In Japanese Kintsugi, the artisans do not throw away broken pottery. They mend the fractures with gold, turning the damaged seams into the most striking and valuable feature of the vessel. Likewise, my scars are the golden seams where God's grace shines brightest. My past isn't a handicap to my leadership—it is my greatest credential.

I wouldn't say the things that happened in my past to land me in the foster system were good. Joseph didn't call his brothers' betrayal "good." He appropriately referred to it as "evil." Some of the things I went through as a child hurt. But God has never asked me to pretend that what I went through as a child didn't hurt. Satan thought that season would destroy my future. He didn't know that God was going to take that exact pain, put it through the fire, and use it to build empathy, authority, and understanding in me. With God, nothing is ever wasted. He brings purpose to the pain. 🌱

