

Cross Family Ministry Update

March 3, 2023

Dear Praying Friends,

We pray that your year is off to a great start for God's glory! We thank God for your ongoing prayers, encouragement, and financial support.

Disciple Making 2023: We rejoice to tell you about the blessings that God has showered on us over the past few months. God has given us an enjoyable time of service with our sending church, Calvary Baptist Church, in Winter Garden, FL. We have enjoyed being a part of the disciple-making ministries of the church. Our desire for our time here in the USA is to encourage everyone around us to spend more time getting to know God through his Word and then dedicate their lives to more fervency, zeal, and service to our Great King.

Titus 3:1-8 (ESV)

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

Family Life for God's Glory: It is with great joy and gratitude to our Great God that we announce the birth of Eliana Hope Cross. She was born on January 2, 2023. This is the birth announcement that Kelly put on Facebook the day she was born. . .

"We are thrilled to introduce you to our fifth daughter, Eliana Hope Cross! She was born on January 2, 2023 at 3:17pm, weighing 6.14lbs and measuring 21in. long. Eliana means "my God has answered (my prayer)," and we always have Hope in God. As many of you know, after Lilian's birth, God gave both of us an increasing joy and contentment with the four daughters he gave us. We felt the responsibility to biblically raise our girls to love and serve God. I was also VERY happy to be past the sleepless nights, diaper changes, potty training, car seats, and nap schedules! But in the beginning of the year, God began to work in Jay's heart, giving him a desire to raise more children for God's glory. I was NOT in agreement at first but eventually came around. Together we began to pray that if it was God's will, that He would bless us with another child to raise for Him. That month I got pregnant but lost the baby. I was crushed. Why would God give me this strong desire to have another child only to take him/her away? I didn't have an answer, but knew that God had a plan for my life and that no matter what, I could and needed to find my joy in Him (Hab. 3:17-19). God greatly used my daily Bible reading and study of Habakkuk to guide my heart during those weeks. That trial deepened our desire to have another child and prayers for God's will to be done. And He answered our prayers by blessing us with Eliana. This post could turn into a book sharing all the ways God met me those early months, calmed my fears, revealing Himself faithful and true, a gentle and loving Shepherd. He truly is a good God!"

I praise God for the kind way he has led us through this time of trials and blessings. May he be glorified in our family in every generation from now until eternity!

We praise God that Kelly and Eliana are doing well. We prayed that God would give us the privilege of sharing the joy of Eliana's birth with family and friends here in the USA. He has answered that prayer. We praise the Lord for the tremendous kindness that the members of our sending church have shown to us during these months.

We thank God that our girls are adjusting well to having a baby sister. We praise God for the grace he gives us each day to fight sin in our own lives and point our girls to the Lord! The girls have enjoyed loving on Eliana and taking care of her.

We thank the Lord for giving us a desire to teach our girls from the Bible every day. We are currently studying through Ezekiel, Esther, and Proverbs at mealtimes. Before bed each night we read a Psalm or two. We are also enjoying reading The Autobiography of George Müller and The Chronicles of Narnia. We recently finished The Silver Chair and we are now a few chapters into The Last Battle.

Upcoming Trips to Partnering Churches: We pray that God will use our visits with partnering churches for his glory. We thank God for bringing together the details of transportation, housing, and scheduling for our upcoming visits to our twelve partnering churches. We look forward to being with partnering churches in Florida and North Carolina during the next couple months.

Holiday Bible Church in Holiday, FL - March 4-5, 2023.

Calvary Baptist Church in Lutz, FL - March 18-19, 2023.

We look forward to reconnecting with good friends, hearing what God is doing among them, and telling them about the work God is doing in Peru.

We look forward to being with Iglesia Bautista de la Gracia in Hendersonville, NC on April 2, 2023. I pray that God will give me grace to translate and record in Spanish the audio portions of our ministry overview video. I look forward to preaching God's word in Spanish on that Sunday!

We praise the Lord for helping us find an airbnb rental house in South Carolina that we plan to live in during the month of April. The house is close to family members and friends and is in a good location for us to visit our three partnering churches in North Carolina. We praise God for providing for all the details of life and ministry during this time of service in the USA. We pray that God will sustain us with his grace, joy, and wisdom during the months that we will be traveling.

Trouble in Peru: You may have heard about recent political trouble and civil unrest in Peru. It has severely affected Puerto Maldonado, the place we served God since 2016. We are in the USA right now, so it has not affected us personally. We praise the Lord for giving believers in Puerto Maldonado, Peru the grace to continue faithfully serving him in the midst of violent protests, road blockades, food and fuel shortages, etc. over the past several months. We pray that the light of the gospel would brightly shine through the churches and individual believers in Peru. We pray that the civil government would govern in righteousness according to God's Word. The government brought in extra units of police officers a couple weeks ago to clear the roads in town and the highway that brings supplies to Puerto Maldonado. For now things are staying open. The political problems that were the catalyst for the protests, however, are not resolved. We thank God for his sovereignty over our lives. Had we been in Puerto Maldonado during this time it might have affected us getting to the hospital for Eliana's birth. We don't ever want to take God's guiding hand, provision, and timing for granted.

Cultivating an appreciation for God's creation: We continue to enjoy observing and investigating God's creation here in Florida. Each place in the world declares God's power and glory in unique and beautiful ways. Wherever you live, I guarantee, you have powerful evidences of God's creative power all around you.

Romans 1:18–25 (ESV)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Thank you again for your prayers and encouragement. May the Lord richly bless you as you serve him this year. We look forward to seeing you, Lord willing, in the coming months.

Jay

Jay & Kelly Cross

Alexia, Isabel, Esther, Lilian, and Eliana